COVID-19 recovery

10th December 2021

**Title:** Lockdown on Loneliness: Creating connection for people with a learning disability

Hft | 3rd December 2021

According to this report, experiences of loneliness were not limited to Covid lockdown for people with learning disabilities. Over a third (36 per cent) of people with a learning disability surveyed after lockdown said they felt lonely nearly always or all the time, while one in three people (37 per cent) also said that they hardly ever or never go out to socialise – suggesting that their experiences of loneliness were not a consequence of restrictions introduced due to the pandemic.

The report highlights unmet support needs as a key driver of loneliness which prevents many people with a learning disability from taking opportunities to socialise.

Full report: [Lockdown on Loneliness: Creating connection for people with a learning disability](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GSr_D_oxwGqo9-yOL_gvQukakj5wPz5V/view)

Press release: [Loneliness for adults with learning disabilities not limited to lockdown according to new research](https://www.hft.org.uk/blog/loneliness-and-isolation-among-adults-with-learning-disabilities-2/)

**Title:** Community mental health survey 2021

Care Quality Commission | 3rd December 2021

People were eligible to take part in the survey if they had at least one contact with services between September and November 2020, with another contact either before, during or after this period. In addition, some questions ask participants to reflect on their care over the last 12 months. Therefore, results of this survey reflect experiences of care throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

The report shows that people are consistently reporting poor experiences of NHS community mental health services, with few positive results. Many people reported that their mental health had deteriorated as a result of changes made to their care and treatment due to the pandemic.

Full detail: [Community mental health survey 2021](https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/surveys/community-mental-health-survey-2021)

**Title:** What has happened to non-COVID mortality during the pandemic?

The Health Foundation | 6th December 2021

In England, deaths from causes other than COVID-19 have been lower than usual for 80% of the pandemic. In January to September 2021, this was equivalent to about 34,000 (or 9%) fewer deaths than we would expect, based on historical mortality patterns. This analysis explores some of the questions arising from this reduction.

Full detail: [What has happened to non-COVID mortality during the pandemic?](https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/what-has-happened-to-non-covid-mortality-during-the-pandemic)

**Title:** BNT162b2 Vaccine Booster and Mortality Due to Covid-19

New England Journal of Medicine | 8th December 2021

The emergence of the B.1.617.2 (delta) variant of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 and the reduced effectiveness over time of the BNT162b2 vaccine (Pfizer–BioNTech) led to a resurgence of coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) cases in populations that had been vaccinated early. On July 30, 2021, the Israeli Ministry of Health approved the use of a third dose of BNT162b2 (booster) to cope with this resurgence. Evidence regarding the effectiveness of the booster in lowering mortality due to Covid-19 is still needed.

This study concludes that participants who received a booster at least 5 months after a second dose of BNT162b2 had 90% lower mortality due to Covid-19 than participants who did not receive a booster.

Full paper: [BNT162b2 vaccine booster and mortality due to Covid-19](https://www.nejm.org/doi/pdf/10.1056/NEJMoa2115624?articleTools=true)

**Title:** Protection against Covid-19 by BNT162b2 Booster across Age Groups

New England Journal of Medicine | 8th December 2021

After promising initial results from the administration of a third (booster) dose of the BNT162b2 messenger RNA vaccine (Pfizer–BioNTech) to persons 60 years of age or older, the booster campaign in Israel was gradually expanded to persons in younger age groups who had received a second dose at least 5 months earlier.

Across the age groups studied, rates of confirmed Covid-19 and severe illness were substantially lower among participants who received a booster dose of the BNT162b2 vaccine than among those who did not.

Full paper: [Protection against Covid-19 by BNT162b2 booster across age groups](https://www.nejm.org/doi/pdf/10.1056/NEJMoa2115926?articleTools=true)

**Title:** Booster bookings surge as National Booking Service expands to over 40s three months on from second dose

NHS England | 9th December 2021

More than 410,000 people snapped up booster appointments yesterday (Wednesday 8 December) after the National Booking Service (NBS) opened to those age 40 and over to book their top-up after the updated three-month interval. Almost half a million jabs were booked through the NBS in total, including 20,559 first doses and 39,623 second doses as people continue to take up the NHS’ evergreen offer.

