



Since January 2020 Elsevier has created a COVID-19 resource centre with free information in English and Mandarin on the novel coronavirus COVID-19. The COVID-19 resource centre is hosted on Elsevier Connect, the company's public news and information website.

Elsevier hereby grants permission to make all its COVID-19-related research that is available on the COVID-19 resource centre - including this research content - immediately available in PubMed Central and other publicly funded repositories, such as the WHO COVID database with rights for unrestricted research re-use and analyses in any form or by any means with acknowledgement of the original source. These permissions are granted for free by Elsevier for as long as the COVID-19 resource centre remains active.



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](https://www.sciencedirect.com)

Child Abuse & Neglect

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/chiabuneg

Child welfare in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic—Emerging evidence from Germany

Birgit Jentsch ^{*}, Brigitte Schnock

Deutsches Jugendinstitut e.V. (German Youth Institute), Abteilung Familie und Familienpolitik (Department of Family and Family Policy), Nockherstraße 2, 81541, Munich, Germany

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

COVID-19 pandemic
Lockdown
Child welfare
Child protection
Remote counselling
Face-to-face contacts
Germany

ABSTRACT

Background: The coronavirus pandemic has had a major impact on the situation and well-being of children and their families, while simultaneously affecting the ability of welfare services for children and youth to support vulnerable families. As measures of contact restrictions were introduced to contain the virus, and schools and childcare facilities closed, the potential risk to child welfare could hardly be overlooked.

Objectives: Focusing on Germany, this article aims to explore some of the effects of the COVID-19 measures on children and families. Furthermore, it examines a number of key challenges for child protection practitioners. These include identifying potential cases of child maltreatment without the support normally provided by teachers and child carers; and establishing and maintaining contact with clients under physical distancing rules.

Methods: The article is based on a review of German and English language scientific and journalistic articles, position papers from professional associations and other gray literature. It benefits from recently published (interim) results of empirical studies conducted in Germany, which explore child welfare issues in the pandemic.

Conclusion: Under COVID-19, the child welfare system faces unprecedented challenges and uncertainty (e.g. (partial) loss of cooperation opportunities with key partners) whilst showing signs of remarkable resilience (e.g. child protection workers' ability to adjust to new conditions). While the potential of digitalising work processes in child protection has become apparent in the pandemic, the proven continuous face-to-face contact between practitioners and their clients is neither dispensable nor replaceable.

1. Introduction

On 27 January 2020, the first case of coronavirus infection in Germany was confirmed near Munich, Bavaria. Just under two months later, on 17 March, schools and childcare facilities closed in almost the entire country. On 23 March, Germany entered lockdown, requiring physical distancing, and comprehensive restrictions on private and public gatherings, as well as on free movement. The federal government and federal states agreed on 6 May on the first easing of the coronavirus measures. For example, schools were to re-open for the final year classes from the beginning of May in some federal states, with other years to follow in June. The re-opening of childcare facilities and primary schools was scheduled for the end of June in some forerunner regions. A regular reopening

^{*} Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: jentsch@dji.de (B. Jentsch), schnock@dji.de (B. Schnock).

of these institutions was expected to occur after the school summer holidays, depending on the federal state, in August or September (lpb, 2020).

At the beginning of lockdown in March, actors in the social and medical fields as well as in politics quickly raised concerns about the welfare of children in families who were strained by multiple burdens, were anxious about their future and who lived in confined space. At the same time, it became apparent that social work professionals, including those responsible for child protection, were no longer able to rely fully on established measures and strategies during lockdown in order to fulfill their responsibilities. Instead, new approaches had to be tried out in difficult circumstances, characterized by uncertainty.

This article aims to shed light on the discourse and emerging evidence concerning the welfare of families and children in the first months of the coronavirus pandemic in Germany. In addition, it examines the new challenges, faced by child protection practitioners, as well as their endeavours to address those. For this purpose, reports, position papers from professional associations, academic literature and media coverage were searched for, using English and German keywords broadly associated with child welfare (e.g. child maltreatment, child protection), the child welfare system (e.g. youth welfare agency, child maltreatment reporting) and processes of child welfare work (e.g. child welfare risk assessment; home visits), as well as target groups of services (e.g. families, children). These key words were linked with the search terms COVID-19 or coronavirus. All literature contributing substantially to the research aims, and identified in the time period between 19 April 2020, when the research began, and 27 August 2020, when the manuscript was revised and updated to be re-submitted, was included. The article benefits in particular from (interim) results of empirical studies conducted in Germany and published within the time span referred to above, which explore the situation of children and families, as well as the experiences of professionals committed to protecting child welfare in these extraordinary times.

This article first examines the emerging evidence of the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on child welfare in Germany, discussing, for example, child abuse and neglect reporting numbers, and a spike in the demand for remote counselling. The article then turns to institutional factors posing a risk to child welfare, including the loss of regular reporting channels on concerns about child welfare, and the extent to which agencies responsible for investigating and determining whether a child is at risk of harm can fully operate as standard. This is followed by a closer look at the work processes of child protection practitioners in the pandemic, with a focus on the challenges of establishing and maintaining contact with clients in the pandemic. Here, the main concern lies with issues relating to the digitalisation of work processes introduced to avoid infection through personal contacts between practitioners and clients. In addition, the precautionary measures which practitioners and their employers have taken, or would like to take, to ensure the safety of necessary face-to-face meetings are of interest.

2. Emerging evidence on the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on child welfare

For children in need of protection, it is particularly important in times of pandemics that the continuity of their care can be ensured (Sistovaris et al., 2020, 11). However, initial feedback from stakeholders such as families, social workers and professional associations on the child welfare situation in the current coronavirus crisis indicates that the relevant system resources and capacities have come under pressure (Sistovaris et al., 2020). The resulting challenges are exacerbated by the fact that pandemics can impact families detrimentally in both direct and indirect ways. The direct risks comprise illness, death and the associated changes in family structures, as well as resulting psychosocial and economic strain (The Alliance, 2019a). Indirect effects include increased existential fears and conflicts in families (Kelly & Hansel, 2020; Sistovaris et al., 2020; The Alliance, 2019a, 2019b). Families in precarious life situations are considered to be under particular strain and dependent on professional support (The Alliance, 2019b). What evidence has emerged regarding the risk of harm to children and adolescents in times of COVID-19?

