

I am contacting you today to give you our experience of lockdown.

I am a single parent of 2 school aged children, my 15-year-old, is a year 11 student who attends a SEN school due to his medical and learning disabilities and my 14-year-old, is a year 10 student who attends a welsh medium mainstream school.

We are now in week 12 of school closures, 3 months away from school. With no fault to anyone except COVID19, we have lost services that my children rely upon but surprisingly my 15 year old SEN child has dealt with the lockdown amazingly, as a child with a few risk factors to the virus he hasn't left the house in 12 weeks not even to go into the garden, but he isn't a fan of people and going out anyway so he has coped amazingly, he has been able to cope with a few bits of school work a week. Although for the first 2 weeks of school closure his school made no contact whatsoever (with any family) but as soon as Easter arrived the school has made weekly phone calls to home every week without fail, my aunt passed away in April and for 2 weeks I missed a call from the school so they sent a text message to ask if I could check in as they were concerned, obviously I did and explained. When my mainstream child was taken ill, they offered if we needed anything or if we needed anything brought to us because even though I have 2 vulnerable children, I was unable to have medication delivered and also unable to get online food deliveries, which meant I had no choice but to go out for essentials, so my son's SEN teacher offered, we didn't require it but the offer was definitely appreciated. The SEN school has now also been able to work with a food bank and offer its families a food package. Regarding the education side of the things, they have continued to make sure that I as a parent concentrate on mental health and well being and education to come second. I have ups and downs with the school over the years but during this pandemic I can't fault them regarding support.

My 14-year-old mainstream child, a different situation altogether. He is currently a year 10 pupil, a pupil that I have been fighting for support at school for 6 years, it has been dangled in front of us then taken away at the last minute. He has many struggles at school, and 3 weeks prior to lock down we had a meeting when everything was finally agreed and signed for,

counselling with the school counsellor, counselling & support with YEPS, the forms were completed & signed for the educational psychologist for an assessment, and he also has a school mentor. The last day of school 21st March 2020, I received a call and was informed that my child was classed as vulnerable and contact would be made on a weekly basis to keep in touch and touch base. I have possibly had 4 telephone calls in 3 months, I contacted them twice asking for help/support regarding my son and it never came. My son struggles academically and requires help, as a non welsh speaking parent, I have struggled to help him because of the language barrier plus I am not a teacher and unable to teach my son these subjects. When I have received contact from the school first question, they ask is has my child done schoolwork! Then say not to worry concentrate on well being and mental health all whilst being bombarded with notifications from google classroom, which totally stressed out my child and his anxiety raised. The first week of lockdown we received a call from YEPS explaining due to my son's counselling needing to be face to face, he was being signed off and would be reapplied for when she goes back to normal, but would be on the end of the phone if my child needs her. We also received a call from school counsellor who asked if my child would speak to her, being the first week of lockdown he refused and she said she wouldn't contact for a month if she doesn't hear from him in a month then she would sign him off counselling, later to be told by school that she had told them she had made contact my child had refused counselling but was still available to him if he needed it. After a few weeks my son finally agreed to sit down and do some school work, he found it difficult and I found it difficult to help and support because of the language barrier, each piece of work he submitted was returned where the work was wrong which really knocked his confidence and said why does he even bother and hasn't done work since, again I am a parent not a teacher of education and also a non welsh speaker so it was difficult as a family on the whole and my concern was/is his well being and mental health. Around 4 weeks ago I contacted a staff member and he seemed surprised by my call and said parents are just texting to check in, which made me feel like I shouldn't be calling asking for help, I explained the difficulties with the help and language barrier and asked for support, he informed me that I wasn't in a minority in regards to the language barrier, as he wasn't part of that team he would put my concern to the team dealing with work, a week later I received an email pointing to me to a school newsletter with questions and answers for parents, which didn't help in the slightest. When they announced the phased return to school for the end of June it was a welcome announcement, I made contact with school over a week ago with a link to a report on how to support children like my son (school and parents) when he returns, a response came and it stated they welcomed the information, they would read it and ring me and the end of

that week to discuss the situation, to date still no contact has been made with us.

The phased return to schools, was definitely something we hoped for as it is something my year 10 child would need/benefit from even for $\frac{3}{4}$ sessions over a 4 week period, it would give him motivation, routine, familiarity, educational support that I cant provide as a parent, and an idea of what school could be like on returning in September. The school timetable was revealed for our mainstream school, to say I am disappointed is an understatement, years 7, 8, 9 and 12 are being phased in over the 4-week period, whilst year 10 are being given 4 sessions in 1 week and that's it. As a parent it feels like they have said lets get year 10 in and out and then we don't have to deal with them, all work, preparations for examinations etc will be dumped onto them in that one week and they will be sent away with their stress and anxiety hitting overdrive. There is no phased in return for them as with other years, which now leaves me feeling that I can't put my child in that position as it will do more damage than good. To say I am truly disappointed is an understatement. Also, I have appreciated teachers going into school and working through the pandemic my child really hasn't benefited from it, once again, he is a child that needs support and being left to one side.

My question is, if I don't return my son for the 1 week in July he misses out on a large chunk of his year 10 education, which as you are aware is a big year due to entering year 11 in September the examinations year, I wholeheartedly believe my child's whole future is hanging in the balance right now, the loss of these months of education is massive to year 10 (and year 12) and wondered how will these children get this important time back, is there any plan being considered for replacing this chunk of lost education? Is this something that has been thought about? Lockdown hasn't played a big part in mental health, but the lack of educational support has played a major part on our family's mental health and not just my children, mine also.

I am now considering and have spoken to several relevant people about a transfer from the school to maybe a college setting because I cant see my child surviving year 11.

Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns as a worried parent.

Many thanks