

Senedd Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

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

COV 151
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 151
Response from: Individual

I am a retired former senior civil servant who worked in the Education Department at the then Welsh Assembly Government with responsibility for school education, curriculum, assessment and examinations. I am also a grandmother of two small children aged 6 and 3 so am seeing the effects of lock down on them daily (initially by video calls but now sometimes outdoors face to face). It is about them that I am writing since this is where I have evidence to contribute.

I have very deep concerns about the long term effects of seriously reduced schooling on children's intellectual, physical, social and emotional development. I realise there are a difficult risk analyses to be done but we really must find ways to get our children back to school. For myself at 70 I would be willing to accept greater personal risk for the benefit of my grandchildren's well-being.

My granddaughter, aged 6, lives in an English medium home but attends a Welsh medium primary school. Last March she was confident and fluent in using her Welsh. I have seen that slipping away during the lock down period. Without regular immersion and interaction in Welsh soon, I fear she will lose her fluency.

For intellectual development, on-line education is better than nothing. However what has been provided for her has not been as good as we'd hoped in quantity, quality or in the provision of feedback. Her parents have felt the need to supplement it with on-line learning in English, which frankly has been richer . She is enjoying that and has been doing well on it - but it's not in Welsh. If the offer next September has to include a mix of on-line and face to face learning, please could the summer period be used to ensure that rich and fulfilling sets of lessons and resources, with individual feedback from the teacher, are available in Welsh for all Welsh medium primary schools to use?

Socially, she and her 3 year old brother have at least had each other. However they both long to play with other children and are really missing their friends. We all know how important socialisation is in young children's development. Please make this possible again. Learning is not just about intellect development and so the on-line resources don't meet this social need. Our 3 year old has just returned to nursery this week. The look on his face said everything about how much he loves being with other children.

Emotionally, children need to feel safe, valued and have hope for the future. Getting them back to school is a vital in this. The emotional well-being of their parents is also crucial. The current situation for two working parents with tiny children is just not sustainable - maintaining their responsible jobs, educating and caring for their children 24/7 and also doing all the domestic chores with only minimal external support.

On physical development I have currently fewer concerns because the largely good weather has meant my grandchildren can be out of doors in parks and gardens and can get lots of exercise. However with autumn and winter weather, school provision of physical exercise will become more important.

In short I fully support initiatives that the Welsh Government many have to reopen schools for all children to receive full-time schooling. I also urge that particular priority be given to the Welsh medium sector since children who rely on school to provide Welsh medium immersion are disproportionately affected by its absence