

Written evidence submitted by Leeds Trinity University and the University of Glasgow

COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES LOCKDOWN LEARNING PLAN

Leeds Trinity University and the University of Glasgow

Authors: R. Clayton, C. Clayton, M. Potter, P. Petri-Romao, H. Minnis, E. Bali.

Introduction:

This proposed plan has been created as a result of the collaboration of two qualitative research studies investigating the lived experiences of families during the UK lockdown which began on the 23rd March 2020 in response to the threat of Covid-19. *'British Families in Lockdown'* (BFiL) was a Research England funded study headed by Leeds Trinity University which interviewed sixty UK families from differing backgrounds and geographical locations. *'Social Distancing: How are Families Coping?'* was a research study headed by the University of Glasgow which interviewed forty-three families with families from diverse backgrounds over two waves in the Scottish region. Both studies found complementary evidence concerning the varied and often dichotomic experiences of UK families.

On 15th September 2020, World Health Organization special envoy on Covid-19 Dr David Nabarro announced that "The world is still at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic and it will take some time to work out how to deal with it". He identified the risks that the pandemic presented to children's education and as the UK prepares itself for a potential second lockdown event, this proposal has been created to offer a strategy for managing the needs of British families should the event of school closures once again occur.

By learning important lessons from the first lockdown and by listening to the voices of the parents as they faced the day to day challenges of home learning during lockdown, it is envisaged that this *'Communities and Families Lockdown Learning Plan'* will be able to offer a potential model for further testing and research in this important area.

Rationale:

With the possibility of children being unable to attend school in the event of a second UK lockdown, real concerns about the long-term impacts on learning, development and educational attainment are to be expected. The University of Glasgow's *'Social Distancing: How are Families Coping'* study has highlighted stressors for families from different socio-economic backgrounds which led to the co-production of the *'Scottish Model of Safe-Education'* (SMS-Ed) which addressed the challenges of single household isolation during school closures. Central to this model is the introduction of *'Closed Childcare Clusters'*, which constitute groupings of families that help and support each other. SMS-Ed was developed with disease modellers, who continuously assessed the its risk to keep it at a minimum. In August 2020, Leeds Trinity University's *'British Families in Lockdown'* study (BFiL) identified that parents would benefit from a deeper understanding of how children learn and develop if future lockdowns were to occur and that schools and businesses need clearer strategies in place for supporting parents who have home learning responsibilities.

A shift from institutional learning to home based learning is likely should future lockdowns occur, which would place parents with a greater responsibility for supervising and supporting learning. The majority of parents are not formally trained in supporting children's learning and development and as such, this may lead to negative outcomes for children. If parents are also expected to work during future lockdowns, this could likely to lead to additional pressures on households. This proposal is intended to offer suggested pathways through which communities, businesses, parents, schools, nurseries, volunteers and government may be able to work together to navigate the challenges of home-based learning should the needs occur. Central to this plan is a focus on enabling parents of all backgrounds to better manage the home-learning challenges and expectations without negatively affecting valuable emotional and physical bonds. This plan could be implemented within both partial and full home learning contexts.

Lockdown Learning Plan:

