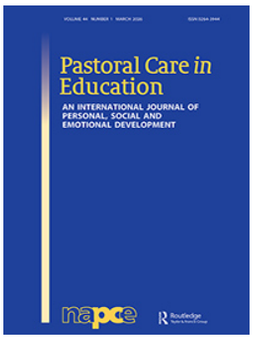

Pastoral Care in Education

An International Journal of Personal, Social and Emotional Development

ISSN: 0264-3944 (Print) 1468-0122 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rped20

The ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on adolescents' (11–18 years) mental health and wellbeing in the UK: a scoping review

Margaret Wood, Andrew Pennington, Feng Su, Alison Laver-Fawcett, Lynne Gabriel & Charikleia Sinani

To cite this article: Margaret Wood, Andrew Pennington, Feng Su, Alison Laver-Fawcett, Lynne Gabriel & Charikleia Sinani (06 Aug 2025): The ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on adolescents' (11–18 years) mental health and wellbeing in the UK: a scoping review, Pastoral Care in Education, DOI: 10.1080/02643944.2025.2541785

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2025.2541785

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

Published online: 06 Aug 2025.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 1689

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Citing articles: 1 View citing articles

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rped20

PASTORAL CARE IN EDUCATION
https://doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2025.2541785

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

The ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on adolescents' (11–18 years) mental health and wellbeing in the UK: a scoping review

Margaret Wood [a], Andrew Pennington [a], Feng Su [b], Alison Laver-Fawcett [c], Lynne Gabriel [d] and Charikleia Sinani [c]

[a]School of Education, Language and Psychology, York St John University, York, UK; [b]Schoolof Education, Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool, UK; [c]School of Science,Technology and Health, York St John University, York, UK; [d]York St John Communities Centre, York St John University, York, UK

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the findings of a study into the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 11–18 years in the UK. The study also explored the key factors contributing to any negative ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people's mental health and wellbeing, and their self-care and coping strategies to counter these impacts. The research adopted a scoping review approach using a staged framework – identifying the research question; identifying relevant studies; study selection; charting the data; and collating, analysing and reporting the results. Based on the findings of the study, five priorities for action were proposed to improve young people's mental health and wellbeing in the post-pandemic era: (1) to identify ways in which young people can be brought to the table in the formulation of policy responses to crises impacting on their lives; (2) to recognise the importance of policy responses targeted at the specific needs of different groups; (3) to prioritise resources to enable connectedness to school and relationships to be nurtured and sustained; (4) to spotlight the need for greater clarity regarding the roles of teachers in supporting young people's mental health within a system of support and (5) to vigorously support the value of an equal focus on academic achievement and wellbeing in schools, an inclusive, holistic curriculum which balances all learning domains and rethinks the pressures of current assessment and testing regimes and implications for young people's wellbeing.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 16 December 2024
Accepted 28 July 2025

KEYWORDS
Mental health; wellbeing; adolescents; COVID-19 pandemic; agency

Students' mental health and wellbeing are matters of continuing concern for schools today especially after the disruption of education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Evidence suggests that the decline of psychological wellbeing in schools has accelerated since the COVID-19 pandemic (Stiebahl & Lally, 2024). This paper reports on the findings of a scoping review study into the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 11–18 years in the UK. The study also

CONTACT Margaret Wood M.Wood@yorksj.ac.uk

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

explored the key factors contributing to any negative ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people's mental health and wellbeing, and their self-care and coping strategies to counter these impacts.

The context

UNICEF (2022, p. 36) noted that 'The impact of COVID-related school closures reaches far beyond lost learning, affecting children's mental health and psychosocial wellbeing, physical health and nutrition' and we know that with reference to England and Wales, '1 in 5 young people in England have a mental health problem, up from 1 in 9 in 2017' (Mind, 2024, p. 17). A Centre for Mental Health (2025, p. 3) report also noted that 'The decline in young people's mental health is one of the biggest health, social and economic challenges of our time. After a sharp rise in recent years, more than one in five children and young people in England now have a diagnosable mental health condition'. In terms of experiences of young people in England, research shows that children aged 5–16 years in the North of England were disproportionately affected throughout the pandemic, experiencing more mental health difficulties compared to children in the rest of England (Pickett et al., 2021). Mental health conditions experienced by children during and since the pandemic will cost an estimated £13.2 billion in lost wages over their working lives (Pickett et al., 2021). When restrictions ceased, the number of active children was reduced by 2.3%, with children and young people choosing alternative or adaptive activities over common sporting activities, participation in which was reduced by 16% (Sport England, 2023). In a narrative review of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's occupations, the associated factors, and the impact on children's health, well-being and development, Blanta et al. (2023) concluded the COVID-19 pandemic seemed to have negatively impacted children's participation in occupations during restrictions. They reported that 'It is evident that the occupational disruption that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic affected health, wellbeing, and development of children and adolescents' (p. 80). They recommended further research is needed to establish reliable conclusions. Clarke et al.'s research on adolescent mental health (Clarke et al., 2021, p. 4) noted that

> Prevalence data in England shows that approximately one in seven young people (14.4%) aged 11–19 experience at least one mental disorder (NHS Digital, 2018). Emotional disorders, including anxiety and depression, are the most common mental disorders experienced by young people, followed by behavioural disorders. The most recent data suggests that young people's mental health has further deteriorated (NHS Digital, 2020). COVID-19 is likely to have played a role in the latest deterioration due to the unprecedented degree of disruption and uncertainty the pandemic has brought to the lives of young people.

In considering the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns on child wellbeing in the UK, Singh et al. (2021) noted how the pandemic as the 'defining event of this generation' brought huge changes to children's daily lives which impacted on their wellbeing (p. 445), with some children affected more than others 'as both COVID-19 and the lockdown disproportionately impacted on social deprived children, due to poverty, bereavement, lack of outdoor space, and greater difficulties accessing online education, entrenching our social inequalities' (p. 448). Research by Laurence (2025, p. 403) noted the significance of the

role of local social capital (LSC), that is 'individuals' local social networks, norms of reciprocity and sense of belonging'. Laurence found that 'Individuals with higher LSC experienced more positive trajectories in mental health (fewer depressive symptoms) over the pandemic' and the research provided insights into 'the mechanisms explaining how LSC cushions mental health during major crises, broadening our understanding of the stress-buffering pathways of social networks in general'. A research study by Su et al. (2024) explored secondary school students' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic on their daily routines and school life during the lockdown between March 2020 and December 2020 and how this affected their mental health and wellbeing at the time and following the reopening of schools and transition back to in-person teaching. The study explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on secondary school children's mental health and wellbeing through an online questionnaire survey ($n = 605$), and follow-up focus-group interviews ($n = 16$). Findings showed the pandemic, and restrictions had a detrimental effect on the lives of many young people, with a greater impact on girls than boys. The adverse impacts on their mental health and wellbeing continue to affect the lives of a significant minority. The 'new' normal was experienced differently by students, especially girls, compared to their 'normal' experience before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods

A scoping review approach was utilised in this study by a review team of six researchers to examine the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people's mental health and wellbeing. In their typology of reviews, Grant and Booth (2009, p. 101) characterize the scoping review as a type of review which 'provides a preliminary assessment of the potential size and scope of available research literature. It aims to identify the nature and extent of research evidence (usually including ongoing research)'. Our research design was informed by Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five-stage framework - (1) identifying the research question; (2) identifying relevant studies; (3) study selection; (4) charting the data and (5) collating, summarising and reporting the results. The aim of this scoping review was to illuminate the following questions:

With specific reference to the UK:

- What is the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people's mental health and wellbeing?
- What are the key factors contributing to any negative ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people's mental health and wellbeing?
- What are young people's self-care and coping strategies to counter any negative ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What interventions appear to contribute to improvements in young people's enduring mental health and wellbeing in the post-pandemic era?

