

Written evidence submitted by UsforThem

# UsforThem Submission to Education Select Committee Inquiry into: The impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services

UsforThem is a group of over 10,000 parents who came together over concerns about the education provision during school closures in March 2020 and the proposals around re-opening of schools.

Our concerns are primarily centred around the control measures proposed for school re-opening which we believe were implemented without a sound risk assessment of the overall impact on children's wellbeing and were centred solely on prevention of viral transmission. Since our inception we have been supported by leading paediatricians and child health clinicians and psychologist along with educational experts including headteachers to submit evidence to the government about the harms of the proposed measures and the concerns of parents.

Our reason for submitting evidence is that as parents we feel that there has not been sufficient consideration of the impact the school closures have had on children, family and parental work life. The decision for children to continue their education at home when schools closed on 20 March was taken without any consultation with parents themselves and yet the expectation was that parents would be able to take this on without proper assessment of the family's situation. Indeed our experience is that the support offered by schools has varied considerably throughout the period of closures and consequently the education and pastoral welfare of children has differed significantly.

Our focus for this submission is provide evidence on the diversity of provision of:

Support for pupils and families during closures, including:

- The consistency of messaging from schools and further and higher education providers on remote learning;
- Children's and young people's mental health and safety outside of the structure and oversight of in-person education.

We have asked our supporters to send in the correspondence they have received from their schools in the form of emails and letters. Given the number of supporters these are numerous and given the nature of the public inquiry it may not be prudent to submit these without the school's consent. However, we do have records should the committee require these. We have summarised the findings through detailed scrutiny of the documents in order to provide some insight from the perspective of the parents and therefore the pupils in the support in terms of both learning and wellbeing.

## Support for pupils and families during closures.

The support experienced by families during school closures has varied from no contact at all by the school to daily contact in the form of online or interactive lessons. In general support provided by the private sector was greater than that experienced by pupils in the state sector. However, there were some particularly good levels of support by certain schools, including weekly calls to pupils and

marking of work done. On the other hand, a large proportion of schools provided no engagement in the form of telephone calls or online lessons. Work may have been set to be accessed online but many families had trouble in accessing work and printing off worksheets (in some cases due to lack of devices or resources such as paper and ink). There has been little assessment by the schools initially about the family situation other than to identify those who were eligible to continue coming to school.

For example:

- No assessment of whether both parents were working, whether parents were continuing to work throughout school closures or had been furloughed.
- No assessment of parents' ability to access online work or ability to print the worksheets which is relevant for both younger children who required parents to print off and explain what was needed and supervise the work as well as older children who even if they had online learning platforms frequently experienced issues with access that required parental assistance.
- No assessment of devices available in home e.g. laptops, iPads, etc or any appreciation that there might be needed by siblings at other schools or indeed parents to complete their own work.
- Even schools which did engage with families to identify any issues this was a once-off exercise at the beginning of school closures and there was a lack of ongoing assessment into families' changing situations e.g. loss of unemployment, financial struggles, illness, etc.

### The consistency of messaging from schools and further and higher education providers on remote learning

Key themes:

#### 1. Online learning

The provision of online learning through platforms such as Zoom, Teams etc was variable. Primary schools who offered it in the state sector appear to be the exception and some secondary schools using 'safeguarding' as a reason for not doing online lessons. This seems to be the biggest single issue for secondary schools.

#### 2. Feedback and marking

No feedback from schools when work submitted seems to be an issue at both primary and secondary level. Parents frustration that children lost motivation as no feedback from their teachers. Some schools requested that the parents sent in videos of the children doing e.g. reading. Whilst some schools (particularly secondary) chased pupils for work that had been set online, they were not always aware of the issues pupils had in accessing the systems and appeared unaware of competing demands from other subjects. Mark schemes were not routinely provided so in some cases pupils had no idea of whether the work they had completed was correct.

#### 3. Communication from schools

The lack of communication from schools was a definite theme, with the speed, or lack of, that schools responded to the crisis and then communicated to parents as well as subsequently keeping in touch. The evidence submitted shows some parents barely had contact from the school, no telephone calls, work only set up for students months after lockdown began. Whilst some schools rang pupils regularly (even weekly in some cases) the communication about was very one-way with limited invitation for pupils to contact schools for assistance if required.