2.1. Number of reports on suspected child abuse and neglect

In view of an increased risk to children's welfare and particular challenges for child protection services, a survey of German youth welfare agencies (*Jugendämter*) (i.e. the agencies responsible for protecting children from maltreatment) was carried out jointly by a national newspaper (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*) and regional radio station (WDR) between mid-March and mid-April 2020. The results indicated that the number of reports on alleged child maltreatment had declined: out of the 231 agencies which responded to the survey, 43 percent stated that the volume of reports had decreased (sharply) in the first four weeks following the introduction of contact restrictions (Hell, Kampf, Kaulet, & Kohrsal, 2020). A more comprehensive, scientific survey of German youth welfare agencies, the *DJI-Jugendhilfeb@rometer* (DJI-Youth Welfare Barometer) was conducted a month later, from the end of April to mid-May 2020. It examined the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on the work of these agencies. According to the majority of youth welfare agencies, reports on alleged child maltreatment had not increased, and in some cases even decreased. A similar development was noted concerning the number of children being taken into care (Mairhofer, Peucker, Pluto, van Santen, & Seckinger, 2020).

The situation was mainly attributed to the fact that due to the closure or limited operation of childcare facilities and schools as part of lockdown, these institutions could no longer support the reporting process. Some agencies presumed that there was a hidden figure of children whose welfare was endangered, so that an increase in reports was expected when childcare facilities and schools were to reopen (Mairhofer, Peucker, Pluto, van Santen, & Seckinger, 2020). Germany is not an isolated case here, but similar observations of a decline in reports about child welfare risks in lockdown, as well as associated concerns by child welfare professionals have been noted internationally (see, for example, National Governors Association (NGA, 2020 and Baron, Goldstein, & Wallace, 2020 for the U.S., and Zussman, 2020 for Canada).

A developmental perspective of child maltreatment emerges from an on-going study launched in May 2020, at a time further into the pandemic when COVID-19 restrictions were gradually being eased. The Federal Ministry of Family Affairs (BMFSFJ), with the

support of the Child and Youth Welfare Statistical Office (*Arbeitsstelle Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik*), conducts along its regular national survey of all youth welfare agencies in Germany a supplementary COVID-19 survey, which closely monitors child protection developments during the pandemic. Hence, in May, the youth welfare agencies were requested to report via an online platform the number of cases of child welfare risk assessments they had performed, as well as the number of children who had been taken into care in the period of a week.

Based on this data, the BMFSFJ continuously carries out comparative and representative analyses with data from official child and youth welfare statistics from previous reporting years. The supplementary survey's preliminary results revealed on the basis of a 35 percent response rate that youth welfare agencies conducted about the same number of risk assessments in May 2020 as in May 2018, and in June 2020 a little fewer than in the same period in 2018 (the 2019 data not being available yet). However, as is typical for child and youth welfare statistics, there were considerable local differences: in May 2020, the percentage of participating youth welfare agencies reporting a decrease in the number of cases compared to the same month in 2018 (42 percent %) was similar to those reporting an increase (44 percent %), while for the remaining agencies (14 percent %) that number had stayed about the same. In June, the percentage of surveyed youth welfare agencies which had lower case numbers in child protection was even larger (48 %), and the proportion of such agencies with higher case numbers smaller (37 percent %). 16 percent reported similar numbers as in the period of comparison (Mühlmann & Pothmann., 2020). Hence, although COVID-19 restrictions were eased in May and June, schools and childcare facilities, which had begun to re-open, did not lodge more child welfare concerns with the agencies, which participated in the study. Reasons for this development could not be inferred from the data, as these are preliminary working results of research in progress (Mühlmann & Pothmann, 2020)

2.2. Evidence on developments in domestic violence

Evidence regarding developments in the risk of domestic violence appears to support this presumption of child maltreatment having remained underreported. In Germany, the COVID-19 Snapshot Monitoring (COSMO) project has conducted weekly or biweekly surveys on various aspects of people's experiences and behaviour in the pandemic. At the beginning of April 2020, the 6th wave of the survey found that under conditions of self-quarantine, feelings of dejection and anxieties about employment increased the likelihood of (physical) conflicts in marriage and partnership considerably (Betsch et al., 2020a). Data on violence actually committed during lockdown (22 April to 8 May 2020) has become available through the representative online survey 'The impact of Covid-19 on violence against women and children in Germany'. The study was conducted by the Technical University of Munich (TUM) and the Leibniz Institute with a sample of around 3800 women aged 18–65. The findings suggest that 3.1 percent of the women had been involved in some form of physical violence with their partner over this time period. In 6.5 percent of all households, children had fallen victim to corporal punishment (Steinert & Ebert, 2020). However, it remains unclear how these figures compare to the time before the pandemic. Such comparative dimension is available in the UK in relation to the specific area of violent deaths: three weeks into coronavirus lockdown (i.e. 23 March to 12 April 2020) at least 16 women and children were killed at home over that period compared to five in 'normal' times (Smith, 2020).

The Outpatient Clinic for the Protection of Violence (*Gewaltschutzambulanz*) of the University Hospital Charité in Berlin could provide particularly meaningful data on the development of domestic violence during and after lockdown. The clinic saw an eight percent increase in patients – victims of child and domestic abuse - in the first half of 2020 compared to the same period of the preceding year. While there was a 24 percent decline in March 2020 (i.e. at the beginning of the lockdown) compared to March 2019, this development went into reverse by the middle of April. In fact, at the height of the easing of COVID-19 measures in June 2020, the clinic recorded an increase of patients by 30 percent compared to June 2019. In the first two weeks of June, the increase amounted to even 50 percent. The number of patients presenting to the clinic thus reflects the individual phases of lockdown: initially, victims of violence were unable to leave the house to seek support, unless they called the police. When the freedom of movement was (partially) restored, they could more easily avail themselves of help, which is reflected in the increasing number of outpatients that attended the clinic. Similarly, as institutions whose staff exert a measure of social control (e.g. childcare facilities and schools) gradually reopened with the easing of COVID-19 measures in late May/early June, this resulted in a clear rise of the numbers of patients (Senatsverwaltung für Justiz, Verbraucherschutz und Antidiskriminierung, 2020).

2.3. A general surge in demand for remote counselling

2.3.1. Expressed need for remote counselling and the hidden figure

In Germany, a heightened risk to child welfare in the pandemic can also be observed in the surge in demand for chat and telephone counselling for children and adolescents through the helpline 'Number against worries' (*Nummer gegen Kummer*), and for parental telephone counselling (BMFSFJ, 2020b). Anticipating higher counselling needs, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs (BMFSFJ) bolstered online counselling services for young people, offered by various providers. In one case, this was combined with the development of an app to make the service available to mobile devices. In addition, counselling portals targeting migrant youth (www.jmd4you.de) and homeless young people (www.sofahopper.de) were expanded. Reasons for the increased demand for counselling have not been explored in any depth, but include young people's fears of the future, loneliness, and family conflicts (Nummer gegen Kummer, 2020).

Other countries have similarly witnessed a sharp rise in the number of calls to telephone counselling services. In the UK, observations by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's (NSPCC) Childline can add further details regarding the reasons for seeking advice. The children's charity noted that anxieties and worries about the coronavirus were articulated especially by

youths who had to cope with complex challenges, including pre-existing mental health issues. Having been cut-off from their networks, such as schools and friends, the feelings of loneliness and isolation of these youngsters were further aggravated. Some young people felt they did not want to burden their parents with their worries, especially in situations where these adults themselves had shown symptoms of distress (Weale, 2020).

