

Senedd Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

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

COV 140
Ymateb gan: Unigolyn

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 140
Response from: Individual

I am writing to express my deep concerns at the ongoing plans for a 'blended' learning scheme in Wales continuing in schools from September. I am an NHS consultant and a mother of 2 children aged 9 and 11 who are in welsh medium education. As a doctor I am fully aware of the incredibly low risk that covid-19 poses to children, as well as the low risk to the majority of teachers (without underlying health problems). Now the track and trace system is in place I cannot understand why schools cannot be opened far more fully and normally than they are now rather than the current blended learning system continuing?

From a personal point of view I have really struggled over the past few months with educating our children through the medium of welsh as a non welsh speaker. They have had access to only 1-2 hours per day of online resources from their school, and sometimes less. We have really struggled with adapting to on line learning; we are not teachers we are parents! I have not managed to get my youngest to write a single sentence even once over the last 4 months despite hours of trying. In school he had no problems with this previously.

We are both frontline NHS workers and have had to do their work with them after long days in work or at the weekends, as no teaching has been provided in the hub school. We have had endless family rows trying to get even the small amount of work done and cope with negotiating online systems after long days in work; I have cried, the children have cried, we cannot continue like this!

With the current social distancing measures, they have been given just 3.5 hours of education each per week! If the current strict restrictions remain in place in September, then another term of just 3.5 hours of school a week will be severely detrimental to not only their education but also their mental wellbeing. My youngest child is extremely shy and I can already see his confidence diminishing. My eldest is due to start in secondary school, and having had no transition days she is already anxious about this. How on earth is she supposed to transition to secondary school with just 3.5 hours in the building a week?!

This is just my situation, and I know from speaking to many other parents that we are not unique in experiencing these sorts of challenges. We are a fairly privileged family compared to many and care enough and have the resources to try our best to help our children, and we are still really struggling to provide an adequate education within the current system of 'blended' learning. How this will effect those families who are less equipped or impoverished really doesn't bare thinking about.

Our hub school has been open full of frontline workers' children with no social distancing in place throughout the peak of the pandemic, without a single case of Coronavirus causing the school to close. The numbers of covid-19 cases are much lower now so it makes no sense at all to continue with such a woefully limited amount of time in school - the current system is barely blended, with 90% of the children's time spent at home still! It is my opinion that the current strict measures of social distancing within the classroom seem overly excessive. Clearly this is not to protect the children (who are more likely to die from a strike of lightening than covid -19). If it is to protect the teachers then I am appalled at this; as frontline workers we have had to continue throughout the pandemic with little social distancing or regard for our health, as have supermarket workers and transport workers etc to keep vital services running. Are teachers not also frontline workers? Educating our children is also vitally important!

So I urge you to follow England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, and consider a more normal return to school for the sake of the children of Wales in September.