4. Variation in provision of education

Some primary schools have not provided anything, other only worksheets and no online learning. In contrast other schools used Tapestry, Seesaw, put work on their website, some did this weekly and some daily. Better schools provided access to reading, e.g one school set up online platform called Bug Club another London- based school set up an outside library where parents could pick up books as they passed by. However, the expectation of some schools of work set to pupils appeared out of line with their age group – sending multi-slide powerpoints to primary school children and setting secondary school pupils a single task lasting 5 hours.

5. Reports

Despite being a requirement, not all schools have issued end of year reports to parents. Schools that did issue them largely were for the first 2 terms of the year as many had not had contact with the pupil or sight of their work to provide commentary on the final term.

6. Differentiation of learning ability

In general, there appears to be little differentiation in terms of pupil ability with respect to the work set with a 'one-size-fits-all' approach adopted particularly at primary schools. Whilst some offered additional challenges, there was a lack of support for pupils who might be below average and those with special educational needs were particularly poorly supported.

7. Wellbeing and pastoral support

The focus of school support was predominantly on the education provision with very little attention on the mental and emotional wellbeing of pupils other than to signpost via leaflets to other sources. It is particularly apparent in the risk assessments carried out by schools for the eligible pupils returning in June that consideration of pupil wellbeing was an afterthought.

8. Access to school for 'keyworkers' and for eligible year groups

The communication regarding eligibility for the 'key worker' groups was very varied with some schools only accepting pupils with both parents who were critical workers (defined as those working in NHS or essential services during lockdown) with others being less stringent allowing children of e.g. finance personnel at supermarkets or marketing personnel from pharmaceutical companies. Overall the impression that schools gave was to discourage pupils from attending wherever possible.

When return to school was announced from children in reception, year 1 and year 6, there was again a variety of communication with some schools only offering places to those who applied (up to 15) and then saying bubbles were full and other schools prioritising certain year groups and not offering places to children in all three year groups.

Alternatively some typically smaller and independent schools were able to offer additional year groups the opportunity to return.

**In conclusion communication from schools to home ranged from excellent to absent and the accompanying variation in provision of home learning will result in a diverse range of education experience and catch up required.**

In appendix A we provide a table highlighting some good and poor examples of the communication from schools to home during school closures. The supporting documents are available.

### Children's and young people's mental health and safety outside of the structure and oversight of in-person education.

The most important point to raise here is that all children have struggled with the sudden disappearance of school not just from the loss of education and social interaction but also the withdrawal of the structure that underpins their lives. Even children in supportive and nurturing environments have become depressed and withdrawn. We have highlighted some specific examples in appendix B but are conscious of protecting the privacy of the individuals who are already vulnerable. We have also provided detailed case studies from a counsellor who had unique third-party insight into the impact of the closures on children who were already struggling.

The main themes are:

- The loss of framework and terms of reference that children get from the school day
- The increased dependency on online platforms and devices to communicate and in some cases as means of learning
- The withdrawal of all social interactions in and outside of school from peers, other adults and mentors
- The removal of the infrastructure that underpins their usual engagement with authority and rules disappear which they have previously been accountable for
- The loss of boundaries between home and school as parents become teachers, and teachers no longer hold pupils to account for work not completed or inadequately done.
- Children become withdrawn, weepy and regress to depending on parents for their physical, social, emotional and psychological wellbeing
- Parents who are also struggling, in some instances with their own mental health issues, find it difficult to support their children
- Usual agencies such as, GP, healthcare, CAMHS, social worker, youth worker are no longer accessible to provide support
- Even where support has previously been in place via school or counselling service this is also stopped and children are refused continuation of access even in crisis

# Appendices

Appendix A: Examples of inconsistency of messages from school on remote learning

Appendix B: Children's and young people's mental health and safety outside of the structure and oversight of in-person education examples including case studies.