It is worthwhile noting that not everywhere has the volume of calls to helplines increased. For example, the number of inquiries from children and adolescents dropped at the German SOS Children's Villages association while public health and safety orders were in place. This has been explained with the fact that it is more difficult for young people to place calls unnoticed when all members of the household are staying at home (ZDF, 2020).

2.3.2. Helpline calls referring to sexual abuse and domestic violence

As concerns the particular problem of sexual abuse, the relevant helpline in Germany run by the UBSKM (Independent Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse Issues) has not published any data regarding the number of contacts in the pandemic. However, police reported in mid-May, as lockdown measures were being eased, that there had been no more indications of violence and abuse in the family than usual. At the same time, the head of the Federal Criminal Police Office warned that these developments needed to be viewed with extreme caution as there could be a large hidden figure (Die Bundesregierung, 2020).

In fact, a US equivalent to the German UBSKM helpline, the hotline run by the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) in the US, reported a historically high number of phonecalls. By the end of March, as lockdown orders affected nearly the entire country, there was a 22 percent increase in monthly calls from people younger than 18, with half of the calls having been placed by minors. 67 percent of these youths reported the perpetrator to be a family member and 79 percent indicated that they were currently living with the perpetrator. In 20 percent of the cases where the minor was living with their abuser, RAINN assisted the victim in immediately contacting police (Kamenetz, 2020).

In other words, the dominant discourse regarding the pandemic and its impact on child welfare has focused on the strains on families and the heightened risk to child welfare. A considerable amount of statistics and newly emerging empirical data underpin this disconcerting assessment.

2.4. (Temporary) benefits for family life in some cases

Notwithstanding the overwhelming evidence that the lives of children and families have been affected detrimentally by the coronavirus, recent research in Germany on children and parents' experiences in the pandemic has revealed a more nuanced picture. In the KiCo study, which is based on an online-survey conducted nationwide with 25,000 parents with children under the age of 15, especially highly educated and well-off parents had also found advantages for their family life. For example, as leisure activities were cancelled and associated travel had become unnecessary, parents discovered the benefits of a more relaxed daily rhythm (Andresen et al., 2020a, 5). Similarly, in a non-representative online survey with over 3000 respondents, carried out in the federal state of Thuringia from 1 to 12 April 2020, just over half of the parents surveyed stated that their child also saw positive aspects in the pandemic. Most of these children enjoyed having more time with their parents (Lochner, 2020).

An additional online-study on changes in child well-being during the pandemic, *Being a child in times of the Coronavirus (Kind sein in Zeiten von Corona)*, based on a sample of 8,127 parents from across Germany with children aged 3–15, similarly aimed to establish the family climate. Here, 74 percent of the respondents indicated that conflicts and chaos had "rarely or sometimes" been part of everyday life. Hence, for nearly three quarters of the families, the unusual situation of being constantly together was largely managed well. A minority but still sizeable group of 22 percent of parents in the study responded that conflicts had occurred "often or very often". This situation was more likely to apply to families with several children (25 percent) than to single-child families (15 percent) (Langmeyer, Guglhör-Rudan, Urlen, & Winklhofer, 2020, 18–19). However, it is important to note that the sample of this study includes an above-average number of parents who felt financially secure and were highly educated. It can be assumed that the situation tends to be more difficult for families in financially challenging circumstances, who could not be reached with the study.

Results from the repeated cross-sectional monitoring project (COVID-19 Snapshot Monitoring (COSMO) (Betsch et al., 2020b) provides a useful dynamic developmental perspective of family climate in Germany. Interestingly, in line with the findings above, between 31 March (wave 5) and 28 April 2020 (wave 9), parents rated the cohesion of their family to be strong. For about a month into the phase of lockdown, the family climate was predominantly characterised by positive feelings, the quality of communication had been maintained at a high level and the extent of family disagreement had remained stable. However, by 15 May (wave 11) when restrictions had been relaxed, the strain on families, particularly with younger children, was shown to have increased. A likely explanation is that despite the lifting of some restrictions, the situation had not significantly improved for these families as childcare facilities remained closed and schools operated in a limited capacity only. The trend continued throughout the subsequent three waves (up to 12 June 2020). Families with children under 14 years felt especially overstretched and experienced minor and major differences in opinion among the family members. Hence, it appears that the longer the restrictions continued – especially with regard to childcare and schooling – the more likely it was that the family cohesion even of generally resilient families started breaking apart.

3. Institutional factors posing a risk to childwelfare

3.1. Loss of standard reporting channels

In terms of institutional factors which pose a risk to child welfare, a key problem discussed in the literature consists of the loss of

standard reporting channels (Baron et al., 2020; Hell et al., 2020; The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (The Alliance, 2020)). The role of schools, childcare and pediatric practices as important contributors to the child maltreatment reporting system has been alluded to above. In Germany, about 40 percent of the concerns raised about the protection of a child usually originate in these organisations (Autorengruppe Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik 2019, 139). However, when communities went into lockdown in the midst of COVID-19, these organisations either had to close, to operate in a limited fashion or they were less frequented due to fear of infection.

Experts in the field of child protection in Germany considered it detrimental to child welfare that it proved not possible to ensure provision of child care in public facilities and schools at the very beginning of lockdown. Given the unfolding crisis, especially vulnerable children would have benefitted from a nationwide regulation guaranteeing such care across Germany (Die Kinderschutz-Zentren, 2020). Similarly, in England, social workers expressed grave concern about the limited provision of services and support from those partner organisations which usually work with families and children in need and which provide intelligence for agencies with a child protection remit (Turner, 2020).

3.2. Youth welfare agencies between infection prevention and child protection

Another institutional factor, which shapes risks associated with child abuse and neglect, concerns the extent to which agencies responsible for investigating and determining whether a child is at risk of harm – in the German case the youth welfare agencies - can fully operate as standard. There is a range of evidence on the extent to which the pandemic has affected the work of these agencies. For example, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs (BMFSFJ) has funded the development of a communication and practice transfer platform, which highlights challenges experienced by providers of social welfare services for children and adolescents, while simultaneously providing support. The platform, which is coordinated by the Institute for Social Pedagogical Research (*Institut für Sozialpädagogische Forschung Mainz gGmbH*) and developed together with three cooperation partners, features regularly updated information, recommendations and examples of good practice in response to the specific problems caused by COVID-19 measures (www.forum-transfer.de).

To some degree, the pandemic has presented youth welfare agencies with conflicting responsibilities of protecting children from maltreatment while at the same time having to prevent the spread of the virus. A survey conducted in early May by the *Bayerischer Rundfunk* (Bavarian broadcasting company) with 14 Bavarian youth welfare agencies revealed that practitioners had largely discontinued homevisits. Practitioners were meeting with families in emergencies only, namely when there was a high risk of significant harm to a child. In other cases, staff remained in contact with their clients by phone, email and video chat (Hell et al., 2020).

