

**Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP**  
**Department of Health and Social Care,**  
**39 Victoria Street,**  
**London**  
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**Parents need help now, we are calling for a mental health strategy to support,  
teachers, parents and children**

**To the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care**

We are a group of parents writing as part of the Playful Minds Campaign. We are asking the government to consider creating a specific and funded mental health strategy to support teachers, parents and children to deal with the impact of the pandemic. A central element of this should be putting playful methods at the heart of any new strategy.

It is estimated that nearly 1.5 million children will require some form of mental health support in the months and years ahead as a result of lockdown. Supporting parents with this is critical.

As parents ourselves we are seeing and hearing first hand the impact of lockdown on children. Organisations such as the Royal College of Psychiatrists have rightly recognised the looming crisis facing our children. Highlighting a 20% increase in referrals to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), raising to the highest referral rate on record.

Research has shown that play and playing can help children and parents foster better conversations, identify issues and address mental health. With the Mental Health Foundation stating that having the freedom to play can actively keep children and young people mentally well.

Of course, there are a range of interventions, but play has been found to be one of the most effective and easy to implement by parents and teachers alike.

We realise the government has rightly focussed on fighting the impact of Covid19 but there is a coming mental health crisis that will require a huge and sustained response. As the government focuses on addressing the academic and societal impacts on children of Covid-19 and Lockdown its vital we remember and foster the importance of play as a way of helping families cope

We are calling on the government to start that now! By creating a mental health strategy specifically focused on children. There is no time to wait!

Yours sincerely

UK Parents