Identifying and selecting relevant studies

The following search terms were employed: (adolescent* or secondary school or teen* or youth*) AND (health or psych* or wellbeing or well-being or social*) AND (covid* or coronavirus or pandemic or lockdown) AND ('united kingdom' or england or scot* or 'northern ireland' or 'wales')

The inclusion criteria were:

- Language: English language or with full translation
- Type of literature: Peer-reviewed articles (qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, systematic reviews and meta-analyses)
- Geographical scope: UK and/or one of the 4 countries (England, Scotland, Wales Northern Ireland) (to note country/countries where studies were undertaken)
- Relates to COVID-19 pandemic (to note if during restrictions/lockdown only, or ongoing impacts of Covid)
- Date range: Published between 2020 and 2024 (because the COVID-19 pandemic started in 2020)
- Age range: young people aged 11–18 years, or a sub-sample with separately reported results for this age group or children within this age range.

The exclusion criteria were – English translation not available; non-peer reviewed for research articles; published before 2020; and younger than 11 years old or adults.

The databases searched were the British Educational Index (BEI), Allied and Complementary Medicine Database (AMED), Cumulated Index in Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), and Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). The choice of search terms and databases was informed by the research questions and through consultation with an academic librarian. This yielded 457 records. Following exclusion of 19 duplicates, 438 underwent initial review. The numbers of records obtained at each stage is recorded in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram (Page et al., 2021) below which details the records screened, records excluded and a summary of the principal reasons for exclusion.

The initial review of the 438 abstracts was carried out by dividing the records amongst members of the team. To establish the inter-rater reliability and a common approach, the first 100 abstracts were reviewed by all team members, the remainder then allocated to individual team members for review. Inter-rater reliability can add to the rigour of the process and, as Cole (2024, p. 1945) explains, 'Having two or more researchers independently analyze the same qualitative data set and then compare their findings, can serve to provide an important check on selective perception and blind interpretive bias'. This initial review excluded 391 records.

The next step was a full text review of the remaining 47 carried out by a member of the team which excluded a further 27 records. Principal reasons for exclusion are shown in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1). The final 20 articles for review were then analysed as set out below.

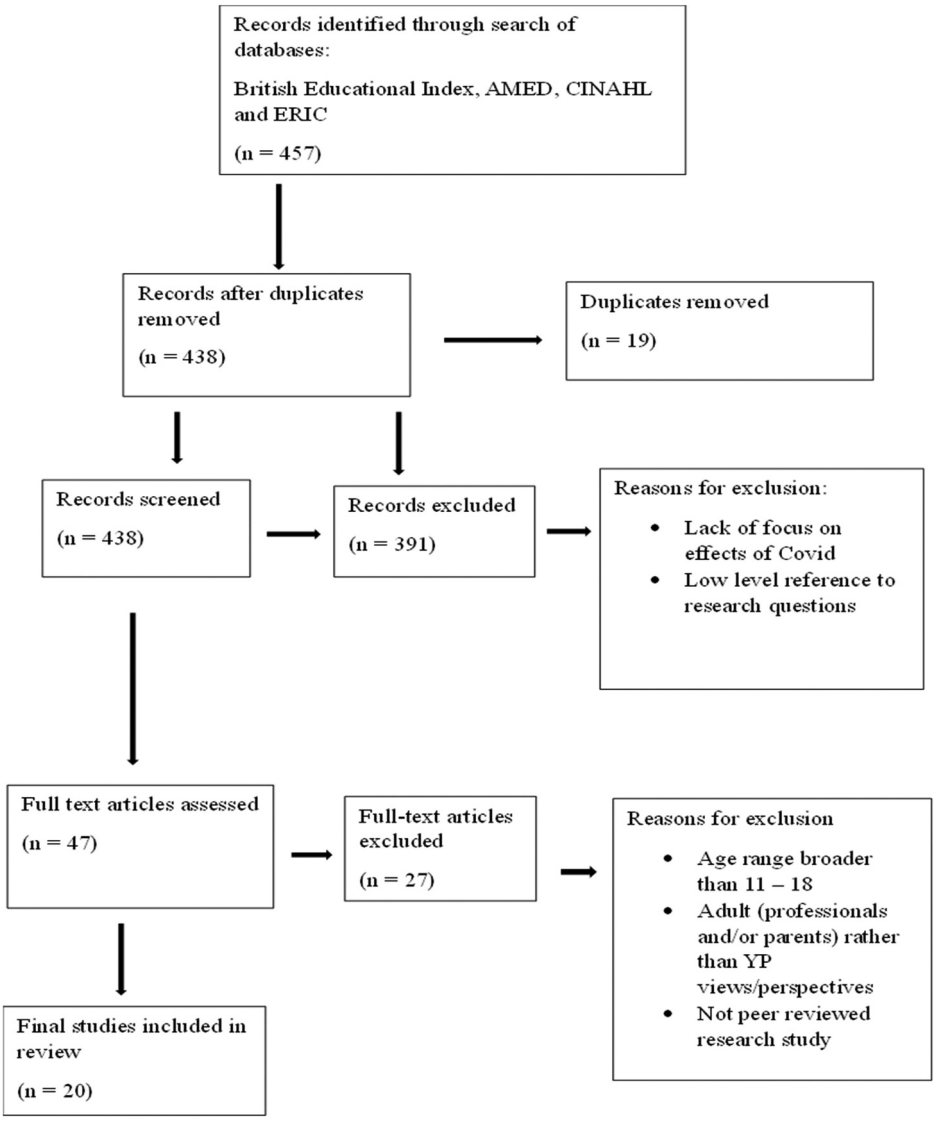

Figure 1. Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram.

Charting the data

The data from the final 20 studies selected for inclusion in the review are shown in Table 1 which summarises details of authorship, journal, date of publication and context of study.