The scientific online survey *DJI-Jugendhilfeb@rometer* examined what challenges youth welfare agencies perceived to be the most pressing in the coronavirus pandemic. Out of the twelve possible and general challenges presented in the questionnaire, the agencies clearly indicated that 'recognizing and prioritizing current needs' was the most difficult. Some agencies attributed this to the fact that routine forms of accessing information about families' needs (such as face-to-face conversations with families or school staff) could not, or only partially, be employed in lockdown. Moreover, the new experience of the unfamiliar pandemic was accompanied by a lack of knowledge of the challenges and problems COVID could cause for children and their parents (Mairhofer, Peucker, Pluto, van Santen, & Seckinger, 2020).

More positively, at least as far as the provision of services by youth welfare agencies is concerned, staff absences seemed to have played a minor role. In the *DJI-Jugendhilfeb@rometer* survey, these agencies were asked to rate the extent to which personnel shortages (related, for example, to sickness or quarantine) had posed problems for the performance of their work. On a scale between 0 „not problematic" and 10 "highly problematic", the average value was only 2.2 (Mairhofer, Peucker, Pluto, van Santen, & Seckinger, 2020). Interestingly, this contrasts with findings in England, where research by CommunityCare involving 500 practitioners working in adult, children and mental health services (92 percent of whom were qualified social workers), revealed that the provision of services had been detrimentally affected by a disproportionate level of staff absences. In fact, 52 percent of respondents indicated that staff absences, which were caused by colleagues being sick or having to self-isolate, had affected their practice; 40 percent had experienced difficulties in meeting statutory duties because of depleted staffing or rising demand for services, with 64 percent reporting that their workload had increased (Turner, 2020). The different assessments may partly be due to the different sample compositions, the English study having included social workers and the German study managers of youth welfare agencies.

4. Identifying children for whom there might be protection risks

Given that the COVID-19 measures affected the ability of child protection practitioners to receive intelligence from cooperating actors, such as teachers and childcare staff, how could children in need of protection be identified? In Germany, a range of actions and strategies were developed by a number of youth welfare agencies with the aims, first, to proactively involve the wider public in the protection of children's well-being, and second, to reach families under strain. Access to help and advice was widely advertised via websites, flyers, information mails, and WhatsApp messages. For example, the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs published on its website a list of support services for families, which can be accessed by telephone or online (BMFSFJ, 2020a). The National Centre for Early Prevention (*Nationales Zentrum Frühe Hilfen* (NZFH)) has similarly compiled a comprehensive list of online and telephone counselling services for pregnant women and parents with children up to three years of age. These remote counselling services were particularly important when many points of contact for families with young children had closed in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus (*Nationales Zentrum Frühe Hilfen* (NZFH, 2020)). In some cases, information targeted neighbourhoods, relatives and acquaintances of families, as well as health professionals, advising these groups on how to support families looking for help and how to

proceed if concerns arose about the protection of a child. An example of this is the appeal of the Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse (Unabhängige Beauftragte für Fragen des sexuellen Kindesmissbrauchs) as part of the campaign 'Leaving no child alone' (*Kein Kind alleine lassen*).

Regarding the specific endeavours undertaken by German youth welfare agencies, the *DJI-Jugendhilfeb@rometer* survey results show that 89 percent of these agencies intensified their efforts of advertising counselling and crisis services (Mairhofer, Peucker, Pluto, van Santen, & Seckinger, 2020).

At the international level, *The Alliance* (2020) recommends involving actors in the protection of children's well-being who despite physical distancing requirements can have contact with children, such as pharmacists and retailers (*The Alliance*, 2020, 3). In Germany, the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs launched the "*Stärker als Gewalt*" ("Stronger Than Violence") initiative: supermarkets display posters in their shopping area and print information on the back of receipts to provide information about services available to support victims of domestic violence. Pharmacies in Spain, France and the United Kingdom support victims of domestic violence who are unable in the presence of the perpetrator to seek help at home (Elks & Davies, 2020; Grierson, 2020).

To summarise this article so far, it has addressed the possible (mainly detrimental) effects of the coronavirus pandemic on children and their families and has outlined the institutional factors which may further aggravate the situation. In addition, issues with regard to identifying children in need of protection have been discussed. The article now turns to the new challenges faced by child protection professionals in their work with clients.

5. Child protection practitioners establishing and maintaining contact with clients in the pandemic

Child and youth welfare service providers rely to a large extent on interaction and dialogue with their clients. Indeed, the communication between practitioners and clients is a key 'work tool' for these service providers. Such communication involves more than an exchange of information. It requires the development of a trustful working relationship, which can facilitate conversations about sensitive issues (Mairhofer, Peucker, Pluto, van Santen, & Seckinger, 2020). However, finding innovative, and in this context especially digital, ways to support and accompany young people and families in times of physical distancing has proven to be onerous.

5.1. Telephone and digital counselling and support for families

Experiences from professional practice indicate that it can be significantly more difficult to establish a working relationship with clients by telephone than by face-to-face encounters, as non-verbal references and eye contact are missing (Buschle & Meyer, 2020; CommunityCare, 2020). Online and telephone counselling reaches its limits in relation to diagnostic issues or acute crisis intervention (Reindl & Engelhardt, 2020). Hence, it is not surprising that the protection of children's welfare exclusively by use of telephonic or digital means was perceived to be a formidable challenge by the German youth welfare agencies included in the *DJI-Jugendhilfeb@rometer* survey. Agencies which could not maintain personal contacts with families found it harder to comply with professional standards (e.g. the timely recognition of need for help), to implement child protection practices and to ensure the participation of clients (Mairhofer, Peucker, Pluto, van Santen, & Seckinger, 2020).

In the absence of the option of face-to-face contacts, communication by video has some advantages over phone calls. The former allows more easily for sending and understanding non-verbal interpersonal signals, and facilitates a better assessment of family safety and well-being (Waters, Winston, & Ghertner, 2020). However, both methods are unsuitable when the addressees are young children, children and parents with limited attention spans or with reduced intelligence (Reindl & Engelhardt, 2020). Moreover, regarding the specific case of domestic violence, social workers in several countries have reported their concern about the impossibility to establish in their video communications if they were speaking to the victim in private. Other people could have been present and listened in while remaining invisible in the video image (Truell, 2020).

Perhaps especially in preventative care, practitioners have frequently resorted to contacting parents by telephone. According to a qualitative ad-hoc survey by the National Center for Early Intervention (NZFH) in Germany, in lockdown, more than half of family midwives and family nurses remained in contact with pregnant women and parents by telephone, and about a sixth of the practitioners looked after the families via email, video telephony or messenger service. Not surprisingly, study participants found that these means did not allow them to provide the intensive support they regarded as necessary in the crisis situation (NZFH, n.d.)

