



## Children and Young People organisations forum summary

**Date:** Tuesday 29 August, 11.00 - 12.00

**Attendees:** Save the Children UK, Children's Rights Alliance England / Just for Kids Law, Long Covid Kids, Children's Commissioner for England, Children in Scotland, Coram, NSPCC, Us For Them, The Children's Society, Children in Wales, National Children's Bureau, Barnardo's, Alliance for Youth Justice, YoungMinds

### Background

The purpose of this meeting was to share as much information as the Inquiry was able to at this stage about how it plans to research the impact of the pandemic on children and young people.

### Executive Summary

- The Inquiry will be listening to the experiences of CYP via a bespoke research project
- Safeguarding is a primary consideration and will be at the heart of our approach
- Responses from potential research suppliers to a 'request for information' were received a few weeks ago and we plan to launch the full procurement soon
- Further information about progress with procuring a research project will be provided by the end of September
- Timings for the future investigation into the impact of the pandemic on CYP will be announced in early 2024 via the [Inquiry newsletter](#)
- Consideration will be given to issues relevant to each of the devolved nations, besides adjustments such as Welsh language provision
- Support offers and adjustments for specific demographics, e.g. CYP living with Long Covid will be factored into the design of the research project and more details will be provided when we are able to share
- Future CYP forums will take place quarterly - Inquiry team to share calendar dates

### Notes

- The Chair of the Inquiry, Baroness Hallett, is committed to investigating the impact of the pandemic on children and young people, as per the [Inquiry's Terms of Reference](#)
- This needs to be done in a way that is safe and minimises risk of harm to the children and young people involved
- The option of widening participation in [Every Story Matters \(ESM\)](#) to children via the webform was considered, but decided against. The reasons are:
  - The existing safeguarding and support offer is insufficient for the needs of CYPs and it would not be possible to include within the scope of ESM (in line with approach taken by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse's Truth Project)
  - A trauma-informed approach applies across Inquiry's work and will be implemented in work with CYPs



- The Inquiry strongly believes that CYP are better served by a bespoke research project that is designed with these considerations in mind
- The approach is being developed in collaboration with experts in CYP research, including with some of the organisations represented at the forum
- Key research principles include:
  - The need to ensure that vulnerable voices are heard
  - Safeguarding needs to be at the heart of our approach
  - Incorporate a range of participant ages
  - Do not replicate existing research
  - Structure by themes such as mental health
- The Inquiry will therefore be informed by existing research on impact. So far we have found 41 studies that featured direct research with CYPs during the pandemic and would welcome feedback as to whether there is other research we should be aware of (further details to be shared with attendees)
- Our research will fill the gap as there is little evidence providing a comprehensive and in-depth account of impact in children's own voices, taking into account a variety of CYP demographics
- Approach will include a qualitative research project that allows us to hear about diversity of experience, in-depth and in CYP's own voices
- Once we've assessed the existing evidence gaps, this will be followed by potential primary quantitative research / analysis
- Hoping to procure qualitative research project soon and will share further details when able
- The existing ESM engagement approach has provision for capturing the experiences of those who are now adults but were children in 2020, ie 18-25 year olds via targeted social media and outdoor advertising as well as upcoming partnerships with media brands and influencers
- Community events for this age group will also be part of our approach - if organisations present have an event that might be appropriate for the Inquiry to attend please let us know
- 18-25 year olds will further be included in the bespoke research project for CYPs
- The experiences of babies and infants will also be key and the Inquiry is seeking input from those who can shed light on this. Will also be hearing from midwives and working with partner organisations who work with parents (e.g. Mumsnet) to gather this evidence
- Decisions on the analytical approach will be made once a research partner is on board and when a definitive list of outcomes for review has been decided in collaboration with module teams and external organisations. Where new analysis can provide insights for the module team then we will consider undertaking this

## **Q&A**

**Q:** *How will you ensure that all children that want to contribute can? The adult version is open to all so the same situation should be available for children.*



**A:** We won't be able to provide a universal offering for every child to tell their story. The ESM model won't work for children and we have to find a different way to engage with them.

