Script for video abstract of Children and Climate Change

[Hello, I am Ann Sanson, and I am Susie Burke. We are 2 of the 4 authors of the Cambridge Element, Children and Climate Change.]

[SB] We wrote this Element to raise awareness among everyone who works with children or has responsibility for children about the deep and far-reaching impacts that climate has on this generation’s development and wellbeing – that are likely to worsen over time – far worse even than the COVID pandemic. So we hope it will be useful to child development researchers and practitioners as well as parents and teachers, in thinking about how they can best support children in this unprecedented situation.

[AS] We adopt a bioecological model of development, similar to the one developed by Bronfenbrenner, to think about climate change as a macrosystem phenomenon that filters through all the systems that affect a child (things like health and education systems, their communities and families). So we look at the direct impacts of being exposed to extreme weather events (like hurricanes, wildfires, storms, extreme heat and droughts) on children’s physical and psychological well-being (so deaths and injuries, illnesses, malnutrition, and psychological effects like post-traumatic stress), and also its indirect impacts (through things like disrupted education, community violence, and family stress). We emphasise children’s greater vulnerability to climate shocks than adults, and we draw on UNICEF’s Children’s Climate Risk Index which shows that about half of the world’s children live in countries at extremely high risk from climate change – most of these being in the Global South.

[SB] Evidence shows most children know about and are worried about climate change, even if they haven’t yet experienced it. So we examine children’s coping strategies”: we look in particular at emotion-focused coping, problem-focused coping and meaning-focused coping, and we look at which are effective and which strategies are less so. We discuss how teachers and schools can help protect and prepare children to face the challenges of the climate crisis. Key themes are children’s right to know about climate change, the importance of building their hope that humanity can rise to the challenge of addressing the climate emergency, the importance of adults showing children that they themselves are doing something about the climate crisis, and the role of agency as a protective factor. Giving children the skills and opportunities to help protect the planet themselves is one of the best ways we can help prepare children to help them cope with the climate crisis.

[AS] We end with two messages: we highlight some of the many areas that are under-researched – given the urgency of the climate crisis, there is shockingly little research on children aged 0-12, and even less in the Global South; and we ask all those caring *for* and *about* children’s future to take climate action themselves, because without all of us playing our part, our children may not have a liveable planet.

[AS & SB] So please read our Element, and please act on it!