Full detail: [Booster bookings surge as National Booking Service expands to over 40s three months on from second dose](https://www.england.nhs.uk/2021/12/booster-bookings-surge-as-national-booking-service-expands-to-over-40s-three-months-on-from-second-dose/)

See also: [People 40 and over to get their lifesaving booster jab three months on from second dose](https://www.england.nhs.uk/2021/12/people-40-and-over-to-get-their-lifesaving-booster-jab-three-months-on-from-second-dose/) | NHS England

**Title:** Prime Minister confirms move to Plan B in England

Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street | 8th December 2021

The Prime Minister has confirmed that England will move to Plan B following the rapid spread of the Omicron variant in the UK, with early analysis suggesting cases could be doubling at a rate of as little as 2.5 to 3 days.

From Friday 10 December, face coverings will become compulsory in most public indoor venues, such as cinemas, theatres and places of worship. There will be exemptions in venues where it is not practical to wear one, such as when you are eating, drinking or exercising. For that reason, face masks will not be required in hospitality settings.

From Monday 13 December, those who can will be advised to work from home.

From Wednesday 15 December, and subject to parliamentary approval, the NHS Covid Pass on the NHS App will become mandatory for entry into nightclubs and settings where large crowds gather – including unseated indoor events with 500 or more attendees, unseated outdoor events with 4,000 or more attendees and any event with 10,000 or more attendees.

People will be able to demonstrate proof of two vaccine doses via the app. Having considered the evidence since the emergence of Omicron, proof of a negative lateral flow test will also be accepted.

Full detail: [Prime Minister confirms move to Plan B in England](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-confirms-move-to-plan-b-in-england)

See also:

[Covid-19: Face masks required in more indoor venues in England](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-59602664?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=KARANGA)  | BBC News  
[Stricter measures than plan B may be needed to rein in UK’s Omicron growth](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/09/plan-b-measures-omicron-variant-growth-uk-analysis) | The Guardian

**Title:** Busiest November ever as new figures show pressures on NHS staff

NHS England | 9th December 2021

NHS staff answered the highest number of 999 calls for any November on record, an average of around one every three seconds, new figures have revealed.

Last month was also the second busiest November on record for A&E with more than two million patients seen at emergency departments and urgent treatment centres. That was up by half a million on the same time last year.

Demand for NHS 111 services also remained high, with almost 1.4 million calls answered during November, the latest available figures show.

NHS staff are continuing to make progress on elective activity with almost 150,000 more people starting elective treatment in October compared to the same month last year.

Patients on the waiting list are prioritised based on their need and at the end of October, were waiting an average of 12 weeks to begin treatment, compared to a high of 19.6 weeks on average in July last year.

The data comes as cases of Omicron increase throughout the country, and the NHS is urging the public to get their booster when invited.

Full detail: [Busiest November ever as new figures show pressures on NHS staff](https://www.england.nhs.uk/2021/12/busiest-november-ever-as-new-figures-show-pressures-on-nhs-staff/)

See also:

* [Almost 6 million people on waiting lists for NHS surgery in England](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/dec/09/almost-6-million-people-on-waiting-lists-for-nhs-surgery-in-england) | The Guardian
* [Health Foundation highlights need for a credible and realistic strategy to bring NHS waiting lists down](https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/news/health-foundation-highlights-need-for-a-credible-and-realistic-strategy-to-bring-nhs-waiting-lists-down)

**Title:** Coronavirus challenges highlight importance of physical activity and sport for children

Sport England | 9th December 2021

Children and young people’s activity levels continue to be negatively impacted by the ongoing coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic at a time when getting active is more important than ever for their mental and physical wellbeing.

The publication of Sport England’s Active Lives Children and Young People Survey report, which covers the 2020-21 academic year, shows that while there's been no overall decrease in activity levels compared to the previous academic year, existing inequalities have widened while enjoyment and confidence in taking part are down, and there are new short-term issues that need to be considered so they don't become long-term trends.

Positively, the results provide further evidence that active children have higher levels of mental wellbeing and illustrate the role sport and physical activity can play in supporting them amid rising levels of loneliness and declining mental health during the pandemic.

In general, there were lower activity levels when there were more coronavirus restrictions in place – which illustrates the importance of protecting and supporting sport and physical activity opportunities in schools, the active commute to school and the other organised sport in children and young people's lives.

Worryingly, the new findings reveal that existing inequalities have been exacerbated and there’s also been a drop in activity levels for boys that brings them in-line with girls’ activity levels, with girls having traditionally been less likely to take part.