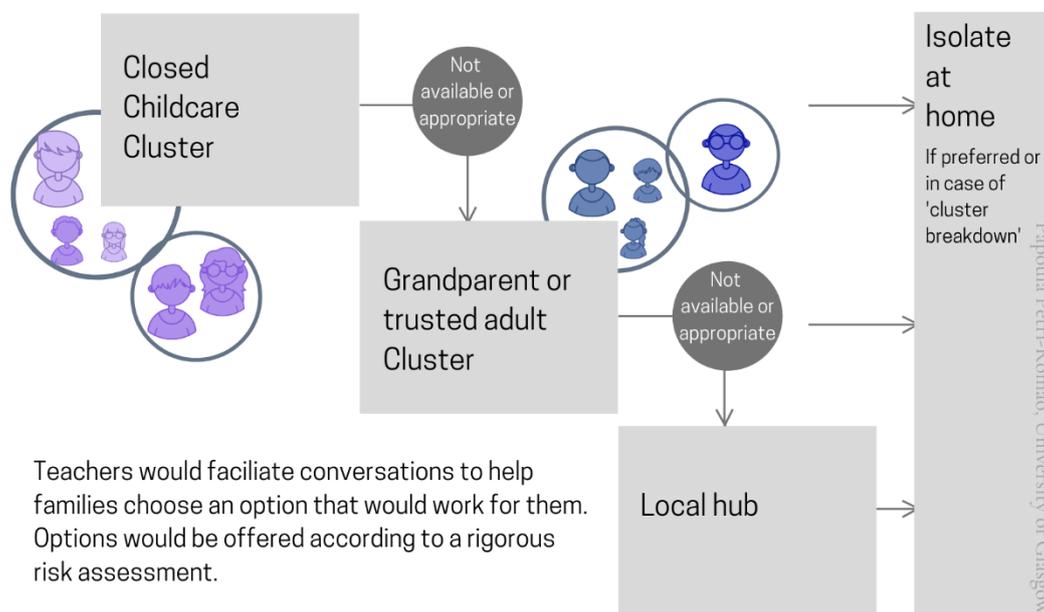
What follows is a ten-point strategy addressing:

- How do we address social divisions in the light of COVID-19 and strengthen the social infrastructure of our communities?
- Has the COVID-19 crisis changed the way that business thinks about their role in enabling a more socially connected and integrated society?
- How can the goodwill of volunteers be harnessed in ways that promote social connection and integration?
- How might the positive changes in relation to social connection and community action be sustained into the future?

1. What schools would do.

- Each household should have assigned to it a home learning mentor (or mentors in the case of multiple children). These will be run by specially trained home learning mentors who will be recruited from the school's staffing team. Each learning mentor will work with a cluster/class.
- Teachers and support staff track the learning of each student and keep an eye on progression.
- Teachers for each year group should provide one-hour long learning session each day for home learners with a list of differentiated learning targets and learning outcomes for learners to choose from.
- Teaching staff should make contact with each student twice a week to support progress and learning online.
- Teachers should prepare options for activities or trips that families could make to support weekly learning.
- Every day a staff member should be available to offer guidance and support for those families in need.
- Teachers should facilitate parents and children to submit their completed work online.
- Schools could provide optional full day or half day learning events in school for small groups of children at least once a week.
- Schools will continue to operate with optional places for children with parents who are critical workers, parents who are suffering from work pressures, SEND children, ESOL learners and hard to reach children.
- Adapt the Scottish Model for Safe Education to their local context in co-production with teachers and parents.

- Help families to form closed childcare clusters, which are groups of families that would support each other during another school closure. This would be based on the Scottish Model for Safe Education.



2. What parents can do.

- Parents would be expected to attend short learning sessions intended to provide them with confidence in supporting their child's growth and development whilst learning from home.
- Attend all sessions with their home learning mentor/s and interact with their home learning mentor/s regularly.
- Parents should work with their children up to GCSE level.
- This may include undertaking some additional learning and so parents should watch the online learning material from school with their children and reflect on their own knowledge and understanding.
- Children of GCSE level and above will in many cases require less learning support from parents and may supersede their parents in subject knowledge and understanding.
- Parents should be encouraged to contribute to their child's growth in ways that they see best.
- This could include real world practical education and experiences such as physical exercise, art, music, learning about money, family history, home decorating, gardening and preparing food.
- Link in with other families to form closed childcare clusters

3. What learning mentors would discuss/explore with parents:

- How children learn.
- Why children can enjoy learning.
- The dos and don'ts of supporting learning.
- Managing expectations.
- Maintaining family bonds.
- Supporting children's health and well-being.

4. What children can do.

- Be given learning choices and differentiated learning targets.
- Inform their parents about their learning preferences and set their own targets.

