

Scrutiny of Covid-19 and its impact on children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds

Summary Note 2

July 2020

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is exploring how the outbreak of Covid-19 is affecting all aspects of life for children and young people in Wales. The Committee is keen to hear from everyone involved in supporting children and young people across sectors, including – but not limited to - education, health, social care, and youth work. In April 2020, the Committee launched an open consultation to seek views on, and experiences of, the impact of the pandemic. A child friendly version of this call for views is also available.

With this in mind, it was of importance to the Children, Young People and Education Committee to ensure the voices of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are at the forefront of scrutiny. To support this, the citizen engagement team have focused on how to engage

specific audiences who could be considered as from disadvantaged backgrounds. This summary note includes the key findings to date.

The engagement approach includes working closely with partner organisations who communicate with young people regularly. By offering guidance and encouragement to these organisations, they have enabled the citizen engagement team to collate valuable experiences directly from young people and to bring these to the Committee's attention.

In addition, by adjusting the questioning used for the main Call for Views, a paper worksheet has been created for young people who may require a non-digital route to engage with the consultation. This has been distributed with the support of partner organisations and the initial findings are included in this summary note.

This is the second of several summary notes that will be presented periodically throughout the consultation. The summary note is divided into 2 parts:

- Part 1 - Themes arising of relevance to the Committee's selected meeting topic in the coming week
- Part 2 – General themes emerging from children and young peoples' views outside of the next meeting topic

The themes and quotes have been selected on the basis that they are reoccurring themes and poignant to the current situation. Where it's possible and appropriate general information has been linked to the quotes to add context within this summary note.



Part 1 - Education Themes

Comments collected to date from young people about their opinion on school closures and their education during the coronavirus pandemic have been both positive and negative. The general themes focused on; social interaction; access to support or information; adjustment to the new structure of learning; and concerns about returning linked with health.

Social interaction - The majority of young people shared comments about how much they missed friends, teachers and certain lessons. A large number of these young people said it was their friends that they missed the most. Some then went on to say they could manage the school work while others explained they were also struggling in a new learning environment;

"I miss school because I don't get to see my friends anymore. It's hard to do schoolwork at home and I feel like I'm not learning" - 13 year old from Merthyr Tydfil

"I pretty much miss seeing my friends. I don't like it but I can do my work" - 8 year old from Merthyr Tydfil

"I miss being with my friends and receiving school work via email was strange to begin with but got used to it now. I set my own timetable now so that's different too" - Young person

"I miss mixing with my friends and socialising out of school. I am still able to keep up with my school work but sometimes the volume that comes in at once can be overwhelming. Sometimes using the laptop can be difficult because we only have one in the house hold with 2 people needing to use it" - 15 year old from Merthyr Tydfil

"I miss having fun with my friend because we always had something to talk about but now we don't have anything" - 11 year old from Merthyr Tydfil

"I miss some lessons like Forest School and doing my Duke of Edinburgh. I can't do them now. I don't miss Maths or Science though" - Young person

"I am doing school work from home and I have regular emails from my subject teachers. I am completing work for all subjects. I have my parents at home to help me when I need it" - Young person

"The thing I miss the most about school is seeing our teachers and friends. Online school is much more confusing to me because my teacher can't explain work as much as she could before...Now that I am home I have been getting less help" - 11 year old from Merthyr Tydfil

"I miss most about school the explaining that the teachers did before the pandemic was better than now. I also miss my friends, my teachers and I miss the topics we had to make and that there was a challenge between classes" - 11 year old from Cardiff

"I don't have many friends as I have just moved to a new house when all this began. I live in the middle or nowhere and there's no service or anything" - Young person

Access to support or information - Many young people expressed they were getting the support they needed however a few comments demonstrated that the provision was not the same as before lockdown or there may be a lack of access to information they required;

"My Mum, Dad, Grandparents and teachers listen to me. I don't really want to know what is happening but my Mum and Dad tell me important things" - Young person

"Being at home has been really stressful, not being able to go outside, isolating in the house, and not being able to do the school work because I don't have access to the school website. The school contacted me that they were going to bring the laptop since March, but they have 3 months that they haven't brought it yet and also they don't answer the messages and also my teacher doesn't help me with the school work I've missed" - 11 year old from Cardiff

"People have phoned mammy to check we have what we need. We have lots of fun learning" - 2 year old from Merthyr Tydfil (completed with the help of parent)

