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## Covid-19 could widen mental health inequalities for a generation, warns charity

Abi Rimmer

The covid-19 pandemic could entrench and exacerbate inequalities in mental health for a generation unless action is taken, the Centre for Mental Health has warned.

In a report published on Thursday,<sup>1</sup> the charity warned that the lockdown would put greater pressure on groups whose mental health was already poor before covid-19 hit, such as women and children experiencing violence and abuse, and ethnic minority communities.

The pandemic will leave an “unequal legacy of complicated bereavement, trauma, and economic repercussions which will push more people towards financial insecurity and poverty, significant risk factors for poor mental health,” the report said.

“Unequal experiences of grief, loss, trauma, injustice, and abandonment all add to the psychological damage caused by covid-19.”

The report, backed by 12 mental health charities and the Royal College of Psychiatrists, said that the government must prioritise race equality and support “trauma informed” approaches for all people whose lives had been affected by covid-19.

“Plans to modernise mental health legislation and invest in community support should be resumed and renewed at the earliest opportunity,” it said.

“The NHS and local authorities, meanwhile, should work with third sector and community organisations to plan, develop, and deliver tailored support for the most marginalised communities.”

Andy Bell, the charity’s deputy chief executive and co-author of the report, said that many inequalities have already been laid bare by covid-19, with higher death rates among ethnic minorities<sup>2</sup> and people living in deprived areas.

“Sadly, we can expect to see the same with the mental health impacts in the months and years to come,” Bell said. “The government has an opportunity now to put mental health equality at the heart of its plans to help the nation to recover from covid-19.”

1 Allwood L, Bell A. Covid-19: understanding inequalities in mental health during the pandemic. [www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/covid-19-inequalities-mental-health](http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/covid-19-inequalities-mental-health).

2 Iacobucci G. Covid-19: Racism may be linked to ethnic minorities’ raised death risk, says PHE. *BMJ* 2020;369:m2421doi: 10.1136/bmj.m2421.