Collating, summarising and reporting the results

The final stage of the scoping review was to collate, summarise and report the results. At this stage, we adopted a thematic synthesis (J. Thomas & Harden, 2008) involving the systematic coding of data and generating of descriptive and analytical themes. This was an inductive approach, which allows 'research findings to emerge from the frequent,

Table 1. Studies included in the scoping review.

	Article title	Author(s)	Year	Journal	Research methods
1	Student experiences of the 2020 cancellation of England's General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs)	McCaldin, et al.	2023	The Psychology of Education Review	Online survey
2	"I'm able to function better whenI know there's a beginning and an end time": Autistic adolescents' experiences of lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic	Hamilton, et al.	2023	Autism & Developmental Language Impairments	Semi-structured interviews
3	Adolescent mental health priorities during the Covid-19 pandemic	Stewart, et al.	2023	School Mental Health	Online survey
4	Children and young people with long COVID – Comparing those seen in post-COVID services with a non-hospitalised national cohort: A descriptive study	Newlands, et al.	2023	Children	Online survey
5	Long-term factors associated with positive mental health outcomes for early adolescents during COVID-19-related school closures	Molloy-Vickers, et al.	2023	Psychology in the Schools	Online survey
6	Young people's mental health changes, risk, and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic	Montero-Marin, et al.	2023	JAMA Network Open	Survey
7	Happier during lockdown: a descriptive analysis of self-reported wellbeing in 17,000 UK school students during Covid-19 lockdown	Soneson, et al.	2023	European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry	Secondary data analysis
8	Factors associated with mental health symptoms among UK autistic children and young people and their parents during the COVID-19 pandemic	Palmer, et al.	2023	Autism	Online survey
9	Inequalities in late adolescents' educational experiences and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic	Anders, et al.	2023	Oxford Review of Education	Secondary data analysis
10	Exploring students' experiences of technical and vocational learning in University Technical Colleges during the pandemic	Deepthi and Exley	2023	British Educational Research Journal	Survey
11	Covid-19, social restrictions, and mental distress among young people: a UK longitudinal, population-based study	Knowles, et al.	2022	Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry	Survey and interview
12	Adolescents' lockdown-induced coping experiences (ALICE) study: A qualitative exploration of early adolescents' experiences of lockdown and reintegration	Ashworth, et al.	2022	Journal of Early Adolescence	Online interview
13	Sleep in the time of COVID-19: findings from 17,000 school-aged children and adolescents in the UK during the first national lockdown	Illingworth, et al.	2022	Sleep Advances	Online survey

(*Continued*)

Table 1. (Continued).

	Article title	Author(s)	Year	Journal	Research methods
14	School closures, exam cancellations and isolation: the impact of COVID-19 on young people's mental health	McCluskey, et al.	2021	Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties	Interview
15	COVID-19 and adolescent mental health in the United Kingdom	Hu and Qian	2021	Journal of Adolescent Health	Secondary data analysis
16	The importance of school culture in supporting student mental health in secondary schools. Insights from a qualitative study	Barker, et al.	2021	British Educational Research Journal	Interview
17	Young people's rights and mental health during a pandemic: an analysis of the impact of emergency legislation in Scotland	McMellon and MacLachlan	2021	YOUNG	Secondary data analysis
18	Impact of the Coronavirus lockdown on older adolescents engaged in a school-based stress management program: changes in mental health, sleep, social support, and routines	Marques and Braidwood	2021	Children & Schools	Online survey
19	'It's making his bad days into my bad days': The impact of coronavirus social distancing measures on young carers and young adult carers in the United Kingdom	Blake-Holmes and McGowan	2021	Child & Family Social Work	Survey and interview
20	Secondary school students' perception of the online teaching experience during COVID-19: The impact on mental wellbeing and specific learning difficulties	Walters, et al.	2021	British Journal of Educational Psychology	Online survey

dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies' (D. R. Thomas, 2006, p. 238).

During this analysis, synthesis and interpretation process, we went through the following steps – reading and rereading of included articles, reflecting on emerging themes, outlining initial themes, discussing of initial themes, and generating thematic synthesis and interpretations. These steps move forward from considering included studies as individual articles towards examining them as a body of evidence. After applying an inductive approach to analysis, a number of themes were generated from the review (see Table 2). The themes constructed through this process were then mapped against the four research questions, and this mapping was used to structure the next section on the findings. Table 2 shows the four broad themes that were constructed in this way.

Table 2. Themes generated from the scoping review mapped against the research questions.

Broad themes	Description of Themes	Articles
Continuing impact of COVID-19 pandemic on young people's mental health and wellbeing	Worsening of mental health/increase in mental health (MH) difficulties.	Montero-Marin et al. (2023) Hamilton et al. (2023) Knowles et al. (2022) Marques and Braidwood (2021) Hu and Qian (2021)
	Improved mental health/emotional wellbeing.	Soneson et al. (2023) Marques and Braidwood (2021)
	Worsening sleep quality and attendant negative effects.	Illingworth et al. (2022) Marques and Braidwood (2021)
	Worsening MH not experienced equally – greater for those in particular groups (effect of gender, race, class, poverty etc.) and challenging circumstances.	Anders et al. (2023) Knowles et al. (2022) Blake-Holmes and McGowan (2022) Hu and Qian (2021)
	Lost learning, disengagement from school, reduction in opportunities (especially for vocational education). 'Shrunken world' and 'shifted path'.	Anders et al. (2023) Deepthi and Exley (2023) McCaldin et al. (2023) Hamilton et al. (2023) Walters et al. (2022) McCluskey et al. (2021)
	Loss of contact with peers, damage to friendships, isolation.	Hamilton et al. (2023) Ashworth et al. (2022) McCluskey et al. (2021)
	Denial of rights, lack of involvement and engagement/ communication, unfairness leading to anger and frustration.	McCaldin et al. (2023) Ashworth et al. (2022) McMellon and MacLachlan (2021)
Key factors contributing to negative ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people's mental health and wellbeing	Vulnerability (on basis of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBT+), black and minority ethnic (BME), gender, particularly female), socio-economic status, financial hardship, housing status and other disadvantage. Pre-existing MH difficulties.	Molloy-Vickers et al. (2023) Palmer et al. (2023) Anders et al. (2023) Montero-Marin et al. (2023) Soneson et al. (2023) Knowles et al. (2022) Palmer et al. (2023)
	Reduced social connection, loss of friendships, loss of support and face to face contact with adults (especially teachers).	Molloy-Vickers et al. (2023) Ashworth et al. (2022) McCluskey et al. (2021) Walters et al. (2022)

(*Continued*)

Table 2. (Continued).

