

SAFEGUARDING

- ⊕ Some of the most essential rights for children and young people relate to 'safeguarding', including rights to life and protection from all forms of harm, abuse, exploitation and violence and to recovery from any kind of harm.
- ⊕ NICCY highlighted the need to ensure standards for child protection do not lessen during the COVID-19 crisis and any reductions has to be a last resort after every other option has been exhausted.
- ⊕ One of biggest issues during COVID-19 was maintaining the ability to have face to face meetings with children and young people where there were concerns about their safety.
- ⊕ Sadly, the reporting of domestic violence and drug abuse increased during the first lockdown - children were at risk of spending increased time in unsafe environments.
- ⊕ Children and young people seeking asylum who had arrived in the country just before the pandemic experienced particular isolation as they had not yet formed social networks.
- ⊕ For children and young people living in communities that experience higher levels of conflict there was more risk of them being used by criminal gangs to take part in civil unrest.

“... but young people in care really do fall through the gaps sometimes of service provisions and stuff and I feel like that during Covid that has had the possibility to happen even more.... (then this) could ruin our whole lives and it's important to kind of highlight that ... ”
(Young person with experience of being in care, supported by VOYPIC)

WHAT GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO DO

- ⊕ Make sure that COVID-19 restrictions aren't stricter for some young people in care settings than for other young people.
- ⊕ Prioritise face-to-face meetings with all children who are at risk of violence, harm or abuse. If this has to stop for any reason it should be for the shortest time possible and should be checked regularly.
- ⊕ Assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on safeguarding. The experiences and views of children and young people as well as those who care for them, should directly inform this.
- ⊕ The Children and Young People's Strategy and its Delivery Plan should be changed as necessary to make sure safeguarding of vulnerable children and young people is a priority in any future public emergency.

