

FAMILY LIFE AND ALTERNATIVE CARE

- ⊕ Lockdown arrangements have had a deep impact on the lives of children and young people and their families. The move to remote learning at home and the loss of many social outlets have contributed to stress and anxiety.
- ⊕ Some children and young people of separating or separated parents often experienced a reduction in contact with family members living outside of their household, as did children with family members in prison.
- ⊕ Families of vulnerable children, including those with disabilities and complex health needs, were affected as specialised supports were effectively withdrawn for a number of months. This included therapies, special education, respite care and in many cases, carers coming into the family home.
- ⊕ The emergency changes to services for those in care was introduced without sufficient safeguards with reports of inconsistencies and inequalities within the care system.
- ⊕ Young people in care and secure care were not supported as well as they might be in terms of access to professional support and services including reductions in face-to-face contact with families, social workers, and other professionals.

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*“I feel like a lot of young people isolate themselves, especially young carers, like most of my friends who are young carers have just sort of isolated themselves.”
(Young carer supported by Action for Children)*

WHAT GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO DO

- ⊕ Through the Family and Parenting Support Strategy, take action to support children, young people, their parents/carers, and wider families who were particularly affected through the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ⊕ Remove barriers to maintaining contact between children and family members, e.g., where parents are separated or family members are in prison
- ⊕ Full provision of respite services must be available to families of children with disabilities and complex needs.
- ⊕ Investigate why services for children and young people in different areas responded differently through the COVID-19 pandemic to make sure that there is more consistency in the future.