### Appendix A: Examples of messages from school on provision of remote learning

| Document number | Town/City | County    | School level | Academy Trust/LEA | Learning format   | School contact   | Parent feedback   |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|---|--|---|
| HS1; HS1A       | York      | Yorkshire | Secondary    | Academy Trust     | Online learning. Home learning across all key stages will have a variety of tasks and activities. These will include audio visual approaches, used appropriately, in line with the content the teacher is delivering. | Years 7-10 weekly contact with tutor. Written feedback uploaded work at least once every 2 weeks for maths, English and science and once every 3 weeks for other subjects. In the sixth form students will have fortnightly contact with their tutors and receive written feedback every 2 to 3 weeks in each subject. If child feels there isn't this level of contact then contact in first instance child's teacher who can clarify when work was set | Email detailing "poor provision". "Our experience, as parents, is that the learning is woefully poor. There is little or no teaching and children are typically sent activities which are often poorly laid out; missing critical information; with no instruction or teaching and little/no feedback. There has been no face to face contact for almost 3 months and, only last week, did a new system start where a form tutor emails a pupil to enquire about their welfare. |

| Document number | Town/City | County         | School level | Academy Trust/LEA | Learning format  | School contact   | Parent feedback   |
|-----------------|-----------|----------------|--------------|-------------------|--|--|---|
| HS2; HS2A; HS2B | Rayleigh  | Essex          | Primary      | Primary           | Stay health, keep ticking things over and read, read, read. Ordered to check website regularly. Second letter sets out a range of activities set, including projects, creative element. Children option to pick and mix. Suggestion to check website as it will be updated with things to do. Encourage to spend time together cooking, playing card games, gardening etc. Make memories | Letter dated 25 March - links to contact details for external services such as school nurse. In addition school says to call or email if parents need them. School says will contact and check in weekly |   |
| HS3; HS3A       | Whestone  | Leicestershire | Primary      | LEA               | Learning became available online from 21st April. Work posted on a Friday for the whole of the following week  |  | No flexibility in work. Parent's child was in year R but ended up doing Year 1 work. Further document refers to "printing problems" where workpacks were not possible |



| Document number | Town/City | County      | School level | Academy Trust/LEA | Learning format   | School contact   | Parent feedback  |
|-----------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|---|--|--|
| HS4; HS4A       | Brighton  | West Sussex | Secondary    | LEA               | Online learning, independent projects and assignments set. No live teaching   | School communicated how expected children to learn and that had shown children how to access online learning environment and followed this up with guide for parents | Deluge of information overwhelmed child and parent wondered what teachers were doing with their time as no online lessons. Parent queries why parents' evening couldn't be conducted over the phone. |
| HS5             | Unknown   |             | Primary      | Not known         | Offered in initial Parentmail: Mon, Wed, Fri class with maths and reading tasks and may include teacher videos; Mathletics access; Charanga Music - music website. Book records sent home to record reading | No zoom or video calls offered. One parent had requested a teacher to join a Zoom call but the teacher said they were advised against joining                        | No video lessons were provided for her children in their year group. No work was marked, no feedback given. Parents encouraged to add work on website  |

| Document number | Town/City                | County        | School level | Academy Trust/LEA | Learning format  | School contact                              | Parent feedback   |
|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|--|---|---|
| HS6             | Birmingham               | West Midlands | Primary      | LEA               | Limited. Worksheets and no teaching support. School took on board some of the parent's comments regarding the request for better online provision but this was limited -Four videos for Year 5 - parent unable to find videos for year 2 | Initial weekly phone calls but then nothing | Parent call for daily lesson plan, worksheets and online lesson plans that parents can follow. Need for regular feedback on work completed. The website needs an overhaul. School response to this was for each year group to do a video outlining the week's work. |
| HS7             | London Borough of Merton |               | Primary      | Unknown           | Online learning. Virtual sports day. Recommendation to look at an event being run by the local library service. Overview of home learning sent for the coming week   |   |   |

| Document number | Town/City   | County      | School level | Academy Trust/LEA | Learning format  | School contact   | Parent feedback |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|--|--|-----------------|
| HS8             | Horsham     | West Sussex | Primary      |                   | Tapestry for Year R. Seesaw for remainder of school. Parents take pictures of children's work. From September plans to use G suite for Education   |  |                 |
| HS9; HS9A       | Westminster | London      | Primary      | LEA               | Tapestry for Yr R. Purple Mash for KS1 & KS2. Email and later newsletter suggest a daily schedule to follow including fresh air and exercise and not going to bed too late. Work loaded daily. Set up an outdoor library for parents to pick up books if they pass the school. | Teachers to call pupils every two weeks. Suggest if parent need help to contact teachers through the blog or by calling the school office. |                 |