Broad themes	Description of Themes	Articles
	Lack of open supportive school culture and trust in it. Performative pressures, over emphasis on achievement and lack of consistency by school staff and leadership damage open and supportive cultures.	Barker et al. (2023). McCluskey et al. (2021)
	Lack of information and communication with children and young people. Anxiety, frustration and anger, especially about changes to important aspects of schooling such as assessment and exam arrangements.	McCaldin et al. (2023) Ashworth et al. (2022)
	Changed/disrupted routines. Loss of hobbies, experiences and outside/physical activity.	Walters et al. (2022) Ashworth et al. (2022)
Young people's self-care and coping strategies to counter any negative ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic	Peer support (including formalised schemes such as student MH ambassadors). Friendship (and ability to control better potentially harmful relationships). Support from and at school. Community and family connection.	Molloy-Vickers et al. (2023) Montero-Marin et al. (2023) Soneson et al. (2023) Stewart et al. (2022) Marques and Braidwood (2021) McCluskey et al. (2021)
	Engagement in and enjoyment of education provision.	Palmer et al. (2023)
	Positive school climate/culture. Dual emphasis in school on achievement and wellbeing/relationship building. Flexibility in school structures, routines and expectations. Fewer typical school days.	Montero-Marin et al. (2023) Soneson et al. (2023)
	Closure of schools and disruption to schooling benefited some marginalised and vulnerable young people.	Knowles et al. (2022) Stewart et al. (2022)
	Sport, play and creative activities. Engaging in recreational activities.	Soneson et al. (2023) Stewart et al. (2022) Marques and Braidwood (2021)
	Willingness to change educational and career plans and reorientate goals and aspirations.	Deepthi and Exley (2023)
	Having and being able to adapt routines.	Ashworth et al. (2022)
Interventions that appear to contribute to improvements in young people's enduring mental health and wellbeing in the post-pandemic era	Extended school day to provide safe space and focus on relationships, peer connection and socialisation and play/recreational activity. Balanced focus on achievement, enjoyment and wellbeing in post-pandemic school structures and curriculum.	Molloy-Vickers et al. (2023) Palmer et al. (2023) Stewart et al. (2022) Hamilton et al. (2023) Ashworth et al. (2022) Soneson et al. (2023)
	Support for young people's mental health (including training teachers, in school services and peer support).	Anders et al. (2023) Montero-Marin et al. (2023) Stewart et al. (2022) Hamilton et al. (2023) McCluskey et al. (2021)
	Focus on school attendance and what makes school engaging, with particular focus on support for vulnerable young people.	Montero-Marin et al. (2023) Soneson et al. (2023)
	Develop open, supportive and trustworthy school cultures that balance achievement and wellbeing and promote belonging. Policy and regulation to enable such cultures.	Barker et al. (2023) Ashworth et al. (2022) McCluskey et al. (2021)
	Dialogue, consultation and engagement of young people in decision-making and policy development. Support and development of young people's agency and autonomy.	McCaldin et al. (2023) Ashworth et al. (2022) McMellon and MacLachlan (2021)
	Orientate education systems better to mitigate inequalities. Develop non-stigmatising ways of identifying and supporting vulnerable and marginalised young people.	Knowles et al. (2022). Blake-Holmes and McGowan (2022)

Findings

The continuing impact of COVID-19 pandemic on young people's mental health and wellbeing

There is a strong focus in the literature reviewed on the negative impacts on young people and the ways in which these continue and endure. The idea of a 'shrunken world' for young people suggested by Hamilton et al. (2023, p. 5) provides a powerful image of the pandemic's negative impact. Within this 'shrunken world' several themes emerge. A dominant one concerns deterioration in mental health. Within this the following are frequently cited: anxiety and worry (Hamilton et al., 2023; Marques & Braidwood, 2021), mental distress (Knowles et al., 2022), depression, low mood, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Montero-Marin et al., 2023) and sleep difficulties and disruptions (Illingworth et al., 2022). Discussion in the literature reviewed on the theme of mental health highlights the ways in which these impacts have a greater effect on those whose social, emotional and/or economic circumstances have been adversely affected and how such adverse impacts exacerbate existing inequalities and disparities.

Relationships and the social dimensions of young people's lives also feature strongly as a component of this 'shrunken world' with many studies reporting both the extent and impact of the curtailing of young people's social relations and contacts. Damage to relationships with family and friends is identified in many studies as a major impact of pandemic restrictions.

Several studies highlight the corrosive impact of the loss and denial of agency on young people with frustration and anger about disruption of their lives and denial of opportunities brought about by decisions on school closures, the poor and chaotic management of national examinations and the awarding of grades and the inconsistent application of social distancing restrictions. A clear theme is evident of overlooking and ignoring the importance of engaging young people as stakeholders in their own lives.

Loss of learning due to pandemic restrictions is very evident as a theme, but the perspectives offered go beyond that of setbacks to academic progress and the need for 'catch up' which has been a feature in public and media discourse. The focus in the reviewed literature highlights the loss of self-worth and the ability to concentrate and engage with learning and the importance of the teacher/student support relationship. Studies reviewed highlight the need for 'catch up' to embrace social, emotional, cultural and physical aspects of learning and the renewing and fostering of peer and teacher relationships at least as much as academic work.

The 'shrunken world' is evident in lost opportunities to progress, grow and follow aspirations and career plans which feature as a reported impact, with several studies highlighting the importance of both formal aspects (for example qualifications) and the informal rites of passage of moving from primary to secondary school, finishing examinations and so on. Young people are reported as rethinking career plans and modifying aspirations for future study and work. This is reported as being more significant for those in vocational education where the loss of practical placements and employer engagement due to pandemic restrictions is more marked.

There is also evidence of positive impact of pandemic restrictions cited in some studies (for example Stewart et al., 2022) with one (Soneson et al., 2023) suggesting

that up to one-third of young people saw improved mental health and wellbeing. The removal of school pressures caused by bullying, oppressive behaviour regimes and examination and assessment pressures are suggested as possible contributors to this improvement.

Some studies (e.g. Blake-Holmes & McGowan, 2022; Hamilton et al., 2023) focus on the impacts on particular vulnerable groups of young people. Young carers and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), such as autistic spectrum conditions. are highlighted as at risk of particularly severe impact from the pandemic restrictions.

The studies reviewed are clear that where there were adverse impacts of the pandemic these were exacerbated by pre-existing conditions, vulnerabilities and inequalities in social and economic status.

> Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds faced a number of barriers throughout the pandemic, with inequalities by socio-economic status arising across lockdown and returning to school experiences, mental health and wellbeing, future plans, and exam cancellation experiences. (Anders et al., 2023, p. 638)

The key factors contributing to any negative ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people's mental health and wellbeing

The major contributory factors to negative impacts on young people identified in the studies reviewed are centred on pre-existing conditions and vulnerabilities, inequalities in socio-economic conditions and reduced social contact and interaction: 'the impacts were greatest among those who reported financial hardship, poor housing, worse relationships and isolation, and disruption to routines' (Knowles et al., 2022, p. 1401). In addition, many studies report the gendered effect of the pandemic, with girls being more adversely affected in mental health and wellbeing domains (Anders et al., 2023; Knowles et al., 2022; Montero-Marin et al., 2023). Related to this is the way in which young people manage the difficult emotions generated during periods of restrictions, such as those occasioned by loss of contact with friends and family and worry about the impact of COVID-19 on family members and loved ones.

