

Survey: Listening to children 'could have improved COVID-19 responses'

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Listening to children about their needs and involving them more closely in decision-making could have improved global responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, according to an [international survey](#) produced by the University of Strathclyde.

People working with [children](#)—including teachers, [care workers](#) and community health workers—also cited lack of access, insufficient funding, school disruption and barriers to advocacy among the challenges they faced in supporting children, particularly those at high risk, during the pandemic.

However, more professionals also reported positive outcomes prompted by the pandemic, including creative uses of technology, community liaison, raising awareness of children's risks and rights, and combining virus protection with [psychosocial support](#).

The eight-week, [real-time](#), daily survey received over 3330 responses from 22 countries across five continents, including Canada, Kenya, India, the Philippines, Scotland, South Africa, Sweden, and the US. These findings are captured in a series of [planned reports](#) from the Strathclyde-based Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures, drawing on data from the [COVID 4P Log](#) (Protection, Provision, Participation, Prevention) for Children's Wellbeing, a smartphone app developed in close partnership with 17 organizations globally, for policymakers and practitioners in children's rights and wellbeing to share anonymously their views and experiences of their work in the midst of the pandemic.

The Institute's Executive Director, Professor Jennifer Davidson OBE, said: "This survey presents a mixed picture. It shows that people are still working flat out to help children during the pandemic and are being creative to achieve this but, despite everyone's efforts, underlying inequalities continue to exist that are seriously getting in the way.

"There's a real determination to turn things around for children but these inequalities are hindering the support getting to every child. When looking in retrospect, people question their decisions such as whether greater use of technology should have been embraced sooner, but there's also a real sense of pride in things like the way they manage to get food

to families and antiretroviral drugs to HIV-positive children, in what have been exceptionally difficult circumstances.

"The survey suggests that the relationship and dynamic between governments and NGOs became quite different. It has often been NGOs and frontline workers who have been reaching the families, while limited by the policies set by governments. In some places, the civic spaces people have, where they can say what they want, have shrunk, and people feel this could be undermining efforts on keeping people safe.

"These early findings indicate that children should be better listened to and involved in decision-making on the support they receive and that there's a need for increased support for—and good uses of technology in—services. There also needs to be sustained collaboration between governments and the third sector and a greater priority placed on children's rights, needs and protection in pandemic decision-making."

The Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures is working with a collaborative of international partners to grow an [evidence base](#), and strengthen leadership and political will, to develop effective policy and practice responses for children in our recovery from the COVID-19 [pandemic](#).

Provided by University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

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