| Document number      | Town/City | County          | School level | Academy Trust/LEA | Learning format  | School contact   | Parent feedback  |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|--|--|--|
| HS10                 | Richmond  | North Yorkshire |              | Academy Trust     | Online lessons, 140 live lessons. School concerns about safeguarding issues concerning online lesson. Offerings include powerpoint and worksheets  |  | Parent concern "death by worksheet/ powerpoint" approach. Parent complaint that school's approach is "we're doing more than some approach". Academy head states school's provision stands up very well to comparison |
| HS 11;HS11A (SURVEY) | Hull      | East Yorkshire  | Primary      | LEA               | Some online learning. School states aim in April newsletter"1) some form of continuing education<br>2) a sense of routine, structure and 'normality' to reduce their anxiety<br>3) a sense of our continuing[school name]family and community to prevent them feeling isolated | Request to complete survey on tailoring Google Classroom dated 27 March. | The survey email sent on 27th March was the only communication from the school regarding feedback received by the parent as of 10th July   |

| Document number | Town/City | County | School level | Acadamy Trust/LEA | Learning format   | School contact | Parent feedback |
|-----------------|-----------|--------|--------------|-------------------|---|----------------|-----------------|
|                 |           |        |              |                   | 4) sustained physical and mental health<br>We have deliberately chosen not to take any form of 'register' nor push children to complete activities. We understand that you will all be under a wide range of stresses individual to you. We will just be happy, if we can help make your children feel safer and happier and provide you with some extra help keeping them in some form of routine" |                |                 |

| Document number | Town/City | County             | School level        | Academy Trust/LEA                      | Learning format  | School contact                                 | Parent feedback  |
|-----------------|-----------|--------------------|---------------------|--|--|--|--|
| HS12            | Unknown   |                    | Primary & secondary | Primary - LEA; Secondary - independent | Primary - once Year R & Year 1 returned learning provision was reduced. Instead of receiving worksheets, just received links to resources such as National Geographic/BBC Bitesize and parents asked to choose for child what activities to do. Secondary - followed something close to normal with Zoom lessons, videos, power point presentations and worksheets | secondary - communication direct with children | Parents both working full-time didn't have time to sift through links to find an appropriate lesson. |
| HS13            | Bolton    | Greater Manchester | Secondary           | Academy Trust                          | No attempt at any digital teaching, no teaching just homework supervised by the parent. No online lessons because of safeguarding issues   |  |  |

| Document number | Town/City | County             | School level | Academy Trust/LEA | Learning format  | School contact   | Parent feedback  |
|-----------------|-----------|--------------------|--------------|-------------------|--|--|--|
| HS14            | Bebington | Wirral, Merseyside | Primary      | LEA               | Home learning loaded onto Google drive on a Monday for the whole week. Work is from Twinkl   |  | The whole week's work is loaded on a Monday. Her child aged 9 (in year 4) could do the whole week's work in 2 hours maximum and it's not a replacement for learning in school. Teacher recommended if child wanted more to do to check work in Year 5 folder. Child has been completing year 4 and 5 work but still doesn't take the whole week to complete. |
| HS15;<br>HS15A  |           | West Sussex        | Primary      | LEA               | Seesaw or Tapestry. No live online lessons because some children don't have the necessary IT or the equipment might need to be used by a sibling and they would therefore miss out | Anyone experiencing difficulties encouraged to email class teacher via class email address |  |

| Document number | Town/City | County                    | School level | Academy Trust/LEA | Learning format   | School contact  | Parent feedback   |
|-----------------|-----------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------------|---|---|---|
| HS16            | Surbiton  | Royal Borough of Kingston | Primary      | Independent       | Home learning on Showbie. Expectation that children complete at least one hour of maths and english per day. Children to upload their work onto Showbie so teacher can see the work has been completed. Self marking. Recommends PE "20 Day Challenge" as well as PE with Joe Wicks |   |   |
| HS17            | Liverpool | Merseyside                | Primary      | LEA               | First week used a national scheme of work rather than online learning. Did not use Seesaw for financial reasons. Online learning not used because of safeguarding issues. Talks of developing online learning and speaking with four other schools in the country that used G       | School did not contact children because there was no expectation to maintain contact with all families (just vulnerable families). School conducted a survey with schools following this and found some families didn't want to be contacted. The letter also refers to | The letter answers questions posed by parents. Hints that parents unhappy with lack of Zoom or other similar products and felt other schools were doing this in Liverpool - a fact denied by the school in its reply. Letter also says why it didn't use Seesaw |



