

Belinda Hunt – Written Evidence (LBC0068)

Impact of Covid 19 anxieties

We were pleased to receive your call for action for feedback on public anxieties of C19 going forward. Having spoken informally with my extended family group, neighbours and friends as well as school colleagues and fellow university students, I am forwarding collective views.

We are of a broadly similar demographic group - middle class, middle aged professionals, with children and elderly parents, although a racially mixed group, including White, Indian, Black, Jewish, Muslim, Christian...

I have summarised these, and am happy to explore and develop any of these further, with others, should this be of interest.

1. **Family and personal**...anxiety in looking after ageing parents and family abroad...wellbeing of spouses ...having a permanent eye on everyday health checks is stressful, especially as we are normal, healthy, no underlying conditions although over 50 ...fear for our children (young adults) and their futures and plans socially, as well as careers and travel experiences... ie just being normal young adults?

2. **Society and community**...healthcare; mental health of those around. Not knowing what next lock down will do, when, where, not being able to live normally, or make plans.

The toll on care workers and **community support groups and volunteers** long term...who will do all this and where will the money come from...at present we all help each other, using our own savings and kindnesses...we are running out of energy, support and funds....

Equally we are enormously concerned at the **polarisation of society and the extremist views** that seem to be prevalent across great gulf of society. This seems to have become more voracious since 2016 with Brexit and has become of increasing concern. We see the anxiety from this in our work as teachers and in the art therapy professional community, which is addressing this with clients in relation to the recent BLM and antisemitism issues.

Anxiety, generally, appears to be everyday and this is of great concern to maintaining **long term resilience and mental health and well-being.**

Impact as teachers on the school physical environment, on colleagues and on pupils and their families and how we will cater for them as educators, counsellors and social workers readying them for their future...exams, work experience, community projects, social activities, sports, PE, music and art and dance lessons, science lessons...space restrictions...

Impact as students (studying part time) what will be the impact on the quality of our very expensive degrees, on the teaching and learning and on the practical workshop sides and placements? As trainee art therapists, what this means for studio time, tutor time and working with clients. For the university and placements...how will they plan for each cohort and provide a quality education of value and use? For the clients in placement situations, with mental health issues, how will their care be managed with consideration and continuity and cater to their ongoing needs?

3. **Financial and economic**...what will happen to our jobs? A number of us work part time as we are unable to find full time employment, despite being highly qualified and skilled. Will we be able to continue to pay our bills going forward? We are the squeezed generation...our parents are living and our **pensions** have been squeezed, pensionable age has gone up and our income has dropped...we are highly skilled experienced professionals yet we are losing out to those much younger and older..If the government adds **tax** to all over 40s, those of us between 50 and 67 will be tremendously affected by hardship...paying at both ends and in the middle...as we are paying for our children's education and housing too...if our parents finally manage to leave us anything after their care costs, once the government have then raided this, we won't be able to properly fund our pensions or our pension gap...even though we have always saved, been careful, been healthy, not used the NHS to any extent, have always worked, are not overweight and are very fit...

What about the **broader economy**? C19 has made some super wealthy even wealthier...How might the super rich pay more to support the middle and working classes who bear the brunt of paying to support the benefits system, education, health and other public services. How might the benefits system support those in real need more effectively? How might better targeted education enable less health and benefits burden?

What changes in the **economic environment** are being sped up by C19? Use of computers and robotics and AI...what impact does this have on health, jobs, mobility, bandwidth, as well as enabling the poorest to have access to these to reduce their deprivation? What about **Telecoms and computing** education, facilities and environment? What does this do to transportation and warehousing? **Manufacturing and distribution**? And the knock on effect of supply and demand of goods and services and **global climate** issues? What are we doing to ensure there are wins here for reducing carbon footprint and increasing health and well-being through less reliance on transport?

4. **Education, Health and NHS**...the system is not effective at putting money where it is needed. Money gets wasted in bad political decisions. Education is currently not fit for purpose (the recent Gove changes are disastrous for pupils with any disability. ...Do we need more academic graduates or more vocational team players? What is Education actually trying to do? Surely it needs to cater on a large-scale for practical vocational subjects as well as for the academic and high brow.

Equally, the NHS is severely struggling.

Surely health and education should become independent of politics, like the Bank of England? What will happen with supporting community health and mental health across the board? There are too many boxes at present and loopholes.

We think potentially there is sense in using technology to facilitate the assessment system being streamlined to cater for holistic health management. If individuals are taught about healthy eating and health management and made responsible for their bodies, this would reduce the burden on the state and on future generations and effectively a health means test could be in place...taxation on self-created ill-health would promote a healthier nation...that way healthcare costs would be reduced, giving more funds to cater for

healthcare needs of illnesses and disabilities that are not self inflicted. **Health insurance and pensions and benefits** could also be linked to this system. Whilst C19 is so new, it is difficult to make policies, however we need long term strategies that are not politically motivated and that are cross party to be put in place, not knee jerk reactions that are short termist, populist sticking plasters. We wish to **support a coherent, cogent response** to our needs as a whole society that will heal divisions and enable a brighter future for all in a life beyond C19, and in the meantime know that our government is working selflessly towards that goal.

We hope our comments are of some use. We are happy to be contacted about these for further elucidation if and as required.

29 July 2020