

# **COVID and Family Homelessness, in the UK and Australian experiences: How do we as a community respond to families during a pandemic?**

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## **Background**

The Sustainable Development Goals premise 'leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first'. The children living in temporary housing are left behind, invisible, uncounted, and disconnected from age-appropriate health, welfare, and education services. Late action in addressing preventable child developmental interventions costs Australia alone \$15 bn per year. One in five Australian children (0-14 years) live in housing-instability. In the UK children number 136,000 living in homelessness, more than 80% increase since 2010. Children living in housing-instability live in overcrowding, in cars, hostels, motels, bed and breakfast, emergency housing and temporary housing that is often unsuitable for a family or children's developmental needs exasperated by COVID.

## **Aim of the study**

The aims of these projects and the UK and Australian collaboration is to illustrate the experiences of parents/carers living and caring for children while homeless during a pandemic.

## **Methods**

The completed scoping reviews from Australia and the UK has provided information related to access, coverage, and healthcare utilization. Our conceptual framework and logic models being presented here provide a foundation for future research. We also compare the qualitative interviews with parents on the impacts of housing insecurity between both countries on their lives during COVID. The scoping reviews and research show the impact of COVID and lockdowns on health and the family's concepts of community. The presentation outlines the process for the development, demonstrates linkages to the SDG's and how this will improve future research in the area.

## **Results**

The main themes from both scoping review and the research were that children in homelessness/housing instability; are at higher risk of deleterious health, educational and developmental outcomes; miss out on essential care; lack of access to mainstream services and cost the health care system more by relying on adhoc and Emergency Department care. The conceptual frameworks map the impacts of the political, community, and household environments on homelessness children, exacerbated by COVID.

## **Conclusions and implications**

The impact of COVID-19 has highlighted the dire situation of homeless families. Children from non-Caucasian backgrounds are three times more likely to be homeless. Housing-instability, places children, especially First Nations children, at a much higher risk of adverse psychological, developmental, and physical outcomes and while 3% of the Australian population, they are 20% of all homeless in Australia. Recognition of the detrimental impact of housing instability and homelessness on children, needs to be explicitly embedded into nursing care, health, welfare, and educational services if we are to address this problem.