

Senedd Cymru  
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

Welsh Parliament  
Children, Young People and Education Committee

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

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

COV 77

Ymateb gan: Cymdeithas Ieuencid a Phlant Sir  
Gaerfyrddin

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Response from: Carmarthenshire Youth and  
Children's Association

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CYCA (Carmarthenshire Youth and Children's Association), is a children's charity based in Llanelli, we are a centre of excellence for helping children and families in building resilience and supporting people of all ages to adapt to a changing and challenging world.

Our services include a crèche and playgroup, training courses in practical and emotional life skills for parents and more bespoke support through a social prescribing project, funded by Llanelli GP's. We also train professionals in better ways to help families and in taking a wider, systemic view of challenges and how they can be tackled by including a wider family view.

As such, we were in the right mind-set to adapt quickly to find new ways of offering support in this new locked-down world. Covid- 19 has greatly impacted services and CYCA immediately need to increase Governance support to ensure that our policies, procedures, operations and safeguarding were sufficient.

We are seeing high levels of fear and anxiety, panic thinking and catastrophizing linked to Corvid 19 and the worry around contracting the virus. This can cause negative coping strategies such as alcohol and substance misuse to resurface, particularly as individuals cannot access the outdoors and the comfort of others. Feelings of isolation can lead to, and have done in some situations, an increase in self-harm and suicidal ideation. Children are suffering with anxiety to the point where they do not feel safe to leave the house at all. They are spending far more time online and consequently we are hearing 'new friends' being formed and increased risks of grooming.

In addition, there are heightened emotions in families where there are frontline workers, families and their children are watching frontline workers go to work and put themselves at risk day after day; all in the context of local and national news is highlighting frontline staff who have lost their lives.

Demands for our services have increased greatly in the last week, evidence has told us:

- Children, young people, families are out of routine and are struggling to implement or try new routines, motivation is low.

- Children young people, Parents are accessing advice services through social media. We have seen that a number of these are not suitable or being provided by associated mental health provisions.
- Social Isolation is greatly impacting them and lack of face-to-face contact with social networks is making them feel low.
- health conditions such as fibromyalgia, anxiety and depression are experiencing heightened symptoms.
- Parents are also struggling with the online schoolwork for children, issues include being able to log on and keeping their children engaged and motivated.
- lack of ICT Equipment to access children's home schooling, as required by their schools.
- Parents are relying on daily deliveries of free school meals.
- Some parents were struggling with other online services and need resources to support them.
- School work is adding pressure to the day, some children happy to complete, not enough work for the little children, some teenagers have disengaged
- Teenagers stressing parents out because they are up all night, sleep all day,
- Lack of suitable devices for the children to complete schoolwork.
- Anxieties and concerns impacting on YP mental health over GCSE's and results.

CYCA delivers face-to-face mentoring, counselling and resiliency support at our wellbeing centre, all those services have ceased. We have however, overcome barriers by developing an online service to our beneficiaries, this has now generated a demand from other community members. We are offering essential childcare for children who's parents are key works or who are vulnerable and at need.

It is taking far longer to support families as we are unable to visit homes or meet with agencies at our centre. There has been an increase in demand for services for anxiety and depression which has become even more apparent as lockdown continues.

Additional presenting issues identified by CYCA that are impacting on overall Mental Health and Wellbeing:

- Bereavement
- Trauma/shock
- Relationship distress
- Emotional regulation/Anger
- Breaking up of relationships
- Domestic abuse

The loss of income streams and fundraising for the charity to offer and sustain vital services has been greatly impacted by Covid-19.