The importance of routines is identified for young people's mental health and wellbeing and consequently disruptions to these is a contributory factor in poorer outcomes cited in some studies (Ashworth et al., 2022; Molloy-Vickers et al., 2023). Disruption to the structure provided by attending school and the accompanying personal and work routines is identified in this regard, together with the changes in home life and domestic routines occasioned by the lockdown stay-at-home restrictions. A particular factor affecting young people attendant on this disruption is the loss of opportunity to engage with hobbies and recreational activity, particularly outside the home, and the resulting loss of physical, social and mental stimulation and engagement. Some studies that reported improvements to young people's mental health suggest that the obverse of this is the case, with some young people indicating that they developed new hobbies and interests or had more time to engage with existing ones centred in the home (for example reading, watching films, online gaming).

Another aspect of disruption to young people's home routine highlighted is the increased family stress and pressure resulting from accommodating home learning in households with limited physical space and poor access to technology and online connectivity. A further pressure reported for some young people arose where they were expected to provide care for younger siblings to enable parents to work.

The degree of school connectedness felt by young people is identified as both a protective factor against some of the negative wellbeing issues where such connectedness is strong and contributing to negative impacts where such connectedness is felt to be weak. The study by Barker et al. (2023) suggests that school cultures which generate a high degree of trust amongst students and focus on an inclusive view of schooling which emphasise achievement and wellbeing equally, are more likely to generate such connectedness. A characteristic of such cultures and the leadership required to foster them is a high degree of consistency between what is said by teachers and leaders in school and the actions experienced by young people. Where these diverge, school connectedness is unlikely to thrive.

An important contribution to the lack of agency reported as an impact of the pandemic restrictions is the lack of communication and consultation with young people about restrictions and the way in which they operated. As Ashworth et al. (2022, p. 533) suggest

> consulting with young people and ensuring their voices are heard when developing policies for preventing transmission of Covid-19, and eventually, the road map for emerging out of lockdowns and returning to 'normality', is invaluable.

McMellon and MacLachlan (2021, p. 27S) also stress this point:

> Participation in decision making and problem solving are not only intrinsic rights that must be met but also protective factors for young people's mental health and development.

This issue is also manifested in studies which focus on the cancellation of examinations, the arrangements put in place for awarding grades for national assessments at 16 and 18 and the consequent feeling of lost opportunity, wasted time and frustration of individual plans and aspirations. McCaldin et al. (2023) suggest that the primacy of young people as stakeholders in the governance of systems of examination and assessment has not been grasped.

Young people's self-care and coping strategies to counter any negative ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

Where the reviewed studies addressed the question of coping strategies and self-care, two dominant themes are highlighted. Firstly, the importance of peer support, friendships and relationships. Where these had been curtailed or limited, coping strategies entailed developing and strengthening existing relationships, typically with immediate and accessible family members and finding other channels to continue relationships (e.g. social media, online, telephone). Strong family connections and relationships are identified across a number of studies as a crucial coping strategy and protective factor. Together with maintenance of peer networks and support, these are reported as vital in maintaining young people's mental health and

wellbeing (for example: Ashworth et al., 2022; Hu & Qian, 2021; Molloy-Vickers et al., 2023).

> Whilst the provision of support from multiple sources spanning school, family and the wider community was more important for adolescents' mental health during the early days of the pandemic, it was peers who were seemingly more important in promoting positive mental health outcomes in the longer term. (Molloy-Vickers et al., 2023, p.184)

Secondly, the importance of going outside for recreation together with engaging in sport, play, hobbies and creative activity are widely reported as an important coping strategy and protective factor.

Other coping strategies are reported. Deepthi and Exley (2023) suggest that in the light of curtailed opportunities and changes to assessment outcomes and examination results, the ability to change plans and goals about future education, training and career direction, what McCaldin et al. (2023, p. 66) identify as a 'shifted path', is important. Where such a 'shifted path' is taken by young people, mitigation of the impact of restrictions may only be partial as aspirations and goals may be lowered and frustration, anger and disappointment ensue.

> Some students felt they had invested their time and effort and 'spent five years preparing for' 'the whole reason you go to school' and that this had become 'wasted years'. Many students described feeling that this change of path denied them the opportunity to demonstrate their skills or learning. (McCaldin et al., 2023, p. 66)

Where routines are disrupted through school closures and changes to home circumstances, the development of new personal routines covering aspects of daily life such as sleep, mealtimes and exercise are reported as important as a coping and self-care strategy (Ashworth et al., 2022).

For those young people who reported improved mental health during the pandemic, Knowles et al. (2022) suggest that school closure offered protection against harmful experiences (such as bullying) and poor relationships as well as respite from what were perceived as oppressive school cultures.

> . . . that the mental health of some in more marginalised and vulnerable groups improved with the closure of schools suggest that, unintentionally, this afforded some protections against harmful expectations and relationships and, as such, reflects poorly on our current education systems. (Knowles et al., 2022, p. 1401)

Marques and Braidwood (2021) report that cognitive behavioural therapy techniques were a helpful strategy for some young people.

Interventions that appear to contribute to improvements in young people's enduring mental health and wellbeing in the post-pandemic era

The studies reviewed suggest a range of interventions that might contribute to improvements in young people's mental health. These can be categorised into six broad themes. Firstly, the importance of relationships, friendships and peer support, including positive family relationships and staff/student relationships in schools. Interventions that give more time and space for such relationships to be fostered and exercised in school are deemed to have the greatest potential for supporting wellbeing.

Secondly, there is a strong emphasis on the need to provide integrated, adequately resourced and easily accessible support for mental health concerns, which is based in schools. Such support should also develop clear definitions of teachers' roles in the system and ensure proper training and development for those involved. Development of peer support roles for young people as part of such systems is also advocated.

The third aspect concerns the importance of school climate and school culture in creating the conditions to foster and sustain good mental health and wellbeing. Barker et al. (2023) suggest that such cultures would be ones which value and give equal emphasis to academic achievement and wellbeing considerations. As Soneson et al. (2023, p. 1144) put it, stressing both individual school and wider policy responses:

> A dual emphasis at school on both achievement and building interpersonal relationships seems essential. Furthermore, additional flexibility on certain aspects of school structure and expectations might better support CYP's mental health and wellbeing. Importantly, the responsibility to conceptualise and implement any needed changes cannot fall only on individual schools or educators, but instead must be part of a systemic shift including all those working with school-aged CYP and their families.

