Summary of NSPA discussion of children and young people, 29th May 2020

We began with a consideration of what impact lockdown had and is having on children and young people: (this list includes issues identified in the previous discussion on 15th May, which were shared in the meeting to prevent duplication – full notes of 15th May discussion on p.4 below):

- There have been some deaths by suicide in some areas – cluster protocols in place where needed, multi-agency groups meeting to discuss any similarities and learn
- Reductions in referrals, reductions in those accessing universal services
- Children and young people at home may not have a safe, private space from which to call, or time by themselves to call
- Loneliness and isolation
- Anxiety – about Covid-19, exams, uncertainty about university or move to work
- Increased risk of bereavement (see below)
- Increased use of negative coping strategies, including self-harm, drug and alcohol
- Gaming addictions
- Family conflict that has been heightened by lockdown, especially as there are no easy ways to release the pressure – usual coping mechanisms are not available
- Children and young people experiencing it or witnessing increases in domestic abuse
- There are some young people for whom lockdown has been protective, particularly those who experienced bullying at school

Challenges	Ideas and projects from participants
Reaching children and young people - Some young people under the care of CAMHS have been told that as they are not in crisis they will not be supported due to Covid-19, which may make them think other services aren't available to them either, or that their struggles aren't important right now - Many services have found that children and young people have not wanted video calls, with many saying they don't want to have to see themselves on the call, but that also means you can't physically see how they are looking. Some therefore don't want any support, where others are happy to chat with their video off.	- Many services are using social media to reach children and young people, parents and teachers with guidance and reassurance - PAPYRUS' helpline is available for all children and young people or for concerned adults (more here) - Where services have found young people disconnecting from services or not wanting video calls, they have moved to supporting parents to support their children - An online creative mindfulness group using art has been popular with adults and young people

• Schools are not wanting people to come into schools to deliver mental health and self-harm and suicide prevention talks at present • Reaching young people may be particularly tricky if services are not asking young people what support they want, how they would like to receive it, and how it could be improved	• A trial project for 11-18 year olds who attend A&E following self-harm: they get a psychosocial assessment, with an immediate assessment of their risk, and are referred to a local service for 8 sessions of counselling and support • During the development of a toolkit on self-harm for schools, one local service that worked with small groups of young people provided the most useful feedback, because they asked the young people to read it and held group discussions to share their thoughts. That worked because they already had a good relationship with those young people • Joint hashtags can create more impact, such as the ones for Mental Health Awareness Week or World Suicide Prevention Day, so might be useful for charities to share information on their services with a shared hashtag 'we're still here'
Reaching those not online • Concern that some young people don't have a smartphone or computer or can't afford data, and so are unable to access online support and are being missed, and may be particularly at risk • Some services are being told by commissioners not to do face to face support	• Fundraising for smartphones and data to give to children and young people without the technology, so that they don't need to worry about the cost of accessing services and support • Sharing information through community hubs with a phone number children and young people can call • Doing 'Street walks' - where local children and young people's workers walk around local areas to get a sense of the area, exploring green spaces where they might meet young people and checking in with them safely, remind them that services are still there for them and still want to support them • Trialling 'walking support' to both maintain a safe distance and offer in-person support

	• Using parks to find a private space in public to provide face to face support
Teachers and school staff struggling • Aware of increased risk of exposure to Covid-19 that might affect themselves, their students and their families • Increased anxiety and uncertainty about the risks, and lack of guidance to mitigate against them • Keen to support vulnerable children and young people and ensure their social and emotional needs are met • Having to put a brave face on for their working day, but may be struggling underneath • Head teachers are seeking support and guidance from local government and other bodies	• Samaritans self-help app is available to anyone (selfhelp.samaritans.org) and could help children and young people as well as school staff • Teachers who have been furloughed have been able to attend online training, and there has been good uptake of offers around social and emotional support, with anticipation of increases in demand for training on self-harm and suicide prevention • A guide for education settings about supporting children and young people with their mental health and wellbeing, that also includes staff wellbeing, and is supported by the NHS and DfE, is here • A charity is working to introduce 'compassion circles' into schools, inspired by Native American traditions, they are spaces that can help young people be heard, and help teachers understand what is happening for young people
Bereavement • Children and young people are more likely to be bereaved at the moment, whether by a family member or possibly a friend • Families are more likely to be bereaved, and dealing with their grief in the lockdown may have been more difficult	• Winston's Wish have a range of online resources for schools here • Child Bereavement UK have resources on helping children and young people who are grieving (here) and for schools (here) • Cruse provide phone support to over-14s, and support the parents of those under 14. They have resources for children and young people (here), for parents and carers (here) as well as for schools (here)

Summary of NSPA discussion of children and young people, 15th May 2020

Impact of lockdown on young people, as reported by participants:

