

I'm an adoptive mum to twin girls aged 9 both of whom have additional needs relating to developmental trauma, adhd, anxiety, attachment difficulties and foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Both girls attend a mainstream primary school in Cardiff and over the years I've had to advocate and fight to secure support for both girls. One daughter has a statement if educational needs and has really progressed. The other is also in need but we are still on a journey to get that support.

How has lockdown affected us ?

We are working parents both of whom have been working at home it has been pretty impossible to build in educational support for the girls. We have literally survived by building rhythms and routines that help the girls feel safe and secure. One daily exercise a day has led to escalated challenging behaviours some of which are aggressive and violent due to one daughter being unable to regulate her emotions numerous times a day and on a daily basis.

We are normally without any real family support due to my sister being a foster carer and my parents elderly. Respite was arranged via social services once a month sometimes every other month for 4 hours. Obviously that is now gone. Schoolwork has consisted of 30 minutes one to one with each child to do reading basic numeracy and literacy. The TA that looks after my child who is statemented has sent various gifts cards and letters as keep in mind strategies and the class teacher has posted work on the website. As we have managed so little work each day we have continued to do 30 minutes each day even during school holidays as a change in routine presents enormous challenge for the girls.

We invested in laptops for both girls but given their additional needs we have not been able to use them much as neither is capable of working online without one to one support.

The first 9 weeks of lockdown has been tough. We try to make up for the day by walking every evening with our gorgeous puppy who we thankfully bought and socialised before lockdown started.

I am now on furlough leave initially for 3 weeks this will inevitably help but the change in routine has triggered emotional reactions again. And when furlough ends and if I return to work there will another change again.

Despite lockdown being hard however the girls' stress levels outside of school are lower but my levels of exhaustion are higher. Our support social worker provided a

phone number for counselling support and I have used this twice and it was really helpful. This kind of support is vital for parent carers and investment in these services is vital to prevent adoptive family disruption. We had early intervention when the girls were aged 5 and it was life changing it didn't fix our girls difficulties but we are definitely better equipped for surviving and thriving as a result.

Questions about continued school closures / return to school

Our second daughter without a statement was on a waiting list for educational psychologists assessment - what will happen to this process during lockdown / when schools return ?

What will happen on return to school for my statemented child ? I have picked up that laws have changed if so in what way ?

How will one to one TAs operate ?

Can schools give consideration to how they will transition all children but particularly ALN children back to school. Eg video messages from teachers virtual tours of the classroom social stories for explaining the rules around distancing visual cards for reminders. Will schools be encouraged to incorporate more movement breaks for children to ease their stress. These have been traumatic times for all children and the re entry to school needs to focus on wellbeing before learning because without that children will not be in the right place to learn.

I am not sure if this is the type of feedback that was sought but I hope it is of use. I would be happy to discuss further to clarify any points.