Closely related to this is a fourth aspect of providing a curriculum which is inclusive and balanced across all domains of learning including academic, physical, artistic, creative, technical, and social. Such a curriculum needs to have a strong focus on encouraging engagement and enjoyment in education.

A fifth area of intervention stresses the need to develop and encourage young peoples' agency, autonomy and involvement in decision-making about education and other aspects of their lives. As Ashworth et al. (2022, p. 534) put it:

> It has previously been argued that education systems are frequently at odds with this need for self-determination in adolescence, with little scope for young people to exercise autonomy … Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic may represent an opportunity to reflect on the structure of our education system and the demands placed on our adolescents, and the extent to which we act as facilitators in their self-exploration. Such reflection should include active discussion with adolescents about what can be learnt and acted on to carry forward the positives of lockdown.

Finally, interventions that aim to improve young peoples' mental health and wellbeing should address issues of inequality, SEND and vulnerability, ensuring those experiencing such conditions are identified in non-stigmatising ways and given access to appropriate resources and support.

> More consideration should be given to how we can better support those who find school challenging and, more boldly, to how the education systems can be restructured to mitigate inequalities. (Knowles et al., 2022, p. 1401)

Discussion and implications for actions

A key finding from this research was that for a significant minority of young people, the adverse impacts on their mental health and wellbeing continue to affect their lives. This knowledge established the need to explore the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic from young people's perspectives and provided the starting point for the current scoping review, with a particular focus on agency and how young people can be brought

to the table as active discussants in the formulation of policy responses to crises impacting on their lives. This means recognising children and young people as agentic and seeking and valuing their perspectives; 'we know that children and young people are the best persons to relate how they feel, how they experience things and what their views are on a range of matters (Coyne & Carter, 2018, p. 5). Arguably children are betwixt child and adult cultures, an idea captured in Corsaro's orb web model, 'children are always participating in and are part of two cultures – children's and adults' -and these cultures are 'intricately interwoven' (2018, p. 26). As 'evolving members' in both cultures Corsaro (2018) argues that

> To capture the complexity of children's evolving membership in these two cultures, we need to examine their collective activities with each other and adults. We also need to consider children part of a social group that has a place in the larger social structure. (p. 26)

In the spirit of the Child of the North report (Pickett et al., 2021) which identified a set of recommendations as the basis for an action plan, it seems apt to distill from our findings some emergent action points. Hence five priorities for action drawn from the findings are now elaborated below. Each priority maps to identified described themes in Table 2. The first priority maps to aspects including the role of dialogue, consultation and engagement of young people in decision-making and policy development and support and development of their agency and autonomy; the second maps to aspects which include worsening mental health not experienced equally and orientating education systems better to mitigate inequalities; the third aligns to school climate/culture aspects including cultures that balance achievement and wellbeing and promote belonging; the fourth maps to aspects concerning support for young people's mental health (including training teachers, in school services and peer support) whilst the fifth relates to aspects which include a balanced focus on achievement, enjoyment and wellbeing in post-pandemic school structures and curriculum and the impacts of performative pressures. Each of these five priorities for action are discussed below.

Firstly, young people's agency and participation in decision-making. We have argued for the positioning of children and young people as agentic beings and for their engagement as contributors to society. The findings of our study highlight the significance of enabling young people's agency in problem-solving to develop responses to issues that affect their lives, affording primacy to communication and consultation with them. Research by Su et al. (2024, p. 17) pointed to the need for opportunities for young people's involvement in planning for future crisis scenarios, noting that

> Whilst the role and value of engaging student voices in decision-making on matters impacting on their lives is generally well acknowledged, this study suggests that denial of opportunities for this in times of crisis, may compound the challenges experienced by young people and reinforce their loss of agency.

As Brown et al. (2020, p. 4) noted, 'Policy is improved when those most affected are involved in the policy development process'. A key point for action arising from this scoping review is to identify ways in which young people can be brought to the table in the formulation of policy responses to crises impacting on their lives, ensuring that their voices are heard and heeded, thus clearly positioning young people as important members of a democratic polity.

The second priority concerns the unevenness of adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic for different groups of young people, exacerbated by pre-existing vulnerabilities and inequalities. We also know that geographically there are uneven impacts. For example, Pickett et al. (2021, p. 8) have drawn attention to particular issues in the north of England, noting, for example, that:

> The mental health of children and adolescents was deteriorating prior to COVID-19, but there was a significant deterioration during the pandemic, particularly in the North of England.

Knowles et al. (2022, p. 1401) suggest the importance of understanding the varying impacts for the development of 'appropriate responses to mitigate these in the most affected groups'. Research by Su et al. (2024), for example, found the continuing adverse effects of the pandemic to be more marked amongst girls than boys. This points to the importance of policy responses targeted at the specific needs of different groups to address such vulnerabilities and inequalities.

Thirdly, relationships and connections appear to be an important aspect. Strong feelings of connectedness to school and positive relationships with peers, family and teachers emerge as a positive factor in terms of wellbeing. School cultures that foster connectedness emerge as being important, where alongside concerns for academic achievement wellbeing is kept in focus and the complementarity of each recognised (Barker et al., 2023). O'Sullivan has suggested that 'evidence increasingly demonstrates that children and young people's sense of belonging plays a decisive role in shaping their social, emotional and mental health outcomes' (O'Sullivan cited in Wood et al., 2024). This points to the value of prioritising resources to enable these connections and relationships to be nurtured and sustained. This links to the next point about the role of schools in supporting young people's mental health.

Fourthly, it is the role of schools within a system of support for young people's mental health. In the Child of the North report, Pickett et al. (2021, p. 8) recognised that:

> There is an urgent need to ensure that schools and services can provide immediate intervention and continued support to children and young people, so that mental health problems do not result in unfortunate consequences, with negative impacts on educational attainment, labour market outcomes, and adult health.

The findings from this study point to a need for greater clarity regarding the roles of teachers in supporting young people's mental health within a system of support. There is a need for joined up services and cross agency working to support children's education and mental health and an extended role for schools in their communities (Longfield, cited in Wood et al., 2024).

Lastly, our study emphasises the importance of a balanced curriculum inclusive of academic, social and creative domains. At a time when an independent review of the national curriculum and assessment system in England is taking place (Department for Education, 2024), the findings from this study contribute some important insights. These include the value of an equal focus on academic achievement and wellbeing in schools, an inclusive, holistic curriculum which balances all learning domains and rethinking the

pressures of current assessment and testing regimes and implications for young people's wellbeing.

The findings from the scoping review and action points we suggest address the relationship between children and young people, schools and society. As Hannah Arendt asserts, the more modern society

> introduces between the private and the public a social sphere in which the private is made public and vice versa, the harder it makes things for children, who by nature require the security of concealment in order to mature undisturbed (2006, p. 185).

