

Senedd Cymru  
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

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

COV 121  
Ymateb gan: Prosiect Gwydnwch

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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 121  
Response from: Resilience Project

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## **Who are we?**

The Resilience Project is a short-term Welsh Government funded project led by Cardiff and Vale Health Board partnered with the Mental Health Foundation. The project aims to build greater capacity, expertise, and mental health resilience for Children and Young People (CYP) in educational settings across Cardiff and the Vale.

## **The impact of COVID-19 on children and young adults in the presenting lockdown and aftermath.**

Children and young adults thrive when they are safe and protected, when family and community connections are stable and nurturing, and when their basic needs are met.

The coronavirus pandemic and the unprecedented measures to contain its spread are disrupting nearly every aspect of children and young people's lives: their health, development, learning, behaviour, their families' economic security and their protection from violence and abuse. Children and young people with increased vulnerability, need to be especially considered and provided for.

## **Present possible impact of COVID-19 on children and young people during the pandemic:**

- More risk of harm and neglect
- Reduced and/or loss of family income which could result in increased deprivation and malnutrition
- Exposure to higher stress in the home environment
- Exposure to domestic abuse
- Exposure to increased alcohol/substance abuse in families
- For many it will mean limited or no education, or falling further behind their peers
- Exposure to more risk due to spending more time online
- Current crises providing opportunity for criminal and/or sexual exploitation
- Reduction in access to services that were available before

- Vulnerable children and young people are less visible to the range of professionals they were normally engaged with decreasing opportunities to safeguard

Public, private and third sector organisations suggest that resources must be mobilised to support the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of the most vulnerable children and young people at this extraordinary time.

We must consider the possible long-term impact of COVID-19 for children and young people after lockdown, these could be:

- Risk to children and young people's safety
- Long term reduction in well-being and increase in mental health problems
- Delayed social development
- Developmental delay in younger children due to restrictions
- Falling into poverty, long terms economic hardship experienced by families resulting from the economic downturn
- Exacerbating the learning crisis – this has more impact on low-income families that have no access to distance learning platforms during the lockdown
- Increase in post-traumatic stress symptoms from exposure to adverse childhood experiences
- Effects of malnutrition on long-term physical and cognitive development
- Increased mortality risk associated with economic hardship

### **Research indications:**

- Key findings from the latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) data on impact of COVID-19 could indicate a new “child poverty and mental health emergency” in the UK.
- The personal and economic wellbeing in the UK bulletin, shows that anxiety has doubled since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and millions of families have seen a drop in income.
- Experts have warned the COVID-19 pandemic and consequent lockdown may lead to a mental health crisis in the UK, putting further pressure on children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).
- Children's charities have warned a drop in income for millions of families could deepen the UK's child poverty crisis. Recent studies have warned that tens of thousands more children could be living in poverty after the lockdown.

### **Service adaptation:**

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown a vast number of organisations (NHS, third sector, charities and private) providing support for families and/or children and young adults have developed a range of online based platforms to provide their services. Therapy, counselling and consultations are provided via telephone or video calls.

At the Resilience Project we have adapted our training for education staff to online delivery; produced resources for education staff, parents and children regarding maintaining wellbeing at this time; provided Clinical Psychology led virtual consultation to schools staff regarding vulnerable children; provided interventions virtually for families. We are working closely with Cardiff Inclusion team, the Vale Engagement Service and Educational Psychology Departments to support children's well-being. We are also working alongside these teams to help prepare schools for transitioning back into schools opening to more pupils.

**Suggestions regarding what may mitigate against the long-term risks identified for children and young people:**

1. Enable children to return to schools as frequently as possible to reduce the impact of isolation, safeguard and promote wellbeing.
2. Support schools to maintain contact virtually by phone with pupils and families when they are not in school.
3. Increase funding for joint working between health and education, particularly with regard to increasing accessibility of mental health professionals in schools.
4. Provide trauma informed training to education staff to equip them with the knowledge and skills required to response to children increase needs.
5. Ensure education staff have access to consultation from qualified clinicians to consider the needs of those children and young people with complex needs and those most at risk of poor mental health outcomes.
6. Provide clinically informed low level preventative universal wellbeing interventions in schools.
7. Address exiting service gaps for children exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences at risk of development mental health problem, 'the missing middle', who traditionally have not meet criteria for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and who are likely to be severely affected by current circumstances.

As a service we have the unique position of being an NHS lead service, embedded within Cardiff and Vale University Health Board Emotional and Mental Health Care Group and working jointly with Cardiff and Vale Education and Social Services Departments. We have governance oversight from senior leadership in education, social services and health.

## **References:**

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