- There have been some deaths by suicide in some areas – cluster protocols in place where needed, multi-agency groups meeting to discuss any similarities and learn
- Reductions in referrals, reductions in those accessing universal services
- Children and young people at home may not have a safe, private space from which to call, or time by themselves to call
- Loneliness and isolation
- Anxiety – about Covid-19, exams, uncertainty about university or move to work
- Increased risk of bereavement (see below)
- Family conflict that has been heightened by lockdown, especially as there are no easy ways to release the pressure – usual coping mechanisms are not available
- Children and young people experiencing it or witnessing increases in domestic abuse
- What impact will end of lockdown have? What feelings will young people be experiencing about the return to school?
- There are some young people for whom lockdown has been protective, particularly those who experienced bullying at school

Challenges	Ideas and practice from different local areas
Effectively reaching young people: - How to reach young people who are not in school or in contact with services, but might be at increased risk? - Children and young people may not be able to ask for or access help directly - How to reach families when schools have often been the key point of referral but not seeing most students now - Practical issues of poor connectivity and digital access in some parts of the country, which means some children and young people	- Planning a communications campaign aimed at parents and young people, saying that services are available and where they can get support - Mapping out what we have across our community and what a range of services are offering; planning a mental health campaign for young people, primarily delivered via social media and a community hub with links to the identified services and resources - Some services are being more present on social media, and have seen more engagement there

cannot access lots of the support now being offered online, or find out about support if it is shared on social media etc	• One service has engaged long-term service users to develop content and get involved with their social media and advocacy work • Some services are supporting parents to support their children, through virtual groups and 1:1 sessions
Providing effective support: • How to conduct effective risk assessments over the phone or via text, especially in under-10s – how to safeguard them? • How to effectively safeguard children and young people without the usual structures and systems in place? • How to support and influence people from a distance? • How support children and young people at risk of self-harm and not able to access their usual support services? • How to support healthcare staff to support young people? • Some services are continuing to do weekly doorstep welfare checks, but a conversation held over their front lawn is not conducive to openness and honesty about how they feel and how they are coping	• Many areas are using online support systems including Kooth, The Big White Wall and Shout • CAMHS services have implemented their business continuity plan and moved support online and over the phone. Young people more at risk or with higher needs are getting more support, including staff still doing face to face support for very high risk young people. • Support lines have been introduced for young people and for families • One charity is delivering online support groups, online resilience workshops, virtual peer mentoring - Kidscape • One organisation has a high level of autistic boys who access their service, and they have found that virtual delivery of support groups is working very well for them as the boys feel more in control and can take time out if they need it. • Learnt lots about reaching isolated people during this time – keen to keep offering things that have worked well when 'normality' returns • Keen to source training and ideas regarding 'loss', not simply 'bereavement', as the losses will be wider at present.
Schools • Schools are under a huge amount of pressure, and even more now with planning an end to lockdown – keen to continue to provide support to them	• Many schools are being very pro-active – if a student had counselling before they are still receiving that now, pastoral staff are checking in regularly with young people • Mental Health First Aiders trained in schools, and they are keeping in touch with the most vulnerable students

• Sharing information with schools, but they are getting lots of information at present – can they pass it all on? • As schools and universities plan to re-open it's vital they prioritise the well-being and mental health of students, not simply academic achievement	• Working with schools to identify how they want information – most commonly they want a link they can put on their website to which they can signpost parents who contact them to resources for our borough. Parents often contact schools for advice in the first instance • Pro-actively sending information and links to schools, conducting webinars, offering Qwell (online counselling and support for education staff to support their well-being and resilience) • Support lines developed for schools and families wanting advice • PAPYRUS have a guide for schools around suicide prevention, intervention and postvention (downloadable here)
Bereavement support • Can be difficult to identify children who have been bereaved during lockdown, so may not get support promptly • Schools will need to provide bereavement support and information • How to safely and ethically disseminate information around a death by suicide, or the risk factors for suicide and/or impacts of bereavement by suicide, especially if the information goes via parents which may increase their own anxiety? • Hard to monitor the response of young people to news of a death by suicide among the student body, when it would usually be communicated in person with support available. Now, having to take a leap of faith, communicating as openly as possible, letting parents know, sharing knowledge, advice and support, and hoping it is enough	• Providing webinars to schools to help them prepare for when students return to school, many of whom will have been bereaved • One charity ran a virtual young people's group, and developed a Lockdown first aid kit, including thinking about how to build and maintain connection, and the positive impacts of being at home. • Lots of members of the National Bereavement Alliance are providing training and education for schools and teachers • Could use online systems for personal support to students if necessary • Samaritans continues to provide its postvention service for schools and other young people's settings: https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/step-step/