Opening Every Story Matters to under 18s would likely engage a diverse group of children and young people and we must ensure this engagement prioritises their safety and works to prevent re-traumatisation.

The Inquiry will be making use of existing research to inform the Inquiry's findings and recommendations.

Bespoke approach will identify gaps in evidence and ensure we hear from a cohort of children that is large enough to capture a varied range of experiences, while also being manageable enough for us to capture insights in significant detail.

**Q:** *How are you ensuring that you are not missing out on collating stories from those who are now adults but were CYP in 2020? They will be in the adult engagement now but their stories relate to their experience as children. Also how are you taking the stories of those at university?*

**A:** We recognise that we need to take a more tailored approach to how we reach 18-25 year olds. There are a number of ways that we are ensuring that we hear from 18-25 year olds:

- This age group will be included within the bespoke research and use of existing evidence - it won't just be for U18s
- The Every Story Matters campaign was designed to reach a broad range of the UK population, and particularly focuses on key audiences, including people aged 18 to 25. We have done this through targeted social media and outdoor advertising as well as upcoming partnerships with media brands and influencers.
- Work with partners to encourage participation e.g. Mind's Youth Voice Network, Long Covid Kids, looking to speak to student bodies and others who can help encourage participation via our partner toolkit: <https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/partner-toolkit/>
- The webform is open to those over the age of 18, and we will be able to analyse experiences from those who were children at the time of the pandemic but who are now adults. Over time, more people will fall into this category. The first webform 'tell us about your experience page' makes clear that we want to hear about experiences in education, school, university, at home, about children
- We plan to have specific targeted community events for different groups of 18-25 year olds to come and speak to us about what happened to them, in places where they already are and already feel comfortable and supported. We want to work with organisations on these events e.g. TUC congress, NI BFFJ conference, so please let us know if you have an event with 18-25 year olds that might be appropriate for us to attend.

**Q:** *When will the Education, Children and Young people module be? If it is not until 2025/26 then all children who were at senior school will have left. Time is absolutely of the essence for these children.*

**A:** The timings for the module investigating Education, Children and Young People will be



announced in early 2024 via the [Inquiry newsletter](#), at which point further information about the module will be published on the '[Structure of the Inquiry](#)' page of our website.

**Q:** *Could you tell us more about the timeframe and plan for what's happening next at the Inquiry with regards to CYP? More specifically could you let us know whether the procurement for the bespoke research project has started and what stage it is at?*

**A:** We will be announcing the next 12 months of module investigations in early 2024. The best way to keep up to date this and similar news is by signing up to our [newsletter](#).

The Inquiry will work with a specialist research partner to collect first hand experiences from children and young people and focus on those most affected by the pandemic. We received responses to a 'request for information' from potential suppliers a few weeks ago and we plan to launch the full procurement soon. We will provide an update by the end of September.

**Q:** *Given the breadth of the approach, and the diverse groups of CYP you're aiming to speak to, are you expecting to commission one organisation to deliver all aspects of your approach or multiple organisations?*

**A:** At this stage of the procurement we don't have the answer to this question and as with all Inquiry procurement we don't have an ideal partner or partners in mind. We will follow a fair and open process to evaluate each bid against our criteria.

**Q:** *Within the review of existing evidence, will you be doing a meta-analysis of preexisting data?*

**A:** The analytical techniques will be appropriate to the evidence which we wish to gather and review. We do not yet have a definitive list of outcomes for review and these will be drawn up by module teams who may request feedback from stakeholders.

We recognise that the evidence-base for the impacts of Covid on all aspects of society is considerable and a commissioned review may not be required for all outcomes as existing reviews may meet the Inquiry's needs.

Furthermore, while there is already an abundance of research evidence, there is far more data that has yet to be analysed and exploited. If new analysis can provide insights for the module team then we will consider undertaking this.