5. What closed childcare clusters can do.

- Support other parents and children within the cluster.
- Offer advice and companionship.
- Offer joint learning sessions and shared learning experiences including quizzes, tests and conversations.
- When possible and when negatively tested for COVID-19, to facilitate shared social time such as outdoor walks or educational visits.
- Promote emotional and mental wellbeing by providing a safe way of continuous socialisation during school closures

6. What government would do.

- Schools need to be prepared for lockdown and staff made aware of their responsibilities and roles.
- The education system needs to present a clear and consistent nationwide strategy for supporting home learning and education.
- This should include regular provision of teaching to all children whilst they are at home.
- All children must be given access to the internet as an essential requirement of their education.
- Parents who find themselves struggling to support their children in their learning need extra support.
- Provide regular COVID-19 testing for all children and their families.
- Government should provide additional support to schools who feel they do not have the staffing capacity to meet learning needs.

7. What regulators would do.

- Ofsted need to follow up on their innovation and regulation plan of 2017 by ensuring that teaching and learning is technologically enabled and that strategies are in place for enabling all children including those who are hard to reach, SEND or ESOL learners who choose not to attend school and learn from home.

8. What community volunteers can do.

- Individual community members who feel that they may have something to offer home learners may wish to also undertake training with home-learning mentors.
- Community members who may be grandparents, retired, furloughed, students, out of work, without childcare responsibilities themselves, and particularly those with specialist skills and interests, may be able to provide essential online support to clusters and educators.

9. What community organisations can do.

- Organisations with community responsibilities such as museums, councils and the emergency services should place the support of children's learning in a position of highest importance and facilitate socially distanced learning visits.

- Organisations should have a dedicated contact for home learners and learning mentors, and where possible provide online learning materials and sessions to support the national curriculum.

10. What businesses can do.

- As a matter of social responsibility, businesses must support workers who have children by offering them flexible working and where possible reduced hours and responsibilities.

Timetable examples:

What a lockdown learning week could look like for home learners:

STANDARD LEARNERS (Younger or SEND, ESOL, Hard to Reach)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
School Online Lesson	School Online Lesson	Cluster group learning session	In School Learning Event	In School Learning Event	Cluster group learning session	Family educational activity or visit
Related home learning activity	Related home learning activity	Cluster group learning session	Related home learning activity	Related home learning activity	Physical exercise	Related home learning activity
Family led learning activity	Family led learning activity	Physical exercise				
Physical exercise						

ASPIRATIONAL LEARNERS (Older or gifted)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
In School Learning Event	In School Learning Event	Cluster group learning session	School Online Lesson	School Online Lesson	Cluster group learning session	Family educational activity or visit
Related home learning activities	Related home learning activities	Cluster group learning session	Related home learning activity	Related home learning activity	Family led learning activity	Related home learning activity
Physical exercise	Cluster group learning session	Physical exercise	School Online Lesson	School Online Lesson	Physical exercise	
			Related home learning	Related home learning		

			activity	activity		
			Family led learning activity			

Evidence:

What follows is select findings from the two studies, which have influenced this plan.

British Families in Lockdown Findings:

- There were positive home-schooling experiences expressed by some parents and children, which requires more research. Particularly as home-schooling has been growing in popularity in recent years and trends may increase as a result of lockdown experiences. Some of the parents in the BFIL study spoke positively about the prospect of partial home-schooling in the future and would welcome such an option.
- A small number of families expressed the view that less time in school and formal childcare was better for their child's mental health and potentially for their capacity to learn and enjoy learning. This requires further investigation.
- Families who have children with additional support needs at school, also need professional support at home if effective home learning is to take place during future lockdowns.
- During lockdown, not only children of critical workers need places at school, but potentially children with SEN or disabilities, and children of parents who are both working full-time hours from home.
- Schools (particularly in the state sector) should develop their home learning capabilities, to involve regular online classes/learning sessions with video conferencing support since these have been shown to have positive outcomes for home learners.
- Parents would benefit from a deeper understanding of how children learn and develop if future lockdowns occur.
- To help parents become more prepared for future lockdowns and in order to build up resilience, work and employment should consider becoming more flexible in order to support parents spending more time with their children.
- Some BAME parents with language difficulties would benefit from further support from school or early years settings, especially if children were identified as having additional needs.
- There should be more support offered to families living with additional needs during lockdown situations, this will help alleviate pressures and improve outcomes for these disadvantaged families.

