



**LONDON
SPORT**

**The Impacts of Covid-19 on Mental Health:
A Review of Recent Publications**

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MAYOR OF LONDON



Contents

- [Page 3: Main Takeaways](#)
- [Page 4: Children and Young People](#)
- [Page 5: Young Carers & Young Girls and Women](#)
- [Page 6: Long Term Health Conditions, Workforce and Disability](#)
- [Page 7: What is required of the sport sector?](#)

Introduction

- Reports and publications released in the last 3 months have covered a range of topics relating to Covid-19 and its devastating impact on individuals and organisations both within and outside the sport sector.
- Presented here is a brief but important collection of quotes (gathered from relevant reports over the previous 3 months) pertaining specifically to the effects of Covid-19 on the mental health and wellbeing of different groups.
- The presentation concludes with recommendations from the sport sector regarding the appropriate response to these issues.
- As society, and the sports sector in particular, transitions into a new normal, it is important to bear in mind the long-term effects that this period will have.
- **Links to all Covid-19 specific reports can be found [here](#) in the London Sport Insight Portal**

Main Takeaways:

- Organisations must continue to prioritise the value of **routine and stability**. Structure is crucial to recovery.
- Where possible, we must seek to reinvigorate **feelings of belonging** and togetherness through the reintroduction of community activities.
- It is crucial that the **mental health of the workforce** is supported, in addition to others who are indirectly affected by Covid-19 (for example, carers of high-risk individuals). More mental health training is needed in the workforce to deal with the effects of anxiety and loneliness.
- Organisations and individuals cannot begin to rebuild supportive and stable networks if solutions are only temporary. **Long term strategies are required to ensure mental health support receives the appropriate attention and resources**, as opposed to short term (often easier) solutions.

How can we ensure the decisions we make as an organisation (and as individuals) are inclusive and supportive of those who have experienced mental health challenges during Covid-19?

Children & Young People

- "Young people miss having **structure** in their lives and organisations are not set up to respond to the increased demand" ([Sport for Development Coalition p.2](#))
- "LTOs report that in some cases, where young people's parents are frontline workers, their mental health is deteriorating quickly because they are terrified that their parents are going to die or bring illness home. Young people often **didn't want to articulate those fears to their own parents who, 'already have enough to worry about'**, but they express it to the trusted adults at the LTO" ([StreetGames p.5](#))
- "Of those who had not been accessing support immediately before the crisis, **40% said that they had not looked for support but were struggling with their mental health**" ([YoungMinds p.7](#))
- "A recent rapid evidence review indicates that loneliness as a result of COVID could **precipitate long term mental health problems** in young people and that strategies to prevent these should be an international priority" ([Youth Sport Trust p.2](#))
- "**Younger Londoners were more likely to report a high GHQ12 score**, indicative of poorer mental health: 46 per cent of Londoners aged 16-29 in May 2020, compared to 31 per cent of Londoners aged 30-49 and 23 per cent of Londoners aged 50+" ([City Intelligence p.16](#))

Young Carers

- "1.5million children in England live with a parent who has a severe mental health problem and there are an estimated 102,000 young carers in England, many of which will now be shouldering significant additional responsibilities without the previous respite that school gave them" ([Youth Sport Trust p.1](#))

Young Girls and Women

- "For older women, exercise has provided both structure and mental health benefits in the form of stress relief for them...Whilst relevant to all, these benefits have been particularly important for women during lockdown, as we have seen anxiety levels increase, especially amongst mothers." ([Women in Sport p.4](#))
- "Overall, a quarter of girls aged 11 to 14 (24%) and half of girls aged 15 to 18 (51%) report that coronavirus / lockdown has had a negative impact on their mental health." ([GirlGuiding p.3](#))
- "Female Londoners were more likely than male Londoners to report a GHQ-12 score of 4 or more in May 2020, indicative of poorer mental health (36 per cent of females, 24 per cent of males)" ([City Intelligence p.16](#))

Long Term Health Conditions

- "Worry about COVID-19 is now one of the most frequently cited barriers to physical activity for people with LTHCs, alongside the top condition-related issues. Levels of stress, anxiety, and fear are heightened amongst people with LTHCs" ([WeAreUndefeatable p.8](#))

Workforce

- "The people that directly and primarily give support to young people are also showing signs of anxiety. In the initial weeks of lockdown, Sported's group leader's average anxiety score was 5.5 out of 10, almost double the national average" ([Sport for Development Coalition p.2](#))

Disability

- "94% of families said the health and wellbeing of their disabled children had been negatively affected by COVID-19" ([Access Sport p.8](#))



What is required of the sport sector?

- "Training and support for staff and volunteers. New skills are needed to respond to the new crisis – such as MHFA and strategies to encourage families to leave their house and trust exercising in public space." ([Street Games p.8](#))
- "In addressing the current challenges there needs to be a greater emphasis on safety, routine building, mental health, and community care" ([WeAreUndefeatable p.8](#))
- "Several LTOs raised concerns that financial support is being focused almost exclusively on projects to assist with the Covid 19 crisis in the short term, with funders less willing to discuss support for the medium to long-term. This makes it difficult for organisations to prepare for the future even where they are currently getting funding for Coronavirus related activity" ([Street Games p.7](#))
- "Communities are noticing place more, and there's a greater need for hyper-local working to find solutions to issues such as mental health and active travel" ([Local Voices p.13](#))
- Make sure everyone is aware of any new guidance or legislation that affects them. Include risks to staff in your risk assessment, especially risks to those who may be more vulnerable. Remember to factor in not only physical safety, but also mental health and wellbeing of staff and volunteers" ([Mayor of London p.8](#))