5.2. Challenges of digitalizing work processes in child and youth welfare services

5.2.1. Technical equipment

There is little evidence available on experiences of the use of digital media in services for children and adolescents (Kutscher, 2020). The *DJI-Jugendhilfeb@rometer* survey indicates that only 25 percent of public youth and child welfare services (*Allgemeiner sozialer Dienst* (ASD)) employ video-based communication. The reasons for this small percentage include a lack of technical equipment, such as work mobile phones and laptops, but also reservations about these communication channels. There are data protection concerns (see also below) and unresolved questions about how to use these communication channels in a legally incontestable manner. Moreover, there is a lack of experience with this form of communication among both professionals and families (see Mairhofer, Peucker, Pluto, van Santen, & Seckinger, 2020). For many clients, the barrier posed by online counselling is very high due to language and/or cognitive barriers, or limited internet access. Clearly, not all families have the required technical prerequisites for digital communication, as has become abundantly apparent in the context of home learning.

A non-representative online survey of 5000 adolescents and youths about their experiences during the COVID-19 measures shows

that most of those surveyed disposed of a smartphone, but not necessarily a computer. Households may lack the appropriate internet connection or sufficient data volume for household members to be able to communicate smoothly by video chat over the required period of time (Andresen, Lips, Möller, Ruksack et al., 2020)

5.2.2. Conditions for successful digital communication

While the providers of services for children and adults must take this evidence into account, the potentially positive effects of digital forms of communication should also be borne in mind. Such communication may enhance the willingness of clients to cooperate as the threshold for engaging in a brief conversation is low, and the barrier associated with appointments at an agency is removed (Mairhofer, Peucker, Pluto, van Santen, & Seckinger, 2020). With regards to professionals' ability and willingness to use video conferencing, at least in the field of psychotherapy, there are indicators that even practitioners with little experience can quickly adapt the style of communication to this technology (Martin, McBride, Masterman, Pote, & Mokhtar, 2020).

Important considerations for the implementation of digital case management can include the following three steps: identify suitable technology, provide training to case workers and clients, and consider of data protection and information sharing between systems (Waters et al., 2020). As to identifying suitable technology, different communication platforms, including telephone, videoconferencing, or other web-based technologies may be appropriate. Some of those can potentially offer a virtual case management system for organizations with a child protection remit. Key issues to consider in the selection of the technology include the existing IT infrastructure of the organisation, the complexity of the information to be transmitted, as well as the ability of clients to be equipped with and confidently use the technology (Waters et al., 2020).

5.2.3. Training needs

However, providers of services for children and adolescents in Germany are often inadequately qualified for video communication, so that there is a considerable need for the second step mentioned above – the provision of training to case workers in the area of digitized work. In fact, a few weeks into lockdown, the *Deutsches Institut für Jugendhilfe und Familienrecht* (German Institute for Youth Welfare and Family Law) tried to respond to this need for training, and offered webinars for heads of youth welfare agencies and employees. In addition, several guidelines to support professionals working in (crisis) counselling have now been developed by social organizations, as well as communication and media experts. These guidelines address communication technology requirements, specific communication strategies associated with the phone or in video chat, and some place a particular focus on child protection (Wenzel, Jaschke, & Engelhardt, 2020).

5.2.4. Urgent data protection issues

The use of digital communication media also raises the question of how data protection can be guaranteed. The different organisations involved in child protection often process personal data, which are protected by data protection regulations. However, in view of the coronavirus crisis, it was sometimes regarded as permissible in Germany to privilege child welfare as a higher priority than data protection. Issues of uncertainty were to be clarified once the situation would normalize again (AGJ, 2020, 4). In Bavaria, for example, the data protection officer temporarily eased data protection measures, initially until 14 June 2020. This allowed staff of public authorities the use of private devices, messenger and cloud services. In a non-representative survey of social work practitioners, respondents from the field of social work employed in public authorities and institutions providing educational support, referred to the violation of professional standards as a precondition for being able to work, or for restoring the ability to work. Digitization was quickly introduced as physical alternatives were no longer viable. The survey researchers found that the effects of COVID-19 led some to conclude that the digitalization of social work should now be prioritized, although upholding data protection standards and avoiding the unintended consequences and costs of such a paradigm shift must be acknowledged (Buschle & Meyer, 2020).

In fact, towards the end of March 2020, authorities responsible for data protection issues have now made available comprehensive information on how data protection can be guaranteed with increased digital communication (Reindl & Engelhardt, 2020). Relevant recommendations regarding the use of messenger and video conference services in times of the pandemic and the competent assessment of commercial offers for enhanced digital services can be found on the website of the Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information (*Bundesbeauftragten für den Datenschutz und die Informationsfreiheit*). Data protection issues are also dealt with in the FAQs section of the German Institute for Youth Human Services and Family Law (DIJuF). Such information will be widely welcome, as the temporary data protection derogation came to an end on 16 June 2020. The ruling was accompanied by the express advice that in the event of digital communication media being used in the future, this requires a secure digital communication infrastructure in compliance with the data protection regulation (*Bayerische Landesbeauftragte für den Datenschutz, n.d.*).

5.3. Face-to-face contacts under COVID-19 measures

5.3.1. Frequency and settings

As mentioned above, face-to-face contacts with families form an integral part of social work in child protection, for example, in home visits, counselling and child protection plans, which are jointly prepared by social workers and clients. At the beginning of lockdown, anecdotal evidence of practitioners responding creatively to the challenge of contact restrictions came to public attention. For example, a family counselling centre reported in the first weeks of lockdown how their staff adhered to the rules on hygiene and physical distancing in meetings with families by using new or varied settings, such as outdoor meetings (Berrischen, 2020). Despite all these protective measures, it is, of course, possible that the articulation of fear of infection by involuntary clients serves as an excuse to prevent unwelcome face-to-face contact (DIJuF, 2020).

The survey of youth welfare agencies as part of the *DJI-Jugendhilfeb@rometer* provided systematic data on the work of youth welfare agencies in times of contact restrictions. It revealed that these agencies had maintained face-to-face contacts in particular in child protection cases. Even under the COVID-19 measures, 98 percent of the surveyed agencies had continued with home visits to families for the purpose of risk assessments. In fact, 46 percent of the youth welfare agencies performed this task exclusively with home visits, 39 percent with home visits and appointments on the premises of the youth welfare agency, and 13 percent also used digital media for risk assessments (Mairhofer, Peucker, Pluto, van Santen, & Seckinger, 2020). As to the general range of tasks of these agencies, 67 percent of the respondents in management posts stated that their staff kept in face-to-face contact with the families. Meeting outdoors or in offices specifically set up for observing distancing and hygiene rules are examples of settings in which such contact took place (Mairhofer, Peucker, Pluto, van Santen, & Seckinger, 2020).