| Document number | Town/City | County | School level | Academy Trust/LEA | Learning format  | School contact  | Parent feedback  |
|-----------------|-----------|--------|--------------|-------------------|--|---|--|
|                 |           |        |              |                   | <p>Suite or Office 365. With regard to Seesaw school said already aware of parents anxiety about school work not being done for a number of reasons such as no IT equipment or equipment needing to be used by siblings, time issues. The school states it would never use technology to place additional pressure on families. School talks of working with School Improvement Liverpool and other schools to develop a city wide online curriculum but suggests no actual timeframe.</p> | <p>guidance from NASWUT which stated contact with families should be only in exceptional circumstances and not on teachers' own devices. Also quotes Liverpool City Council advice that teachers can be asked to contact families but teachers should only do it if they felt comfortable doing so.</p> | <p>App to contact families where work was not being completed as this may have motivated them.</p> |

| Document number | Town/City | County    | School level | Academy Trust/LEA | Learning format   | School contact                                | Parent feedback   |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|---|---|---|
| HS18            | Unknown   |           | unknown      | unknown           | Google classroom. Photocopied pages of books  | Doesn't believe child was contacted by school | Response not from a parent but observer. Maths set at below expected level. Poor photocopied pages from books. Google classroom described as "poor". "School really did not try very hard". |
| HS19            | Newbury   | Berkshire | Primary      | LEA               | using school website to load work on Monday and Thursday mornings. Work to include maths, english, science or a theme. Work not marked. Initially work will be for children to use knowledge and understanding they have already gained but going forward new learning will be added. No pressure for parents to feel they should do everything added | Email addresses given for contacts in school  | No parent feedback on this document.  |

| Document number | Town/City | County    | School level | Academy Trust/LEA | Learning format   | School contact  | Parent feedback   |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|---|---|---|
| HS20            | Park Gate | Hampshire | Primary      | LEA               | Yr R Tapestry, remainder years online learning via the website. Maths, English and topic work uploaded each day as well as recommended online games and enrichment tasks. There was no expectation to send work to the teacher until after May half term when each Monday either a piece of maths or a piece of English work had to be sent in. Provided every child with access to "Bug Club" an online reading platform | Any questions you could contact the school office who would get in touch with the relevant teacher. Great communication from the school. One phone call home for my daughter in Year 3 after May half term which was sufficient. After May half term we were provided with email addresses for teachers for sending in work. Set up a Facebook page for the school. A weekly school disco was posted live which the kids loved and in June the headteacher and deputy head began "virtual assemblies" which were posted to the Facebook page. Continuation of usual weekly newsletter home. Overall | The speed at which the school set up online learning was excellent. Each day there was plenty to do for my daughter in year 3. Plenty of optional tasks as well. For my son in Year R, the work on Tapestry was also excellent, including fun activities. Year R teachers were very good at commenting on any work that was uploaded. However, the work did seem to drop off once Year R were back in school and some days the learning was completed in 1 hour. Both my kids loved Bug Club and the teachers were up to date with adding new titles when they had finished reading |

| Document number | Town/City | County      | School level | Acadamy Trust/LEA | Learning format                     | School contact                                | Parent feedback  |
|-----------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|
|                 |           |             |              |                   |                                     | excellent communication in challenging times. | them. Only criticism is that felt like sometimes we were doing Year 3 work in a void, with only one piece of work being marked after June. This made it difficult to motivate my daughter some days.     |
| HS21            | Unknown   | Unknow<br>n | unknown      | Unknown           | No zoom offering or printable packs |   | educational and pastoral provision well below that provided by other schools in the area. Lists; (quality of teaching communications, interaction with class / students, quality of teaching materials). |

| Document number | Town/City    | County         | School level  | Acadamy Trust/LEA | Learning format   | School contact | Parent feedback  |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|---|----------------|--|
| HS22            | Billinghurst | West Sussex    | Primary       | LEA               | Learning loaded onto webiste with spellings, maths, music, science tasks/worksheets |                | One link to home learning sent on 1st June. Parent comment: "It's not terribly helpful for my daughter in year 3 or myself to be able to get the resources,such as books or worksheets of what they are teaching week by week." Children prefer learning with each other, and working together. Home schooling in my case, is an excuse for rebelling against myself! So hardly any work done. |
| HS23            | Uttoxeter    | Stafford shire | Middle School | LEA               |   |                |  |