**Q:** *What specific accommodations will be in place to ensure that children with Long Covid can share their experiences with ESM?*

**A:** The bespoke research project with children and young people is separate to Every Story Matters. While we are not able to provide specific details on accommodations that will be in place at this stage we can reassure you that Covid safety and adjustments for clinically



vulnerable groups are at the heart of everything the Inquiry does and our research with children and young people will be no exception. We will be able to share more detail on specific accommodations when we have a research partner in place.

**Q:** *Pandemic survey saturation/ fatigue is an issue in the LC community, has the effect of this been considered when developing research surveys?*

**A:** In designing our approach we have considered challenges in obtaining good response rates from different groups. We will ensure the research is engaging and accessible for participants, and offers something different to previous research.

**Q:** *Young people often find it difficult to talk in front of their peers, especially people they don't know. How will ESM ensure CYP feel safe and comfortable to share their experience and what support will be in place for CYP who share their experience if they need it?*

**A:** These very important considerations are exactly why we are taking the approach of a bespoke research project rather than opening ESM to children and young people. This is why we have determined that we require the input of a CYP specialist who can help us to ensure that our approach meets the support and safeguarding needs of a diverse range of children and young people and we look forward to sharing more detail on this when we have a research partner in place.

**Q:** *How will CYP know that the experience they share will have an impact on ESM?*

**A:** As with Every Story Matters, the findings of the bespoke research project will directly inform the findings and recommendations made by the Inquiry. As per the [Terms of Reference](#), one of the aims of the Inquiry is to investigate the impact of the pandemic on children and young people, including health, wellbeing and social care. The research project is being designed specifically to fulfil this aim. Any research partner will be asked to look into how we close the feedback loop with children and young people that have participated, so that they understand how their experiences have been fed into the Inquiry.

The reports from the CYP research project, like ESM reports, will be fed into the legal proceedings as evidence.

**Q:** *Can the Inquiry give further details of how it will ensure that it will engage with a wide range of children from different backgrounds and experiences during the pandemic including in different settings including children in residential children's homes or in prison? Can the Inquiry confirm that it will also draw on existing research carried out with children during the pandemic or to date?*

**A:** We can confirm that our approach will draw on existing research carried out with children, much of which we know has been conducted by many of the organisations on this call.

Regarding the wider research approach: we will share more details on this soon. The Inquiry will work with a specialist research partner to collect first hand experiences from children and young people and focus on those most affected by the pandemic. We will be tendering for



this contract soon and will be able to share more information on our plans as part of that.

The design and development of our approach has taken into account the points raised so far, in particular including some focus on vulnerable and other hard to reach groups of children and young people and a robust safeguarding and support offer.

**Q:** *I'd like to discuss the role of the Inquiry with regard to children in devolved nations (specifically Wales), whether Welsh language consultation will be available, and to offer an opportunity for the Inquiry to talk directly to young people in Wales.*

**A:** We are a UK-wide Inquiry and as such are committed to ensuring that all activity in Wales is bilingual. The Inquiry is committed to working with organisations in each of the devolved nations to ensure that we are listening to the experiences of children and young people in each nation of the UK while also being cognisant of local factors that might impact the response we receive and the willingness / ability of audiences to communicate with us. While we are unable to provide specific details of the adjustments that the CYP research project will include for Wales, the approach we have taken for [Every Story Matters](#) serves as a useful guide. Besides ESM itself being available in multiple languages (including Welsh), we will be holding community events across the UK (including each devolved nation) to promote ESM, with information and listening opportunities provided in multiple formats, including in Welsh. We will also be offering the opportunity for participants to share their experience over the phone in Welsh via our language line, which will be launching later this year.

**Q:** *Babies' and infants' experiences are often forgotten or neglected. Although this group can't be spoken to directly, their parents / carers can be. Will anything be done to hear from this group?*

**A:** Inquiry fully agrees this group is important and are actively looking to hear from those who can shed light on the experiences of babies and infants. We will be hearing from midwives and will also be working with partner organisations who work with parents (e.g. Mumsnet) to gather this evidence.

**Q:** *Would it be possible to have more regular meetings such as this?*

Yes. The Inquiry is keen to maintain regular contact with the sector and will be holding quarterly meetings going forward.