5.3.2. Factors shaping decisions on face-to-face contacts

The *Jugendhilfeb@rometer* survey also indicates that the decision to reduce face-to-face contacts is linked with difficulties of accessing personal protective equipment (PPE) or the lack of suitable rooms (Mairhofer, Peucker, Pluto, van Santen, & Seckinger, 2020).

German professional associations and trade unions expressed their concern that in the phase of acute crisis management, the needs of staff in health and social care were prioritized in Germany, while other systemically relevant practitioners were relegated to the background. Having surpassed the acute crisis, these professionals should receive financial and material support, including PPE, as a matter of urgency (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Kinder- und Jugendhilfe (AGJ), 2020; Der Paritätische Gesamtverband, 2020). Such demands are supported internationally and have a clear ethical dimension. For example, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) emphasises in its ethical principles that social workers cannot be forced to work in conditions which present health hazards (Wehrmann, 2020, 4) and refers to the WHO's advice on how best to protect oneself from the virus. The Federation demands that outreach social work be adequately supplied with PPE, including suitable masks and gloves (Wehrmann, 2020).

Management of youth welfare agencies themselves was asked in the *DJI-Jugendhilfeb@rometer* survey to assess the difficulty of different aspects relating to their child and youth welfare work as a consequence of the pandemic. Accessing PPE was regarded as the third hardest challenge (following the items of 'Recognizing and prioritizing needs for help' and 'Maintaining participation opportunities of the addressees'). On a scale from 0 (not at all problematic) to 10 (highly problematic), the average score was 4.9, whereby 43 percent of respondents rated the item on the scale above 5 (Mairhofer, Peucker, Pluto, van Santen, & Seckinger, 2020).

Finally, a point neglected in the discourse in Germany but discussed in the international literature outlines alternative ways in which social workers in some cases can reduce their need for face-to-face contacts in the pandemic. Representatives from non-governmental (e.g. The Alliance) and governmental organisations (e.g. The Children's Commissioner for England) encourage practitioners to garner support and develop strategies jointly with the communities in which families are embedded to support vulnerable families in difficult times. Trusted adults living in the community, who can make direct contact with parents and children, include retired social workers and people who already have the necessary checks and vetting - from childcare workers on leave to sports coaches (The Alliance, 2019b; Welch & Haskins, 2020; Simpson, 2020).

6. Concluding comments

The coronavirus pandemic poses a range of sudden and unexpected challenges for families as well as for child welfare service providers. The physical contact restrictions introduced to contain the spread of the virus tests the child welfare system. The importance of childcare facilities, schools and organised leisure for children and youth as essential parts of child protection are highlighted. The closure of these institutions with the resulting inability of their staff to monitor children's welfare and cooperate with child protection workers as necessary creates a gaping void. It is unlikely that this gap could be filled, despite the endeavours undertaken by many agencies to proactively involve the wider public in the protection of children's well-being. The possible decline in the number of reports of alleged maltreatment and the predominant spike in demand for remote counselling may indicate that the role of professionals and volunteers, who are in regular, face-to-face contact with children, is difficult to replace. As such, the coronavirus pandemic underscores some areas of vulnerability in the child welfare system. However, there have also been signs of remarkable resilience. For example, child protection workers have found ways of carrying out their tasks and fulfilling their responsibilities through a creative and flexible adaptation to the new circumstances. This article highlights endeavours taken to carry out face-to-face contacts safely, and the emergence of a pronounced effort to digitalise work processes.

In fact, COVID-19's impact on the child welfare system may also be understood as a catalyst for a long overdue development of alternative forms of counselling, which are currently being tested and implemented to complement the indispensable face-to-face contact. Social services provided for children and adolescents would benefit from the continued and consistent development of digitalizing work processes after the crisis. To this end, practitioners must be equipped with the required technology and receive corresponding training. In addition, in 'normal times', remote forms of counselling can expand the range of such services. This may in some cases significantly reduce access barriers, even if in terms of child protection, the benefits may be limited. Proven, continuous face-to-face contact between clients and practitioners as an established action strategy in child and youth welfare services has been shown to be neither dispensable nor replaceable.

Although the gradual easing of restrictions allows for more personal contacts, the coronavirus pandemic remains dynamic. Ongoing challenges, potential further waves of infection (and indeed new pandemics) require strategies that should build on national and international experience. This contribution aims to deepen the understanding of the German evidence on child welfare issues in a time with COVID-19. Further lessons could be identified and learnt if we looked beyond the national evidence and began to compare and

contrast the consequences of the pandemic for child welfare, the underlying reasons for similarities and differences, and the range of ways in which challenges were addressed. Such systematic and cross-national comparisons will become increasingly feasible as more data become available from studies undertaken in response to this global pandemic.

Funding source

The authors are Research Fellows at the National Centre for Early Prevention, German Youth Institute [Nationales Zentrum Frühe Hilfen (NZFH), Deutsches Jugendinstitut (DJI)] and members of the project "Quality development in child protection" [Qualitätsentwicklung im Kinderschutz]. The NZFH is a cooperation of the Federal Centre for Health Education [Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung (BZgA)] and the German Youth Institute [Deutsches Jugendinstitut (DJI)]. It is funded by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth [Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (BMFSFJ)].

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Dr. Andreas Mairhofer, as well as staff from the National Centre for Early Prevention (Nationales Zentrum Frühe Hilfen (NZFH)) and the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (BMFSFJ)) for very helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.