- Schools were seemingly unprepared for lockdown and the education system appeared to be without a clear and consistent nationwide strategy for supporting home learning and education. This needs addressing to reduce inequalities.
- Whilst some employers were supportive towards their workers with parenting responsibilities during lockdown, others placed additional pressures on them, which led to negative outcomes for the families. Employers would benefit from guidance on how to best support workers with children during potential future lockdowns.

Social Distancing: How are Families Coping? – Findings

- Families who had good relationships and personal resources were more flexible in adapting to lockdown restrictions, creating a balance between work and homelife, childcare and personal life.
- Families with poor pre-existing relationships and complex health needs struggled more to adapt and found it challenging to keep to the guidelines.
- Children in nursery were better able to adapt to lockdown than primary aged children.
- Teenagers were mixed –some adapting well, others poorly. Parents found it difficult to adapt to their new role as teachers.
- Children with learning disabilities or other complex needs found home schooling challenging.
- Most parents and some children were anxious about the return to school.
- Families were reduced to the nuclear family. This removed a lot of familiar coping mechanisms and support structures and increased stress for some parents and children.
- Quality family time had increased, but some parents struggled with managing their children's behaviour and maintaining a routine.
- Self-isolation and social distancing increased stress, anxiety, and risk of domestic violence in some families.
- Many families were worried about the future. However, some families were optimistic.
- The majority of parents felt that technology helped them and their children to work, do homework and stay in touch with friends.
- Parents and children found that lockdown was an opportunity to spend quality time together, obtain new skills and be more active.
- There was a significant gap in access, confidence, and skill in regard to using technology for work, education, and social interaction. This caused varying levels of stress to families. Over time many families adapted, however there was a substantial number of families for whom technology did not offer solutions to their problems, e.g. very young children or people with communication difficulties.

SMS-Ed – Findings

- Families and teachers voiced that an alternative to single household self-isolation would be beneficial in reducing three stress to families during a lockdown.
- ‘Closed Childcare Clusters’ could improve educational and developmental outcomes for children by reducing the pressure individual families are under.
- Clusters would provide a source of peer support for parents and carers as well as children.
- In clusters families would link in with neighbouring families to support each other with home-learning and childcare.

Further Links:

BFIL website: <https://www.leedstrinity.ac.uk/research/british-families-in-lockdown-study/>

BFIL report: <https://www.leedstrinity.ac.uk/media/site-assets/documents/key-documents/pdfs/british-families-in-lockdown-report.pdf>

SMS-Ed website:

[https://www.gla.ac.uk/researchinstitutes/healthwellbeing/research/mentalhealth/research/projects/acecentre/#covid-19scottishmodelforsafeeducation\(sms-ed\),covid-19%0Ascottishmodelforsafeeducation\(sms-ed\),covid-19scottishmodelforsafeeducation\(sms-ed\)](https://www.gla.ac.uk/researchinstitutes/healthwellbeing/research/mentalhealth/research/projects/acecentre/#covid-19scottishmodelforsafeeducation(sms-ed),covid-19%0Ascottishmodelforsafeeducation(sms-ed),covid-19scottishmodelforsafeeducation(sms-ed))

SMS-Ed report: https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_736441_smxx.pdf

Leeds Trinity University Research Team:

Dr C. Clayton, R. Clayton, M. Potter

University of Glasgow Research Team:

Professor H. Minnis, P. Petri-Romao, E. Bali

September 2020