The Eco-Crisis and CAMHS: What's the evidence?

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February 2021
The Eco-Crisis and CAMHS: What's the evidence?

• The Eco-Crisis
• Consequences of the Eco-Crisis for children and young people’s health
• Responses to the Eco-Crisis
The Eco-Crisis
Pollution of land, sea and air

Land use change and habitat loss

Urbanisation

Over exploitation
Global and local climate change

Biodiversity loss

Failure of ecosystem services
These are not independent issues

• **Zoonotic disease** - interactions of biodiversity loss, climate change, landuse change

• **Harmful algal blooms** - interactions of land use change, intensive agriculture, climate change

• **Crop failures** - interactions of climate change, loss of biodiversity and over intensification
Consequences of the Eco-Crisis for children and young people’s health
Climate sensitive environmental burden of disease in childhood

Of the climate sensitive environmental burden of disease, 88% fell upon children under 5 years.

Effects on children and on other vulnerable populations are already — and are projected to continue to be — disproportionately heavy.
Environmental burden of disease in childhood

The environmental risk factor for child health in the EU28 with the largest impact was air pollution.

PM$_{10}$ is associated with infant mortality (<1 year old) and asthma (5-18 years old). Of these, infant mortality was associated with the largest burden (93,147 DALYs annually), followed by asthma (13,904 DALYs annually). PM$_{2.5}$ is associated with low respiratory infections (<18 years old) and was estimated to produce 17,453 DALYs annually.
Environmental burden of disease over the lifecourse

“Exposures to environmental pollution in early life are especially hazardous. Susceptibility is greatest during “windows of vulnerability”—brief, precisely timed periods in embryonic, fetal, and early postnatal life when vital organs are sculpted through complex, highly choreographed, and tightly scheduled developmental processes.

Exposures to harmful environmental influences during these critical periods can cause permanent anatomic, functional, and metabolic changes…. dysfunction can manifest as acute or chronic disease at any point across the life span from early infancy to extreme old age.”
Short and long term impacts of exposure to natural disasters and extreme events

“Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression are the most commonly observed psychological reactions in children following severe natural disasters. Between 30% to 90% of youth display severe posttraumatic stress reactions following exposure to severe natural disasters.”
Short and long term impacts of exposure to natural disasters and extreme events

“A study of over 7,000 children from four parishes in Louisiana heavily affected by Hurricane Katrina. Based on a screening tool measuring symptoms of PTSD and depression (National Child Traumatic Stress Network [NCTSN], 2005), they found that 49% of fourth through twelfth graders exceeded the cut-off for a mental health referral in the year following the disaster and 41.6% of youth exceeded the cut-off the following year.”
The Eco-Crisis and Eco-Anxiety

Ecoanxiety: A chronic fear of environmental doom
(Def. American Psychological Association)

“Many young people express worry, fear, and anxiety about its impact on their future lives, and children in developed countries also show concern about climate impacts on children and families in developing countries....

...10-12-year-olds in the USA expressed strong feelings of fear, sadness, and anger when discussing environmental problems. Many young people believe that the world may end during their lifetime due to climate change and other global threats.”
The Eco-Crisis and children’s specific vulnerability

“Children are... at risk of a range of... climate-related health stressors because of their biological sensitivity, immature physiology, unique ways of interacting with their environment, limited adaptive capacity, and lifelong exposure.

Climate change threatens the underlying social, economic, and environmental determinants of children’s health”
The Eco-Crisis and multiple vulnerability

“Socially deprived communities typically struggle under a triple burden of poverty, poor quality environment and ill health. Poorer communities are often exposed to higher levels of pollution and noise and to high temperatures, while pre-existing health conditions increase vulnerability to environmental health hazards.”
“Lower-income and other disadvantaged groups contribute least to causing climate change but are likely to be most negatively affected by it; they pay, as a proportion of income, the most towards implementing certain policy responses and benefit least from those policies; and their voices tend to go unheard in decision making.”
The Eco-Crisis and unequal representation

“We found that little attention was given to future generations; young people rarely spoke and, along with those yet to be born, were represented in ways that obscured the temporal and social inequalities that are built into climate change.”
Responding to the Eco-Crisis

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Key principles

• Nested strategies integrating zero to tertiary prevention
  ➢ Zero – prevent hazard
  ➢ Primary – block interaction of hazard and individual/community
  ➢ Secondary – prevent effects after exposure
  ➢ Tertiary – reduce morbidity and mortality due to exposure
Key principles

• Nested strategies integrating zero to tertiary prevention
• Support systems wide, inter-departmental and -sectoral efforts such as Wales’ Wellbeing of Future Generations Act
Societal attitudes, beliefs and behaviours

Political and private sector action

Prevent
Mitigate & Adapt
Respond
Key principles

• Nested strategies integrating zero to tertiary prevention
• Support systems wide, inter-departmental and -sectoral efforts such as Wales’ Wellbeing of Future Generations Act
• Support long-term, co-beneficial action
• Intergenerational, socio-economic equity and fairness
• Listen to and involve children and young people
Thank you for listening

Thanks to colleagues at ECEHH, UoE, Defra, Natural England, Dorset PH and elsewhere

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