

People at the Centre Update 11

The impact of COVID-19 on autistic people and their families: loneliness, additional pressures, loss of support

Between June and July 2020, the National Autistic Society ran an online survey for autistic people and their families across the UK to share their experiences of coronavirus and lockdown.

The key findings were compiled in a report, "Left stranded: the impact of coronavirus on autistic people and their families in the UK", and are highlighted in the image below:

Compared to the general public, autistic people in June and July were:



seven times more likely to be chronically lonely



six times more likely to have low life satisfaction

Those requiring support all of the time were **significantly more affected** by lockdown.



Nine out of ten autistic people worried about their mental health during lockdown.



One in five family members had to reduce work due to caring responsibilities.

Lockdown undermined the essential ways many autistic people cope with daily life – through routine, structure, exercise, and time with friends or family. The COVID-19 pandemic therefore placed additional pressure on the mental health of autistic people.

This pressure on autistic people's mental health was reinforced by:

- The sudden disappearance of support from public services, which was done overnight and led to impossible pressures on families and many feeling abandoned. Some support has been available online or on the phone, and while that has been vital for many, this isn't accessible to all
- The fact that the more complex the needs of an autistic person and the more support they need, the worse their anxiety and mood, and the less likely they were to receive the information and advice they needed during the pandemic

“I am just very isolated. The only person I see regularly is the postman.”

“Mental health services stopped seeing my children. My daughter was due to start specialist therapy which has been postponed.”

The report recommends that all four governments in the UK should create an action plan to protect autistic people and their families in case of a second wave. This action plan should cover social care, health, education, transport and shops.

More specifically, it asks that Scotland:

- Moves forward with plans for a national public awareness and understanding campaign due for the autumn
- Takes forward the recommendations from the Independent Review into Learning Disability and Autism within the Mental Health Act.

[Read the full National Autistic Society report 'Left stranded'.](#)

