**Families Experiences of Coronavirus Lockdown 2020**

**Report: November 2020**

On Friday 20th March 2020 schools across England shut due to the Coronavirus pandemic. On Monday 23rd March 2020 the country was put into lockdown by the Prime Minister, this meant families were unable to leave their house other than for food shopping, medical needs and for one form of exercise a day. Some of our more vulnerable families in Leeds were asked to ‘shield’ meaning they were not allowed to leave their house at all.

Families in Leeds have had different experiences of the Coronavirus Lockdown. During September and October 2020 children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their parents and carers were given the opportunity to share their experience of the lockdown and reflect on things we have done well in Leeds and things that could have been better.

**Children & Young People**

42 young people with special educational needs and disabilities from across Leeds completed the ‘your experience of the coronavirus lockdown 2020’ survey.

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| **Age of young people:**   * 9 years old * 10 years old * 11 years old * 12 years old * 14 years old * 15 years old * 16 years old * 17 years old * 18 years old * 19 years old | **Schools:**   * Benton Park * Blackgates Academy * Broomfield, South SILC * Farsley Springbank Primary * Leeds City College * Lighthouse School * NW SILC * Queensway School * Springwell Academy, South * Temple Moor High School * The Bruntcliffe Academy * The Stephen Longfellow Academy * West SILC |

**School Support**

67% of young people who completed the survey didn’t attend school during the lockdown, and were at home with their families from March to September 2020.

16% (7 young people) said they didn’t receive any support from school during the lockdown. However, 84% (35 young people) said they were supported and contacted by their teachers throughout the lockdown.

Schools supported students in a number of ways including:

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| * Virtual lessons * Video messages * Work packs | * Email support * Phone calls |

**Health Needs**

12% (5 young people) fed back that their health needs were not met during the lockdown, and they sought support more from their parents / carers.

40% (17 young people) said they didn’t have any health needs during the lockdown.

Positive feedback from young people who received medical attention during the lockdown or required support from their GP were:

“My medication and tablets were delivered to my home”

“I had regular and frequent calls with my GP”

**Personal Experiences of Lockdown**

We asked young people what they enjoyed about the lockdown, if they had any worries or fears and what could have made the lockdown experience better.

All but four young people who completed the survey found enjoyment during the lockdown. Young people enjoyed:

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31% (13 young people) said they were not worried about anything during the lockdown. 69% (29 young people) of the young people who completed the survey had varying worries during the lockdown.

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The young people who completed the survey were very clear about things that could have made their experience of the lockdown better. Young people stated they found the lockdown very stressful and confusing, and found the experience “scary and horrible”.

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**Parents & Carers**

63 parents and carers of children with special educational needs and disabilities from across Leeds completed the ‘your experience of the coronavirus lockdown 2020’ survey.

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| **Age breakdown:**   * Pre-School Age: 1 family * Primary School Age: 25 families * Secondary School Age: 37 families | **Attendance at school:**  44 families had children who did not attend school during the lockdown, and returned to school in September 2020. |
| **Shielding:**  17 of the 63 families who completed the survey were shielding during the lockdown | |

**School Support**

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| Supported by school | Not supported by school | N/A |
| 59% (37 families) | 40% (25 families) | 1% (1 family) |

“The school work sent was too advanced for my child”

“We had to fight for support from the school”

“My child was offered to return to school but without the support they require due to lack of staff”

“Children with SEND were forgotten about during the pandemic”

“Insufficient reasonable adjustments made which led to them failing their GCSE’s”

“Being off school so long has had a negative impact on them”

“Schools sent work but let children down mentally and socially”

“I felt very alone with barely any support”

“Contacted regularly by the school and supported throughout by teachers and SENCo”

“The SENCo supported us to do educational games and life skills”

“Online lessons were great”

“We were able to contact the school whenever we needed support”

“Regular welfare calls were received”

“Video messages really helped”

**Information, Advice and Guidance**

68% (43 families) clearly knew who they needed to contact during the lockdown if they required information, advice and guidance around support for their child. The majority of families contacted their school SENCo during the pandemic if they required any additional information, advice and guidance to support their child.

32% (20 families) felt they were alone and didn’t know who to contact. Families who tried to reach out to services often received a response of ‘we are too busy at the moment due to the pandemic’, which left families feeling very alone.

**Health Needs**

Parents and carers shared their struggles with meeting their child’s health needs during the lockdown.

“No SEN support was offered or provided”

“I contacted CAMHS but never received a call back”

“EHCP progress was limited and expectations needed to be clearly set out”

“Mental health needs were not met”

“My son wished he was dead, I had to advise CAMHS and school what was needed”

“My child tried to take her own life during lockdown. From a service that was massively overstretched we received really good care under the circumstances”

“Difficult to get hold of prescriptions and medical equipment. There were long delays and it is dangerous for my child’s health to go without”

“It was a hard time for all, but school really helped with our child’s health needs”

“GP’s were good at assessing needs and prescribing medication”

“GP’s have limited understanding of autism and anxiety, no support received”

“I had to pay for private mental health counselling for my child”

“Health needs were dealt with by parents”

**What Leeds did well**

Parents and carers shared examples of things that Leeds as a city did well to support their child and their family during the pandemic.

“SENDIASS were available throughout and helped us gain support”

“Schools did really well to respond to issues, concerns and support required”

“Leeds Carers supported us and helped us apply for DLA”

“Social workers who know our child really helped us”

“The RES team helped us and kept in touch”

“School were brilliant”

“Weekenders held park meet ups during the summer which were really needed”

“Leeds Youth Service dropped off resource packs which were amazing”

“Food parcels helped feed my family”

“CAMHS had regular contact with my child and our family”

“Scope provided us with advice and guidance”

“It has been an incredibly difficult time for families, but I would like to thank Leeds City Council for the services they provide to children and families. They have quite literally been a lifeline during lockdown.”

**What could have been better**

Parents and carers shared with us what could have made their experience of lockdown better.

“Contact families to find out what their SEND needs are”

“My child was trying to commit suicide, all we received was a phone call with advice from CAMHS”

“More SEND resources around mental health”

“Asked about our challenges earlier and regular phone check-ups”

“SENCOs to be more qualified and contact the family more”

“Provide support for siblings”

“Advice lines and online support for families”

“Provide more access to school for children with SEND”

“Provide advice via videos and not just written text”

“Outreach practitioners checking in on families”

“I have had the worst 5 months of my life, and I am now in a position where I may have to give up work as my child’s behaviour has become so extreme”

“Allowing families with SEND to form support bubbles with other families to provide support and respite”

“Schools to provide online classrooms so that children could connect with their teachers and peers”

“More advice for families who were shielding”