References

- Andresen, S., Lips, A., Möller, R., Rusack, T., Schröder, W., Thomas, S., et al. (2020a). *Kinder, Eltern und ihre Erfahrungen während der Corona Krise*. Hildesheim: Universitätsverlag Hildesheim, 27.05.2020. <https://doi.org/10.18442/121>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Andresen, S., Lips, A., Möller, R., Rusack, T., Schröder, W., Thomas, S., et al. (2020b). *Erfahrungen und Perspektiven von jungen Menschen während der Corona-Maßnahmen. Erste Ergebnisse der bundesweiten Studie JuCo*. Hildesheim: Universitätsverlag Hildesheim. <https://doi.org/10.18442/120>, 14.05.2020, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Kinder- und Jugendhilfe (AGJ). (2020). *Wenn Kümmern*innen selbst Hilfe brauchen... Die Auswirkungen der Corona-Krise auf die Kinder- und Jugendhilfe*. Zwischenruf der Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Kinder- und Jugendhilfe, 27.3.2020. https://www.agj.de/fileadmin/files/positionen/2020/AGJ_Zwischenruf_Corona.pdf, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Autorengruppe Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik. (2019). *Kinder- und Jugendhilfereport 2018. Eine kennzahlenbasierte Analyse*. Opladen, Berlin & Toronto: Budrich.
- Baron, E. J., Goldstein, E. G., & Wallace, C. (2020). *Suffering in silence: How COVID-19. School closures inhibit the reporting of child maltreatment*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3601399>, May 14, 2020, last accessed 1 July 2020.
- Berrischen, B. (2020). *Familienberatung im Rhein-Kreis: Beratungsstellen trotz Corona erreichbar*. NGZ online, 02.04.2020. https://rp-online.de/nrw/staedte/rhein-kreis/familienberatungsstellen-im-rhein-kreis-trotz-corona-krise-erreichbar_aid-49784475, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Betsch, C., Korn, L., Felgendreff, L., Eitze, S., Schmid, P., Sprengholz, P., et al. (2020a). *German COVID-19 snapshot monitoring (COSMO) - Welle 6 (07.04.2020)*. PsychArchives. <https://doi.org/10.23668/PSYCHARCHIVES.2874>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Betsch, C., Korn, L., Felgendreff, L., Eitze, S., Schmid, P., Sprengholz, P., et al. (2020b). *Germany COVID-19 Snapshot Monitoring (COSMO Germany): Monitoring knowledge, risk perceptions, preventive behaviours, and public trust in the current coronavirus outbreak in Germany*. <https://doi.org/10.23668/psycharchives.2776>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- BMFSFJ. (2020a). *Corona Pandemie. Familiäre Belastungssituationen*, 09 April 2020, last accessed 06 July 2020 <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/corona-pandemie/familiaere-belastungssituationen>.
- BMFSFJ. (2020b). *Schutz von Kindern und Jugendlichen vor häuslicher Gewalt. Ministerin Giffey stimmt sich mit Ländern über Maßnahmen in der Corona-Krise ab*, 31.03.2020. <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/aktuelles/presse/pressemitteilungen/schutz-von-kindern-und-jugendlichen-vor-haeuslicher-gewalt/154262>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Buschle, C. H., & Meyer, N. (2020). *Soziale Arbeit im Ausnahmezustand?! Professionstheoretische Forschungsnotizen zur Corona-Pandemie*. Soz Passagen (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12592-020-00347-0>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- CommunityCare. (2020). *Social work diary: "I miss the non-verbal cues, the looks and the eye-contact"*, 30 April 2020. <https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2020/04/30/social-work-diary-i-miss-the-non-verbal-cues-the-looks-and-eye-contact/>, last accessed 26 August 2020.
- Der Bayerische Landesbeauftragte für den Datenschutz (o.J.). (2020). *Sonderinformationen zum mobilen Arbeiten mit Privatgeräten zur Bewältigung der Corona-Pandemie*. last accessed 27 August 2020 <https://www.datenschutz-bayern.de/corona/sonderinfo.html>.
- Der Paritätische Gesamtverband. (2020). *Bonus für soziale Arbeit während Corona-Krise: Paritätischer fordert Steuerabzug für alle Beschäftigten in sozialen Diensten in Höhe von 500 Euro*, 09 April 2020. <https://www.der-paritaetische.de/presse/bonus-fuer-soziale-arbeit-waehrend-corona-krise-paritaetischer-fordert-steuerabzug-fuer-alle-beschaefigt/>, last accessed 28 August 2020.
- Die Bundesregierung. (2020). *Kindeswohl hat höchste Priorität*, 11 May 2020. <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/missbrauchszaehlen-1752038>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Die Kinderschutz-Zentren. (2020). *Was Kinderschutz in der gegenwärtigen Krise bedeutet und braucht. Ein Zwischenruf der Kinderschutzzentren*, 01 April 2020. https://www.kinderschutz-zentren.org/Mediengalerie/1585749029_-_Zwischenruf_der_Kinderschutz-Zentren.pdf, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- DIJuF. (2020). *Wie ist damit umzugehen, wenn eine Familie einen im Rahmen einer (möglichen) Kindeswohlgefährdung notwendigen Hausbesuch mit Verweis auf die Infektionsgefahr verweigert?*, 16 April 2020. <https://www.dijuf.de/coronavirus-faq.html#kindFAQ3>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Elks, S., & Davies, S. (2020). *Coronavirus codewords: Help or hindrance in domestic abuse?* Thomas Reuters Foundation News. <https://news.trust.org/item/20200415175930-b0dk>.
- Grierson, J. (2020). *Boots to provide help for domestic abuse victims*. The Guardian, 1. May 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/may/01/boots-to-provide-help-for-domestic-abuse-victims-coronavirus-lockdown>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Hell, A., Kampf, L., Kauler, M., & Kohrsal, C. (2020). *Häusliche Gewalt in der Corona-Krise. Wenn das Kind verborgen bleibt*. Süddeutsche Zeitung, 6. Mai 2020. <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/coronavirus-haeusliche-gewalt-jugendaemter-1.4899381>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Kamenetz, A. (2020). *Child sexual abuse reports are on the rise amid lockdown orders*. National Public Radio (npr), 2, 28 April 2020. <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/04/28/847251985/child-sexual-abuse-reports-are-on-the-rise-amid-lockdown-orders?i=1593846585623>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Kelly, J., & Hansel, K. (2020). *Coronavirus: What child welfare systems need to think about*. The imprint. Youth and family news, 11.03.2020. <https://imprintnews.org/child-welfare-2/coronavirus-what-child-welfare-systems-need-to-think-about/41220>, last accessed 26 August 2020.
- Kutscher, N. (2020). *Ethische Fragen Sozialer Arbeit im Kontext von Digitalisierung*. In N. Kutscher, T. H. Ley, U. Seelmeyer, F. Siller, A. Tillmann, & I. Zorn (Eds.), *Handbuch Digitalisierung und sozialer Arbeit* (pp. 347–362). Beltz: Weinheim & Basel.

- Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg (lpb). (2020). *Coronavirus – COVID19. Die Pandemie in Deutschland und Baden-Württemberg*. Updated 2 July 2020. <https://www.lpb-bw.de/coronavirus-covid-19>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Langmeyer, A., Guglhör-Rudan, A., Naab, T., Urlen, M., & Winkhofer, U. (2020). *Erste Ergebnisse zum veränderten Alltag und zum Wohlbefinden von Kindern*. München: DJI.
- Lochner, B. (2020). *Thüringer Familien in Zeiten von Corona – Wohlbefinden der Kinder, Herausforderungen des Homeschooling & Unterstützungsbedarfe der Eltern. Erste Befunde*. Fachhochschule Erfurt, 25. April 2020. https://www.forum-transfer.de/fileadmin/user_upload/20-04-25_Befr.Familien-1.Befunde.pdf, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Mairhofer, A., Peucker, C. H., Pluto, L., van Santen, E., & Seckinger, M. (2020). *Kinder- und Jugendhilfe in Zeiten der Corona-Pandemie*. DJI-Jugendhilfeb@rometer bei Jugendämtern. München: DJI.
- Martin, J., McBride, T., Masterman, T. H., Pote, I., & Mokhtar, N. (2020). *Covid-19 and early intervention: Evidence, challenges and risks relating to virtual and digital delivery*. London: Early Intervention Foundation. April, 2020.
- Mühlmann, T., & Pothmann, J. (2020). *Werkstattbericht zur Zusatzhebung der Gefährdungseinschätzungen gemäß § 8a Abs. 1 SGB VIII anlässlich der SARS-CoV-2-Pandemie. Kurzfassung. Arbeitsstelle Kinder- und Jugendhilfestatistik (AKJStat) an der Universität Dortmund*. Report status: 11 August 2020.
- National Governors Association (NGA). (2020). *Addressing child abuse reporting and supporting child well-being during Covid-19*, 15 June 2020. <https://www.nga.org/memos/child-abuse-reporting-covid-19/>, last accessed 26 August 2020.
- Nationales Zentrum Frühe Hilfen (NZFH). (2020). *Corona Zeiten: Wo gibt es jetzt Beratung für Eltern?*, 13 May 2020 <https://www.elternsein.info/beratung-anonym-anonym-kostenlos/corona-zeiten-beratung-jetzt-fuer-eltern/>, last accessed 6 July 2020.
- Nationales Zentrum Frühe Hilfen (NZFH) (o.J.). (2020). *Befragung von Gesundheitsfachkräften zu den Veränderungen durch Corona*. last accessed 27 August 2020 <https://www.fruehehilfen.de/forschung-im-nzfh/forschung-zu-corona/befragung-von-gesundheitsfachkraeften-zu-den-veraenderungen-durch-corona/>.
- Nummer gegen Kummer. (2020). *„Nummer gegen Kummer“ zur aktuellen Situation an den Beratungsangeboten*, 28 April 2020. <https://www.nummergegenkummer.de/neues/corona-und-die-aktuelle-situation-bei-nummer-gegen-kummer.html>, last accessed 11 Aug 2020.
- Reindl, R., & Engelhardt, E. (2020). *Handlungsempfehlungen zur kurzfristigen Umsetzung von Onlineberatung vor dem Hintergrund der Corona-Krise*. Institut für E-Beratung der Technischen Hochschule Nürnberg. IEB 1012 INFO Onlineberatung Corona public, Vers. 1.0, 19 March 2020.
- Senatsverwaltung für Justiz, Verbraucherschutz und Antidiskriminierung. (2020). *Anstieg häuslicher Gewalt und Kindesmisshandlung im Zuge der Corona-Pandemie*, 02 July 2020. <https://www.berlin.de/sen/justva/presse/pressemitteilungen/2020/pressemitteilung.954934.php>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Simpson, F. (2020). *BASW makes fresh plea for PPE as social worker dies from Covid-19*. *Children & Young People now*, 01 April 2020. <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/news/article/basw-makes-fresh-plea-for-ppe-as-social-worker-dies-from-covid-19>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Sistovaris, M., Fallon, B., Miller, S., Birken, C., Denburg, A., Jenkins, J., et al. (2020). *Child welfare and pandemics*. Toronto, Ontario: Policy Bench, Fraser Mustard Institute of Human Development, University of Toronto.
- Smith, K. I. (2020). *Coronavirus doesn't cause men's violence against women*, 15 April 2020 <https://kareningalasmith.com/2020/04/15/coronavirus-doesnt-cause-mens-violence-against-women/>.
- Steinert, J., & Ebert, C. (2020). *Gewalt an Frauen und Kindern in Deutschland während Covid-19- bedingten Ausgangsbeschränkungen: Zusammenfassung der Ergebnisse, Hochschule für Politik München, TUM School of Governance*. https://drive.google.com/file/d/19Wqpy9nwMNjdgO4_FCqqlfYyLmBn7y/view.
- The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2019a). *Minimum standards for child protection in humanitarian action* (2019 edition), 2019. <https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/cpms/#ch001>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2019b). *Technical note: Protection of children during the coronavirus pandemic*. Version 1, March 2019. https://alliancecpa.org/system/tdf/library/attachments/the_alliance_covid_19_brief_version_1.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=37184, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (The Alliance). (2020). *End violence against children, UNICEF, WHO, COVID-19: Protecting children from violence, abuse and neglect in the home*. Version 1, May 2020. <https://www.unicef.org/media/68711/file/COVID-19-Protecting-children-from-violence-abuse-and-neglect-in-home-2020.pdf>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Truell, R. (2020). *COVID-19: The struggle, success and expansion of social work. Rory Truell reflects on the profession's global response five months on*. Switzerland: IFSW, 18 May 2020.
- Turner, A. (2020). *Most social workers say Covid-19 has negatively hit their work and the lives of those they support*. CommunityCare. May 28, 2020. <https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2020/05/28/social-workers-say-coronavirus-negatively-affected-services-people-they-support>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- UBSKM. (2020). *Jetzt kein Kind alleine lassen*. last accessed 27 August 2020 <https://www.deine-playlist-2020.de/>.
- Waters, A., Winston, P., & Ghertner, R. (2020). *Virtual case management considerations and resources for human services*. US Department of Health & Human Services, 01 April 2020. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/pdf-report/virtual-case-management>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Weale, S. (2020). *Sharp rise in number of calls to childline over coronavirus*. *The Guardian*, 27 March 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/27/sharp-rise-in-number-of-calls-to-childline-over-coronavirus>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Wehrmann, C. (2020). *Ethical decision-making in the face of COVID-19*. International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). last accessed 26 August 2020 <https://www.ifsw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Option-A-Ethical-Decision-making-in-the-face-of-COVID-19.pdf>.
- Welch, M., & Haskins, R. (2020). *Report. What COVID-19 means for America's child welfare system*. Brookings, 30 April 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/what-covid-19-means-for-americas-child-welfare-system/>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Wenzel, J., Jaschke, S. T., & Engelhardt, E. (2020). *Handreichung. Krisenberatung am Telefon und per Video in Zeiten von Corona*. Aktualisiert, 08.04.2020, Version: 1.2. https://www.fruehehilfen.de/fileadmin/user_upload/fruehehilfen.de/pdf/Krisenberatung-am-Telefon-und-per-Video-in-Zeiten-von-Corona-2020-03-27-VS-1-1.pdf, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- ZDF. (2020). *Sorgentelefone in Corona-Zeiten. Hilferufe aus dem Kinderzimmer*, 21 May 2020. <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/panorama/coronavirus-gewalt-kinder-sorgentelefone-100.html>, last accessed 27 August 2020.
- Zussman, R. (2020). *Reports of child abuse down amid COVID-19, as B.C. advocates remind public of duty to report*. *Global News*, 11 May 2020. <https://globalnews.ca/news/6929622/child-abuse-reporting-coronavirus/>, last accessed 27 August 2020.