"In one family, mum has learning difficulties as do the two of her three eldest children. 3 children all at different schools. Mum had no idea how to access the online school work and neither did the children. The primary school teacher had shown mum on last day of school how to access an app. Mum couldn't do this and was very stressed by the thought that she couldn't support her daughter at this time. On first talking to the teacher she genuinely couldn't comprehend that a family was unable to download an app and access the work. Once I had broken it down for her she did become very understanding, sends out regular work packs and talks to mum regularly. I am not sure that this would have happened if she didn't have an advocate" - Staff member working with young people

"I can no longer see my counsellor so I speak to this other lady over the phone. I don't like to though as it's not the same lady and it's over the phone. My dad is always there for me if I need to talk" - 13 year old from Merthyr Tydfil

"I know there's teachers that will help and I get help from my Personal Support Workers that I can get help from at any time. I just think it's not the same now though" - Young person

"Young people are calling/texting Support Workers and asking them to google numbers when they would normally be able to go to libraries or ask friends they see" - Professional working with young people

"Staying home is boring. I can't do the homework as my mum can't find it on the Chromebook" - 7 year old from Cardiff

Adjustment to the new structure of learning - In several comments from young people they mentioned a lack of structure in their lives while they weren't attending their regular learning environment. Some of these comments demonstrated a negative impact on their motivation levels but others said that it was helping to them to try new ways of learning;

"I don't go to a school but I go to a special provision with a small group. This is all a big struggle for me. I haven't got a routine now. I'm stuck at home in my bedroom most of the time. All I seem to do is sleep. I've gone really lazy" - Young person

"One young person (15 years) also wanted me to pass on that they are glad there is a lock down as their family is safe, they have more time so are learning to cook meals and bake and normally they would be out with their friends" - Staff member working with young people

"Being at home is a lot easier because we don't have to finish the work in 1 hour we can come back to it later" - 11 year old from Merthyr Tydfil

Concerns about returning linked with health - There were a small number of comments from young people highlighting their concerns around returning to schools where they, or a family member, had a health issue;

"I am anxious about going back to school as I live with my elderly grandmother and I don't want to bring the virus into the house. We only go out for a small drive in the car as I am autistic and this is a way of calming me down" - 15 year old from Merthyr Tydfil

"Before this I didn't really enjoy going to school, it was a massive stress on me and I had hoped it was going to be cancelled initially because my sister is vulnerable. The day I left school the teachers were great, they made sure I picked up all my books, gave me documents and papers to work on at home and helped to make sure I had what I needed. But when they said about the predicted grades I was disappointed not to be given the chance to sit my exams" - Child asylum seeker

Please note, in addition to this summary note, a variety of education themes were highlighted in [Summary Note 1](#) including; a lack the of digital provision; access to food (including free school meals); and attachment issues as a result of limited social interaction.

Part 2 - Additional Key Findings

Wellbeing - When young people were asked how they were feeling and who can they talk to about their feelings there were a range of responses including statements about being overwhelmed and scared, or in contrast, calm and relaxed. Most expressed that they had someone they could talk to;

"I try not to think about what is going on too much. I don't really understand it all" - Young person

"I'm not worried that anyone I know will get the virus but I am scared this will affect us financially and the impact it will have on our mental health. I talk to my father about my feelings" - 13 year old from Merthyr Tydfil

"I have lost connections with friends because I can no longer see them, I feel really lonely most of the time also. My Mother now has seizures every day due to stress" - 13 year old from Merthyr Tydfil

"I feel calm now. I talk to my Dad about them [feelings]" - 8 year old from Merthyr Tydfil

"We go for walks, different trails. I enjoy running and jumping. I'm happy" - 2 year old from Merthyr Tydfil (completed with the help of parent)

"My Mum and Dad listen to me, they are doing their best" - 7 year old from Cardiff

"I am feeling very worried at the moment because I am not sure if everything after the pandemic is going to be as it was before in the UK. Many people have died from coronavirus and I am afraid that every person in the world is going to die since covid is returning in some other countries" - 11 year old from Cardiff

"I think that everyone is keeping in contact with everyone, so nobody is feeling alone, and I think that it is good to see that the majority of the public are following the lockdown rules" - 17 year old living with foster carers

"I am sad as I can't go out as normal. I can't go to the parks or beach. I'm scarred and worried that this virus is not going to end" - 7 year old from Cardiff

"I feel relaxed because there isn't that much pressure. I don't talk to anyone I will find a quiet place in nature or at home and think. I'm doing a bit [of exercise] like walking and netball and I do go outside a bit" - 11 year old from Merthyr Tydfil