Our review highlights some of the adverse consequences of this social sphere for children and young people and points at ways in which schools might both mitigate them and better equip young people to respond. As Arendt points out, schools are 'by no means the world and must not pretend to be; it is rather the institution that we interpose between the private domain of the home and the world in order to make the transition from the family to the world possible at all' (2006, p. 185).

Schools however face a challenging tension which Biesta (2022, p. 19) identifies as that between 'the demand to do what society wants from it and the demand to keep society at a distance'; the tension of being subject to two imperatives. The first of these, which carries the force of the state and asserts a much stronger influence, is the requirement to produce useful outcomes for society in the form of qualification and preparedness of young people to meet society's needs. This imperative is functional and increasingly manifest in the culture of performance, efficiency and effectiveness and caught up in what Biesta terms the 'global educational measurement industry' (2022, p. 1). The second imperative, rooted in what Arendt (2006) asserts as the central aim of all modern education being the welfare of the child, has less influence but understands that intense pressures to perform results in something akin to terror (Ball, 2003). Our review and its findings perhaps indicate that to counter these malign effects of performativity it is necessary to follow Biesta's (2022) advice and seek to rebalance or reset the system of schooling such that concerns about the wellbeing and welfare of young people can achieve equal priority in the demands and expectations we place on schools. We have argued that young people as active agents contribute more widely to resetting society by drawing their perspectives into the formulation of policy responses to crises impacting on their lives and engagement in 'renewing a common world' (Arendt, 2006, p. 193).

Conclusion

This study has explored the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people's mental health and wellbeing in the UK. The study has also explored the key factors contributing to any negative ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people's mental health and wellbeing, and their self-care and coping strategies to counter these impacts. The findings of this study have highlighted the importance of engaging children and young people in the decision-making process. The findings have also helped us to identify specific actions and interventions which could contribute to ongoing improvements in young people's mental health and wellbeing in the post-pandemic era. At the same time, due to the complexity of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people's mental health and wellbeing, there are

unresolved and unexplored issues associated with young people's agency and participation in the decision-making process for matters affecting them, including their involvement in policy responses in times of crisis. Some studies included in this scoping review have considered the impact of COVID-19 restrictions using proxy reports (such as parents and teachers), and focused on mental and/or physical health, but not the longer-term impact on young people's lives from their own perspectives. Future research should consider deepening our understanding of barriers and facilitators to their participation and wellbeing, and factors impeding their agency, life choices and prosperity.

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge that this study was funded by York St John University via its Quality Research (QR) funding. We declare that research ethics approval for this article was granted by York St John University ethics committee (Ref: ETH2324-0391). The authors conducted the research reported in this article in accordance with British Educational Research Association ethical guidelines (2024). We would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers who kindly commented on the original submission of the paper.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Margaret Wood http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5067-1978
Andrew Pennington http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2286-8375
Feng Su http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0317-4033
Alison Laver-Fawcett http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9924-1319
Lynne Gabriel http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8144-090X
Charikleia Sinani http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8942-8780

References

Anders, J., Macmillan, L., Sturgis, P., & Wyness, G. (2023). Inequalities in late adolescents' educational experiences and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Oxford Review of Education*, *49*(5), 620–642. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2022.2124964

Arendt, H. (2006). *Between past and future: Eight exercises in political thought*. Penguin.

Arksey, H., O'Malley, L. (2005). Scoping studies: Towards a methodological framework. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *8*(1), 19–32. https://doi.org/10.1080/1364557032000119616

Ashworth, E., Hunt, A., Chopra, J., Eames, C., Putwain, D. W., Duffy, K., Kirkby, J., McLoughlin, S., & Saini, P. (2022). Adolescents' lockdown-induced coping experiences (ALICE) study: A qualitative exploration of early adolescents' experiences of lockdown and reintegration. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, *42*(4), 514–541. https://doi.org/10.1177/02724316211052088

Ball, S. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy*, *18*(2), 215–228. https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093022000043065

Barker, R., Hartwell, G., Egan, M., & Lock, K. (2023). The importance of school culture in supporting student mental health in secondary schools. Insights from a qualitative study. *British Educational Research Journal*, *49*(3), 499–521. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3853

Biesta, G. (2022). *World centred education: A view for the present*. Routledge.

Blake-Holmes, K., & McGowan, A. (2022). 'It's making his bad days into my bad days': The impact of coronavirus social distancing measures on young carers and young adult carers in the United Kingdom. *Child & Family Social Work*, *27*(1), 22–29. https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12877

Blanta, M., Karathanasi, A., & Tzonichaki, I. (2023). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's occupations. *Hong Kong Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *36*(2), 69–83. https://doi.org/10.1177/15691861231204905

Brown, K., Fitzmaurice, L. M., & Provoost, D. (2020). Engaging children and young people in the policy process: Lessons learned from the development of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. *Policy Quarterly*, *16*(1), 3–9. https://doi.org/10.26686/pq.v16i1.6349

Centre for Mental Health. (2025). *Future minds. Why investing in children's mental health will unlock economic growth*. Retrieved April 29, 2024, from https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/publications/future-minds/

Clarke, A., Sorgenfrei, M., Mulcahy, J., Davie, P., Friedrich, C., & McBride, T. (2021). *Adolescent mental health: A systematic review on the effectiveness of school-based interventions*. Early Intervention Foundation.

Cole, R. (2024). Inter-rater reliability methods in qualitative case study research. *Sociological Methods and Research*, *53*(4), 1944–1975. https://doi.org/10.1177/00491241231156971

Corsaro, W. A. (2018). *The sociology of childhood* (5th ed.). Sage.

Coyne, I., & Carter, B. (Eds.). (2018). *Being participatory: Researching with children and young people. Co-constructing knowledge using creative techniques*. Springer.

Deepthi, D., & Exley, S. (2023). Exploring students' experiences of technical and vocational learning in University Technical Colleges during the pandemic. *British Educational Research Journal*, *49*(3), 575–592. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3857

Department for Education. (2024). *Curriculum and assessment review: Review aims, terms of reference and working principles*. Retrieved October 27, 2024, from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6699698f49b9c0597fdb0010/Curriculum_and_assessment_review_-_aims_terms_of_reference_and_working_principles.pdf

Grant, M. J., & Booth, A. (2009). A typology of reviews: An analysis of 14 review types and associated methodologies. *Health Information and Libraries Journal*, *26*(2), 91–108. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-1842.2009.00848.x

Hamilton, L. G., Kelly, L., & Mesa, S. (2023). "I'm able to function better when I know there's a beginning and an end time": Autistic adolescents' experiences of lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Autism & Developmental Language Impairments*, *8*, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1177/23969415231159552

Hu, Y., & Qian, Y. (2021). COVID-19 and adolescent mental health in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *69*(1), 26–32. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2021.04.005