| Document number | Town/City    | County         | School level | Academy Trust/LEA | Learning format   | School contact | Parent feedback |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|-------------------|---|----------------|-----------------|
| HS24            | Peterborough | Cambridgeshire | Secondary    | LEA               | Not listed. Focus of the letter is on the cancellation of transition visits for year 6s going into year 7 and creation of "virtual tours" and chance to meet tutor, head of year via video. Some schools also providing "virtual meeting" for parents so teachers can explain transition arrangements. Also includes explanation of why the school can't open to more children explaining its because some schools do not have enough staff or space. |                |                 |

| Document number                    | Town/City  | County                    | School level | Academy Trust/LEA | Learning format             | School contact | Parent feedback   |
|------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|---|
| HS25;<br>HS25A;<br>HS25B;<br>HS25C | Scunthorpe | North<br>Lincolns<br>hire | Secondary    | Academy Trust     | Website, SPAG<br>worksheets |                | Son is in Year 7, he gets around 1 hour of school work a day to do and has not had any meaningful video lessons. Maths lessons are from a website and English work is once or twice a week and is mainly SPAG worksheets and comprehension. |

| Document number | Town/City      | County       | School level | Academy Trust/LEA | Learning format   | School contact | Parent feedback  |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|---|----------------|--|
| HS26;<br>HS26A  | Chippin Norton | Oxfords hire | Secondary    | Academy Trust     | Teacher refusing to conduct online lessons, reasons given include anecdotal evidence that online teacher not as successful as thought but also concerns about teachers being plugged to their laptops as well as live work would widen the gap between pupils doing the work and not, he said he didn't want the attainment net to widen. The headteacher was also concerned with safeguarding issues with running online lessons. In a newsletter the head "dismissed out of hand" the idea of online learning. He referred to years 7 and 8 not being a priority. |                | Parents emailed the head and spoke with the headteacher for an hour about their concerns. Headteacher described as "interesting" information sent to him by the parent about another local school and the online provision that school was providing. Parents asked for information on how the school would help with "gaps in learning" and why their son had not received any feedback on the work they had sent in. |



| Document number | Town/City | County         | School level | Academy Trust/LEA | Learning format   | School contact   | Parent feedback   |
|-----------------|-----------|----------------|--------------|-------------------|---|--|---|
| HS27:<br>HS27A  | Cambridge | Cambridgeshire | Primary      | MAT               | Uploaded weekly work to school website for parents to download. 3 pieces per day: 1 english, 1 maths, 1 topic plus weekly art challenge and spellings. Links provided to OAK but not used in lesson format. No marks schemes provided initially | Children or family not contacted by phone or email. Teachers emails were supplied part way through term but cautioned against contacting them more than once per week. No work marked by teacher | Emailed head several times and requested mark schemes - some for maths eventually provided but school was only interested in receiving pictures of children to put into virtual assembly. Requested print off of worksheets when printer broke but it was reluctantly given and had to travel into school to pick it up on the one day the class teacher was in school. Teachers posted videos of themselves learning e.g. sign language, baking and rearranging gardens which was disheartening when parents and pupils were struggling and asking for help. |

## Appendix B: • Children's and young people's mental health and safety outside of the structure and oversight of in-person education: examples and case studies

### MH1: Boy aged 11

No home learning was attempted. There was no skype classroom - or similar - which would have helped the child to be motivated and keep in touch. Reading was supposed to be done via a poorly photocopied page from a book, and maths was far below the expectation level for the age - i.e. school really did not try very hard! I do not believe school contacted the child. Third party observer of child "has suffered hugely as a result of absence from school - educationally, socially, mentally and physically. Dad has indicated that if school goes back part-time he will not bother, as he will never know what day to send him to school!

### MH2: Girl aged 8, Surbiton

Mother is a teacher with two children in years 3 and 6 and finds that "home schooling beginning to take its toll". The older child can return to school due to eligible year group leaving younger child at home who becomes as teary and losing motivation to work and desperately missing her friends, finding it particularly difficult to see her older sibling going to school. Mother requests if child can return for short time before summer break but is refused.

### MH3 Girl secondary school, Brighton

Mother reports that there was a deluge of emails and flashing red projects that my daughter felt completely over whelming. Chasers were sent by school but there was no live teaching. Daughter in floods of tears and impact on wellbeing.

