

# New study shines a light on likely suicide among children and young people in England

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A new report led by University of Bristol academics has identified that 108 young people in England died under circumstances that were assessed as highly or moderately likely to be due to suicide between

2019 and 2020. The analysis, led by the University of Bristol's National Child Mortality Database [NCMD] program, which gathers comprehensive information on all children who die in England below the age of 18 years with the aim of identifying ways that could help reduce them in future, is published 14 October.

The study funded by NHS England sought to gain new insight into [suicide](#) among [young people](#) by examining the characteristics and contributing factors of 199 [child deaths](#) that were either reported or reviewed between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020 in England.

The deaths of 108 young people were identified as highly or moderately likely to have been by suicide, with further analyses showing that it is not limited to certain groups; rates of suicide were shown to be similar across all areas and regions in England, including urban and rural environments, and across deprived and affluent neighborhoods.

Many of the young people whose deaths were reviewed had endured difficult circumstances prior to their passing. These included 62 percent had suffered a significant personal loss such as a bereavement or the breakdown of a close relationship, and almost a quarter (23 percent) had experienced bullying.

The report includes a number of recommendations that could help prevent suicide, including ensuring that all frontline staff have suicide prevention training and that there is continued roll out of children and young people's mental health services across community settings including schools, local authorities and the criminal justice system.

Professor Karen Luyt, NCMD program lead and professor in neonatal medicine at the University of Bristol, said: "Our report is based on the comprehensive, multi-agency [child death](#) reviews performed by Child Death Overview Panels. These contemporary data give the complete

picture of antecedent factors in the lives of children and young people who died by suicide in England."

Louis Appleby, professor of psychiatry at the University of Manchester and Chair of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy Advisory Group for England, added: "To inform prevention we need evidence. Suicide is complex, rarely caused by one thing, and suicide prevention is also complex. We need to understand who is at risk and when, the stresses and settings, and the response of services. This new report adds to our understanding by examining the individual tragedies. It shows how varied the circumstances can be."

While these findings demonstrate that we can better understand and derive learning if we pool information, it is important to recognize that no two deaths are the same. The authors of this report wish to acknowledge that the death of each child is a devastating loss that profoundly affects bereaved parents as well as siblings, grandparents, extended [family members](#), friends and professionals. They also wish to thank all the families who shared their data and experiences, and the Child Death Overview Panels who submit detailed evidence on every death to the database.

**More information:** Suicide in Children and Young People.  
[www.ncmd.info/2021/10/14/child-suicide-report/](http://www.ncmd.info/2021/10/14/child-suicide-report/)

Provided by University of Bristol

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