Illingworth, G., Mansfield, K. L., Espie, C. A., Fazel, M., & Waite, F. (2022). Sleep in the time of COVID-19: Findings from 17000 school-aged children and adolescents in the UK during the first national lockdown. *Sleep Advances*, *3*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1093/sleepadvances/zpab021

Knowles, G., Gayer-Anderson, C., Turner, A., Dorn, L., Lam, J., Davis, S., Blakey, R., Lowis, K., Schools Working Group, Young Persons Advisory Group, Pinfold, V., Creary, N., Dyer, J., Hatch, S. L., Ploubidis, G., Bhui, K., Harding, S., & Morgan, C. (2022). COVID-19, social restrictions, and mental distress among young people: A UK longitudinal, population-based study. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *63*(11), 1392–1404. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.13586

Laurence, J. (2025). Explaining the pathways through which social capital buffered mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, *373*, 403–411. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2024.12.110

Marques, S. S., & Braidwood, R. (2021). Impact of the coronavirus lockdown on older adolescents engaged in a school-based stress management program: Changes in mental health, sleep, social support, and routines. *Children & Schools*, *43*(4), 198–208. https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdab006

McCaldin, T., Woods, K., Brown, K., Buck, R., Fairhall, N., Forshaw, E., & Soares, D. (2023). Student experiences of the 2020 cancellation of England's general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs). *The Psychology of Education Review*, *47*(1), 61–70. https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsper.2023.47.1.61

McCluskey, G., Fry, D., Hamilton, S., King, A., Laurie, M., McAra, L., & Stewart, T. M. (2021). School closures, exam cancellations and isolation: The impact of COVID-19 on young people's mental health. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, *26*(1), 46–59. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2021.1903182

McMellon, C., & MacLachlan, A. (2021). Young people's rights and mental health during a pandemic: An analysis of the impact of emergency legislation in Scotland. *Young*, *29*(4_suppl), S11–S34. https://doi.org/10.1177/11033088211032783

Mind. (2024). *The big mental health report*. Retrieved April 29, 2024, from. https://www.mind.org.uk/about-us/our-policy-work/reports-and-guides/the-big-mental-health-report-2024/

Molloy-Vickers, D., Chopra, J., Saini, P., & Ashworth, E. (2023). Long-term factors associated with positive mental health outcomes for early adolescents during COVID-19-related school closures. *Psychology in the Schools*, *61*(1), 173–189. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.23048

Montero-Marin, J., Hinze, V., Mansfield, K., Slaghekke, Y., Blakemore, S. J., Byford, S., Dalgleish, T., Greenberg, M. T., Viner, R. M., Ukoumunne, O. C., Ford, T., Kuyken, W., & MYRIAD Team. (2023). Young people's mental health changes, risk, and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of the American Medical Association Network Open*, *6*(9), e2335016.

Newlands, F., Goddings, A., Juste, M., Boyd, H., Nugawela, M. D., Pinto Pereira, S. M., Whelan, E., Whittaker, E., Stephenson, T., Heyman, I., Chalder, T., Dalrymple, E., Segal, T., & Shafran, R. (2023). Children and young people with long COVID-comparing those seen in post-COVID services with a non-hospitalised national cohort: A descriptive study. *Children*, *10*(11), 1750. https://doi.org/10.3390/children10111750

Page, M. J., Moher, D., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J. M., Akl, E. A., Brennan, S. E., Chou, R., Glanville, J., Grimshaw, J. M., Hróbjartsson, A., Lalu, M. M., Li, T., Loder, E. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., McDonald S. . . . Whiting, P. (2021). Prisma 2020 explanation and elaboration: Updated guidance and exemplars for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, *372*, n160. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n160

Palmer, M., Chandler, S., Carter Leno, V., Mgaieth, F., Yorke, I., Hollocks, M., Pickles, A., Slonims, V., Scott, S., Charman, T., & Simonoff, E. (2023). Factors associated with mental health symptoms among UK autistic children and young people and their parents during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Autism*, *27*(7), 2098–2111. https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613231153694

Pickett, K., Taylor-Robinson, D., Alexiou, A., Alrouh, B., Atkins, R., Ayadurai, C., Bambra, C., Barber, S., Bhopal, S., Bingham, D., Bird, P., Bond, C., Bradshaw, J., Bridges, S., Broadhurst, K., Bryant, M., Creswell, C., Daly-Smith, A., Demkowicz, O., … Wickham, S. (2021). *The child of the North: Building a fairer future after COVID-19*. Northern Health Science Alliance and N8 Research Partnership. https://www.n8research.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Child-of-the-North-Report-compressed.pdf

School and Sports Activity Action Plan Update. (2023). *Department for Education working with Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Department for Health and Social Care. School sport and activity action plan (publishing.service.gov.uk)*. Retrieved December 8, 2023

Singh, A., Shah, N., Mbeledogu, C., & Garstang, J. (2021). Child wellbeing in the United Kingdom following the COVID-19 lockdowns. *Paediatrics and Child Health*, *31*(12), 445–448. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paed.2021.09.004

Soneson, E., Puntis, S., Chapman, N., Mansfield, K. L., Jones, P. B., & Fazel, M. (2023). Happier during lockdown: A descriptive analysis of self-reported wellbeing in 17,000 UK school students during COVID-19 lockdown. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, *32*(6), 1131–1146. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-021-01934-z

Stewart, T. M., Fry, D., Wilson, J., McAra, L., Hamilton, S., King, A., Laurie, M., & McCluskey, G. (2022). Adolescent mental health priorities during the COVID-19 pandemic. *School Mental Health*, *15*(1), 247–259. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-022-09547-w

Stiebahl, S., & Lally, C. (2024). *Mental health support for young people in schools*. *Uk parliament*. https://doi.org/10.58248/HS83

Su, F., Wood, M., & Pennington, A. (2024). "The new normal isn't normal": To what extent has the COVID-19 pandemic affected secondary school children's mental health and wellbeing in the north of England? *Educational Review*, 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2024.2371836

Thomas, D. R. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, *27*(2), 237–246. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214005283748

Thomas, J., & Harden, A. (2008). Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, *8*(1), 45. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-8-45

UNICEF. (2022). *From learning recovery to education transformation. Insights and reflections from the 4th survey on national education responses to COVID-19 school closures*. https://www.unicef.org/media/127286/file/From%20Learning%20Recovery%20to%20Education%20Tra nsformation.pdf

Walters, T., Simkiss, N. J., Snowden, R. J., & Gray, N. S. (2022). Secondary school students' perception of the online teaching experience during COVID-19: The impact on mental wellbeing and specific learning difficulties. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *92*(3), 843–860. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12475

Wood, M., Su, F., & Pennington, A. (2024). *COVID-19 pandemic and the mental health and wellbeing of secondary school children*. *European educational research association*. Retrieved October 27, 2024, from https://blog.eera-ecer.de/author/dr-wood-dr-su/