### MH4: 5-year old child, Milton Keynes

Feels "boxed in" because of a partition in his classroom. Witnessed anxiety and child having a breakdown. Parent (a clinical psychologist)states: "I could see all the classical anxiety signs in children: he was teary, didn't want me to leave his side and needed a lot of comforting, had a couple of tantrums at night (which he has not had in ages) and had nightmares at night."

MH5: Two parents working full time with 3 children

Parents describe themselves as struggling to home school three kids. Describes children as falling behind and their mental state as poor and deteriorating. Describes one previously healthy child suffering with mental illness as a result of school closures.

MH6: 7 and 10 year old, Birmingham

Describes mental health impact on 7 year old daughter and 10 year old son. Daughter cries "pretty much every night" and is lonely. 10-year-old son "has completely gone into himself and is I think depressed."

MH7 Primary and secondary siblings

My child cries so much these days as she can't see her friends. She wants to go to school. She can't go swimming, she can't even go to the park. She's pretty much house bound unless I take her out for a walk. But all she wants to do is play in the park, it breaks my heart to hear her cry at night. She's only eight. Her routine is disrupted. She stays up all night either crying or just over thinking. When I go in and talk to her she just replies with what's the point in living? My reply is it will get back to normal. But will it? I also have a 14 year old daughter who struggled with the lockdown and refused to go out when some restrictions were lifted. She believed the media hype and thought if you catch it you die.

MH8: 7 year old, Chelmsford

A single mother struggling with her 7 year old daughter who showed signs of behavioural problems before lockdown and which have increased during lockdown. Mother says she was seeking support for her daughter from the school before lockdown but was left feeling isolated. Mother says she contacted the school behavioural contact but was told ""everyone is in the same boat"". Describes daughter as feeling even more rejected and misses interaction at school. it. ""She feels that coronavirus has taken away her birthday party, her friends, her parks and swimming. She refuses to be home schooled and won't listen or entertain me in any way shape or form."" Mother says she is depressed and struggles to get through each day."

MH9: 9 year old boy, Cambridge

9 year old boy who is usually quite self-sufficient and initially copes well. Starts to struggle when he sees his older sibling return to school and witnesses his classmates (children of keyworkers) returning but he is prevented. Becomes withdrawn, lethargic and depressed. Talks of wanting the old world back and then of not wanting to be in this world. Becomes easily distressed and exhibits worrying signals. School is asked if he can return even on a part-time basis or for limited time but it is refused. Child becomes even more disruptive at home with violent exchanges with sibling. Eventually enrolled into holiday workshop where he struggles to socialise after 17 weeks at home and becomes faint and distressed.

### MH10-12 case studies from a counsellor working within a primary school in

I am a primary school counsellor living and working in the UK. Seeing children, who are the most creative, imaginative, and innocent beings in our world, flourish is what I live for. It has been devastating to see how the school closures and enforced social distancing measures have damaged their mental health, not only now but in the long-term. Really, these measures go against everything we, as mental health practitioners, try to promote. A child-centred education is not just about learning, but about play, socialising, expressing oneself through hobbies, developing one's character and future aspirations, and so much more. Here I present to you three very real case examples of children whose lives have been damaged by the lockdown, and as you read them I encourage you to think about how you would feel if this were you.

Names and certain details have been changed to protect the identity of the families.

#### MH 10: Alyssa

Alyssa is a seven-year-old girl who lives with her single mother in an impoverished area. Her mother suffers from depression and has, in the past, tried to take her own life, due to financial stress and feelings of loneliness. Alyssa is aware of this and tries to keep her mother happy and protect her. Alyssa also witnessed domestic violence from her father towards her mother, before her father moved away and left the country when Alyssa was 3. Her mother receives regular support from a mental health worker. Alyssa was having weekly sessions with me in school. These sessions were helping her to work through her traumatic experiences of nearly losing her mother.