It’s a new problem that’s arisen since coronavirus emerged and there's a risk of it becoming a longer-term trend if it's not addressed.

Full report: [Active Lives Children and Young People Survey. Academic year 2020-21](https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2021-12/Active%20Lives%20Children%20and%20Young%20People%20Survey%20Academic%20Year%202020-21%20Report.pdf?VersionId=3jpdwfbsWB4PNtKJGxwbyu5Y2nuRFMBV)

Press release: [Coronavirus challenges highlight importance of physical activity and sport for children](https://www.sportengland.org/news/coronavirus-challenges-highlight-importance-physical-activity-and-sport-children)

**Title:** Tackling population health challenges as we build back from the pandemic

BMJ | 2021; 375: e066232 | 7th December 2021

This BMJ analysis argues that a new model of equitable, holistic, and sustainable public health should be central to recovery plans

Key messages:

* A decade of austerity, stalled mortality trends, widening health inequalities, and climate change present profound health challenges that predate the pandemic
* The pandemic has shown that population health in the UK is insecure
* It has created additional challenges from ongoing covid-19, unmet health and social care needs, and social and economic disruption
* A radical shift in the government’s approach to population health is needed, integrating equity and health in all policies, and shifting to a wellbeing economy

Full detail: [Tackling population health challenges as we build back from the pandemic](https://www.bmj.com/content/375/bmj-2021-066232)

**Title:** Protecting the mental health of groups needing NHS care this winter

BMJ | 2021; 375: n3063 | 10th December 2021

The sudden return to coronavirus restrictions to protect the UK from the latest “heavily mutated” covid-19 variant will only add to the trepidation that many have been feeling in the lead-up to winter. NHS triaging, waitlists, and slow care will have a direct impact on our lives.  This BMJ opinion piece suggests that particular groups will be more affected than others by any cancellations or changes in treatment and they need to be prioritised and monitored as we approach this “hard” time to come.

These include people with mental health conditions, pregnant women, and those managing chronic illnesses who during the peaks of the pandemic were left vulnerable and with few options. What they have in common is a reliance on regular contact with health services.

As we brace ourselves for what may come this season, we should remember to listen to the mental health needs of groups most reliant on consistent mental and physical healthcare.

Full detail: [Protecting the mental health of groups needing NHS care this winter](https://www.bmj.com/content/375/bmj.n3063)

**Title:** Review finds significant barriers in shift to remote mental health services during pandemic

Kings College London | 9th December 2021

A systematic review looking at mental health care provided by phone and video call (remote care) during the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that many service users were able to continue accessing some support but that the shift to remote care presented significant barriers to certain groups. Researchers are calling for further examination into the effects of telemental health on groups at risk of digital exclusion and for better evidence on long-term impacts.

The study reviewed a total of 77 primary research papers from five countries. It found that the implementation of telemental health services – provided by video, phone call, or messaging – allowed some continued support to a majority of service users during the COVID-19 pandemic and highlighted its value in emergency situations.

The benefits of remote care include increased convenience and accessibility for staff and patients and reduced travel costs. Additionally, some studies reported that more family members were able to attend family therapy or family education sessions since care was moved online.

However, the shift to telemental health also presented challenges, such as difficulties in picking up on non-verbal cues and establishing a strong therapeutic relationship. While the studies came from a variety of higher income countries, similar challenges tended to be experienced.

Full detail: [Review finds significant barriers in shift to remote mental health services during pandemic](https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/review-finds-significant-barriers-in-shift-to-remote-mental-health-services-during-pandemic)

Full research: [Implementation, adoption, and perceptions of telemental health during the COVID-19 pandemic: Systematic Review](https://www.jmir.org/2021/12/e31746/)

We

[TRFT Library & Knowledge Service](https://www.trftlibraryknowledge.com/) aim to bring together the latest guidelines, research and news on Covid-19 through our [Covid-19 portal](https://www.trftlibraryknowledge.com/coronavirus.html). For daily updates on Covid-19 visit our '[Latest Health](https://trfthealthweeklydigest.wordpress.com/)' newsfeed, or use the hashtag [#covid19rftlks](https://twitter.com/hashtag/covid19rftlks?src=hashtag_click) to see our latest tweets on Covid-19 research, guidelines and news.

We also produce a range of subject-specific news feeds to ensure our clinical and professional teams stay up to date with developments in their work areas. Please visit our [website](http://www.trftlibraryknowledge.com/) for more information

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