

## **SOCIAL CLIMATE CHANGE AND CHILDREN: CONSEQUENCES, CAUSES ANCURES**

Dr Tim Moore, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Community Child Health, Royal Children's Hospital

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Over the past fifty years, the conditions under which families are raising young children have altered so rapidly and dramatically as to constitute a form of social climate change that parallels environmental climate change. At the same time, health and developmental outcomes for children have worsened or are unacceptably high. Understanding this phenomenon is a challenge. Given the general improvements in general prosperity, the occurrence of worsening outcomes is counterintuitive. At a general level, it appears that the worsening outcomes represent an unintended consequence of societal changes and economic policies that in other respects have been remarkably successful. However, if we are to improve outcomes for young people, we need to understand the specific ways these environmental changes are affecting children's development and wellbeing. This paper identifies a number of factors in the natural, built and social environments that are potentially contributing to these outcomes. It also describes a comprehensive developmental framework for understanding how these environmental factors, singly or in combination, may be affecting child development and functioning. This framework expands the widely-accepted ecological systems model to include both physical environmental ecological effects and intrapersonal 'ecological' effects. The notion of biopsychosocial accumulation is introduced to describe how environmental influences may affect children's biological, neurological and psychological functioning. Finally, the paper explores the implications for action and research, drawing on the processes whereby the scientific community has reached agreement about climate change to identify a potential research agenda for understanding what needs to be done to improve outcomes for children and young people.