However these sessions came to an abrupt stop when lockdown started. Alyssa was still attending school as a vulnerable child, so I called the school to ask how she was. Teachers had told me they were noticing her becoming sadder and they were concerned. They were also aware that her mother had sadly lost her job due to Coronavirus cutbacks, and she was asking for financial assistance as she was struggling to feed Alyssa. I asked my managers numerous times if I come and see the child in school, or, at the very least, offer her video counselling, but my suggestions were dismissed and I was told I can only do what the managers say, so as to follow safety guidelines. I was told that the mental health worker would visit the family home to check if things were okay. I was concerned about whether or not this would actually happen, due to the service cuts. One day, a few weeks ago, Alyssa did not attend school. The mental health worker was called to visit and found that, tragically, Alyssa's mother had taken an overdose and was in hospital. Alyssa had witnessed the incident and had called the ambulance herself. Thankfully Alyssa's mother is on a recovery program and is receiving support to help her look after Alyssa, but this has all happened too late, and I am upset about how the family was neglected due to lockdown social service cuts. Alyssa was simply not protected. More than ever she needs her own therapy to help her process what she has seen. I have been calling the school to check how Alyssa is. She is very distressed and asks to see me every day, but she is told she cannot until September at the earliest. I know I cannot undo what has happened but at least I would be able to offer her a shoulder to lean on. Alyssa has also expressed sadness at not being able to take part in her music and drama groups at school. Alyssa can be shy and withdrawn, and these groups were really helping to build her confidence and self-identity. However, due to social distancing measures, they cannot take place any more. She has also been shouted at several times for forgetting to keep two metres away from her friends. She is a

sensitive child and I know this must be hurting her so much. This case exemplifies the many ways the country is failing its children: job cuts, no access to support, denying children their right to have counselling, and social distancing measures in school, to name a few. For a child whose life was already difficult, life is now so much worse.

#### MH11: Tom

Tom is a 10-year-old boy who lives with his parents, who have good jobs, and his younger sister. Tom had counselling with me about a year ago due to some anxiety around changes and transitions. He quickly gained resilience and did not need to come any more, and since then he had thrived and lived life with confidence and ambition. He is a very kind, caring, and sensitive child. However all this changed when lockdown started, and I was informed that Tom would be re-referred to me when I could resume counselling again, perhaps in September. In the meantime I was permitted to offer the child some video counselling. Tom attends a different school to the other children I have described, which is why I was allowed to do this. I had heard that Tom was very frustrated and felt "locked-up". When I spoke to the child over the video call, he told me that he felt like he was in prison and he was worried this would "never ever end". He said he missed his friends, playing and hugging, and that he had no-one to talk to or play football with. He had not been able to do any school work at home, due to his distress. Sadly, a few days later, he, in front of his mother, got hold of a kitchen knife and attempted to stab his face, shouting that he couldn't stand being in prison. His parents managed to stop him and they have been doing their very best to reassure him. I continued to help Tom express his feelings whilst I empathised with him, and thankfully he is doing better now. I just feel sad that this ever had to happen and to see such a young child feeling suicidal has been heart-breaking. For me, this case shows how lockdown restrictions are affecting all children, not just those who are vulnerable or from impoverished backgrounds.

#### MH12 Rashard

Rashard is a six-year-old boy who, before lockdown, was living with his mother. His mother does not work as she suffers from schizophrenia. Sadly, growing up, Rashard has witnessed his mother having psychotic episodes. Social services have been called several times and Rashard has been repeatedly placed in the care of an aunt, although this was not a sustainable permanent solution, and so the child went back to his mother time and again. I had been giving Rashard counselling for about a year, to help him process his mother's continuing mental health difficulties. Rashard had also been put on the Child Protection Register since an incident occurred that involved him being sexually and physically abused by a visiting relative, who is now in prison. Considering how the child is at risk, I realised how important it was for him to have weekly counselling, in order to monitor his safety, as well as help him recover from his traumatic experiences. However, Rashard's counselling was halted due to the lockdown. Sadly, at home, Rashard's mother became very stressed about the Coronavirus and the fear-inducing stories she was hearing on the news, and she had a particularly severe psychotic episode, which led to her attacking her child.

Rashard has now been placed in care and is in a state of shock from the experience. He is attending school and has asked to see me, but has been told he cannot. It is breaking my heart that I cannot talk to him. What could be more important than a traumatised child getting the support they need right now? I have heard that Rashard is also finding the social distancing measures difficult, as he has been placed in a social bubble with only one other boy in his year group, and this boy sometimes bullies him. He has felt sad when seeing his friends playing together on the other side of the red tape, knowing he cannot join in. Rashard's story shows how child safeguarding is inadequate at the moment due to the lockdown restrictions, and opportunities to protect children are being missed. Even when an incident occurs, children are placed in an uncomfortable environment and are not allowed to see their counsellor.

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