

# MRC/AHRC/ESRC ADOLESCENCE, MENTAL HEALTH AND THE DEVELOPING MIND: COVID-19 Rapid Knowledge Mobilisation

## Rapid knowledge mobilisation to promote adolescent mental health in the era of COVID -1

**Led by:** Professor Andrea Danese, MD, PhD, Professor of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King's College London

**Project summary:** The COVID-19 pandemic is a 'perfect storm' for the mental health of young people. On the one hand, during the pandemic young people have been exposed to known risk factors for psychopathology (e.g., perception of threat, social isolation, reduced levels of enjoyable activities and physical activity). On the other hand, infrastructures that are normally in place to ensure safety and provide support, such as schools, social services, and Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have been disrupted.

It is, therefore, more important than ever to provide mental health support through psycho-educational materials. Many of the existing materials typically target parents to deliver support to their children or younger adolescents - including our [Families under Pressure animations](#). However, this passive transfer of information is unlikely to work well with older adolescents (14-24 years), who are at greatest risk of emotional disorders but also progressively separate from their parents and striving to gain agency. Therefore, to support young people's mental health, we will co-produce novel, engaging psycho-educational materials with adolescents and creative professionals, and rapidly disseminate them widely across the UK.

First, we will synthesise information on mental health needs and evidence-based solutions. To capture young people's voices about their mental health concerns, we will capitalise on the wealth of data emerging from ongoing longitudinal surveys, for example the [RAMP Study](#), as well as the data repositories including the [Wellcome Trust Covid-Minds Network](#) and the [ESRC Catalogue of Mental Health Measures](#). We will then identify core elements from evidence-based interventions for the identifies concerns through the expertise at the [National & Specialist CAMHS Clinic for Trauma, Anxiety, and Depression](#) at the South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust.

Second, along with co-investigator [McPin Foundation](#), we will engage young people to prioritise the mental health concerns and to ensure that the content built from evidence-based interventions is clear and relevant. We will then work with young people and creative professionals to produce the materials in the most engaging way.

Third, we will disseminate the materials produced widely through social media campaigns and our established links with professional and voluntary organisations across the UK. We will ensure that the materials are disseminated across all devolved nations in partnership with local senior clinicians.

This work will be responsive to the changing mental health needs of young people in the months ahead. We have also ensured that content development, production, and dissemination can be undertaken both in-person or remotely, maximising feasibility.

### **Evidenced based mental health and wellbeing resources made by young people for young people in the COVID-19 context**

**Led by:** Professor Cathy Creswell, Professor of Developmental clinical psychology, Department of Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford

**Project summary:** Young people have faced extensive disruption and challenge throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. There is good evidence to draw on to provide advice and support, but this is often not easily available to young people in accessible and engaging forms.

This work will be led by the UKRI Emerging Minds and Triumph Networks, and supported by the wider Mental Health Networks, to work with partners from across disciplines, across sectors, and with people with lived experience to (i) draw together evidence on the mental health and wellbeing impacts of the pandemic on young people, (ii) identify priority areas where resources are needed, (iii) enable young people to develop resources that will be engaging and accessible to young people, and (iv) disseminate the outputs widely.

Central aspects of our approach are (a) involvement of young people throughout, including creating opportunities for skills development and training to enable young people to be involved at all stages of designing and developing resources across a range of platforms, including (b) purposeful participation to address the needs of vulnerable groups who are likely to require tailored support and/or may face particular barriers to accessing support, and (c) collaboration with a wide range of partners who will both feed in insights and feed out outputs to ensure that the resources are disseminated widely through sources that young people trust.

We are delighted that this work will also be supported by a generous gift of £100,000 from the Westminster Foundation to maximise this opportunity to support young people at this unprecedented time.