

Impact of Covid

Key Messages

The COVID-19 pandemic had a disproportionate impact on young children (aged five and under) because of its duration and restrictions taking up a [greater part of children's lives](#) in comparison to adults or even older children, their inherent vulnerability, and because it occurred at a highly sensitive time in their holistic development.

While babies and young children were at low risk from the COVID-19 virus itself, [they suffered disproportionately from the impact of measures](#) on their early experiences. At the time, the impact that measures to control the pandemic would have on children was not adequately considered, now labelled a structural problem of ["the invisibility of children in government"](#). When measures were eased, children's needs were not a priority, and young children continued to be affected by restrictions longer than any other group.

Existing inequalities were exacerbated for already more vulnerable groups, specifically children experiencing poverty, those with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) or Addition Support Needs (ASN), children in insecure housing, and children from minority ethnic groups. This impact continues to have a lasting impact.

The youngest children did not have a voice in the planning and response to the pandemic; their experiences and views were not sought, and the importance of their early life experiences were not considered.

We now have an opportunity to ensure they do have a voice in the recovery phase and, going forward, in the preparation for similar shocks or crises that may occur in the future.

This Early Years Knowledge Bank theme:

- Collates existing evidence on the impact of the pandemic on the youngest children.
- Explores the recovery needed for the babies and young children who lived through the pandemic as well as how to mitigate against the impact from its fallout.
- Suggests how to consider and adequately prioritise babies' and young children's needs in crisis situations.
- Establishes the importance of listening to the voices of young children and their parents, so they can be involved in solutions and the planning and preparedness for future disruptions.
- Ascertains the need to urgently address child poverty to ensure we have a system that is more resilient to shocks, and to mitigate against the ongoing impact of the pandemic on young children.

