

Senedd Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

Ymchwiliad i effaith argyfwng Covid-19
ar blant a phobl ifanc yng Nghymru

COV 33
Ymateb gan: SchoolBeat Heddlu
Gogledd Cymru

Welsh Parliament
Children, Young People and Education
Committee

Inquiry into the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak
on children and young people in Wales

COV 33
Response from: North Wales Police SchoolBeat

Children and young people report North Wales Police Report May 2020

General

This report has been compiled by our team of School Community Police Officers (SCPOs) within the North Wales Police area, most of which have now been redeployed back to Neighbourhood Policing Teams. Information gathered has been based on not only their interactions within the community but also from their personal experiences as parents during lockdown. We have also sought feedback from Youth Justice Teams as well.

Generally here in NW, the majority children and their parents appear to be coping well with the adjustments as are the children with being home schooled. It appears that Parents and Children are interacting more whilst in this environment as opposed to packing them off to school for the day in a rush so they can get to work. Youth Justice Teams reported that older young people appear to be doing ok where the young people were deemed low risk. Many have parents at home, and are happy to play on their games console and keep in touch with their friends on there. They also watch, discuss and then rate films or TV series' on Netflix and make recommendations to each other.

It was, however, noted that this difficult time will be slightly easier on children who have siblings. There is a distinct possibility that some children from only child families, specifically young children, may go weeks and months without face to face contact with other children. This is a worry.

Educational perspective

From an educational point of view, parents/carers and what support they provide, will be the difference between children that thrive and children who don't. There will always be parents/carers who push their children too hard and parents on the opposite scale who don't take enough interest in

their children's education. Striking the correct balance at this difficult time is very important. Teachers are doing all they can to support key workers children, as well as supplying work for children at home through google classroom and class dojo.

The initial period after schools re-open will be a very difficult period for teachers and children alike. Children who have little or no rules at home find it difficult to adjust to routine and structure that a school brings following normal school holidays; I believe this will be amplified should schools be closed until September or later.

Personal experiences as parents

One of our SCPOs stated 'Having a 15 and 12 year old at home, they have responded and adapted really well to the situation. They have been very proactive in getting on with the work that they have been set by the school and my wife who is working from home can leave them unsupervised so she can get on with her work. If anything they seem to be bonding better than usual. A highlight of our Saturday evening is our sports day where we play pool, darts and table football. We have a great laugh and forget about all the worries and troubles for a time!'

Another officer has a 7 year old son who 'LOVES life at the moment! Mum or dad is home with him EVERY day!' Her other son is 13 and he is 'finding it hard to keep interested in school work - even Google Classroom work over the internet during lockdown is not enticing enough to keep him occupied!'

Another Officer, who has a 14 year old son, stated that 'at first, he found being off school amusing and enjoyed the lie in every morning, but as the weeks have progressed, he has become bored and lonely. He is a very active young man and participated in team sports which have all been cancelled. He is not only missing the sports, but also his acquaintances from rugby and athletics and friendships from school. He is now becoming increasingly anxious and frightened to go outside any further than the house. He is concerned he will catch Covid19. A consequence of this is that it's been hard to get him to do his daily exercise. Just this week, he said he wants to go back to school; he misses the routine of school and work. 'Teams' is good for setting work but it's challenging if you don't understand it - you simply cannot ask questions and interact with the teachers. Not being at school is having a huge impact on his mental health and well-being and this is something the school is aware of, for all pupils.'

Her daughter is 17 years old and in her final year of school. 'The impact on her has been huge, not only have her exams been cancelled and course work stopped in its tracks, but it is the uncertainty of her grades for

university and how the school will grade her work without the exam result that worries her. The social aspect of not having a 'leaving prom' and leaving school quite abruptly too, has affected her well-being. The worry in the first few weeks was whether to continue with coursework with the necessary resources at home. This was a struggle until guidance came through from WG.' Her daughter has plans to go to university and although they seem to be putting things in place for a September start, 'there's uncertainty of not knowing if this is going ahead or not. Big decisions for her and the not knowing is the hardest part for her. The other side of the education aspect is, she turns 18 this year so her party is also on hold. She is anxious about not having the same level of contact with her friends to discuss their futures and very soon they will all be going their separate ways.'

This pandemic, it seems will have a huge impact on the mental health and well-being of all of our young people and this is a long term concern for all of our SCPOs, as Officers and parents.

Examples of Incidents dealt with involving children and young people within the NWP region

- One of the School Community Police Officers (SCPOs) has recently had involvement with a 12yr old boy and his family from the North Wales region. The child attends one of her high schools and is currently on the Child Protection Register. He has been described as being beyond parental control and is associating with other young people in the community committing ASB and putting others and himself at risk. He is accessing school provision, although he has put his place at risk due to him not adhering to current COVID 19 lockdown guidance. Due to his current behaviour Social Services Department are escalating legal proceedings and considering placement options outside the family home in the short term. This is a child who under normal circumstances suffers from mental health issues and is finding the current restrictions, lack of parental control and changes in his education extremely difficult to comprehend. The SCPO had involvement in the past with this child while he was in primary school and has submitted previous CID 16s due to his threats and attempts to harm himself. The pandemic has had a massive effect on him. The school's Deputy Head and Safeguarding teacher has been in contact with the parents regarding arrangements for the boy's education.
- Another SCPO has dealt with an incident involving the online grooming a 15 year old girl. Currently with CID and Onyx - and the suspect has been arrested.

- The mother of the 12 year old boy contacted the Police for assistance, as her son had an episode in her car. He said he was going to kill himself and was kicking the windows. His father and disabled brother were also inside. His behaviour was due to him falling out with his friends while out playing with them that day. He was out playing despite COVID 19 restrictions still being in place. The NWP FCC Mental Health Coordinator recommended he be taken to A + E to be assessed.
- From YJ, there have been concerns about a young girl because she is staying up late and being in bed all day and lost all structure to her life - this is now spiralling out of control and she is getting very anxious.
- A young male has found it difficult really difficult to cope. Being stuck indoors all day, the whole change of routine has been difficult to cope with. There has been some aggression from him towards his mum escalating to an incident of DV.

Conclusion

This is a brief insight into the effect of the COVID-19 lockdown on some of the Children and Young people in the NWP region.

When schools do re-open, we anticipate some disclosures happening and other safeguarding concerns being presented as children return to school.

As the School Liaison Police team supporting all the schools in the area - we will be there for to assist.