



Children in Wales Plant yng Nghymru

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Speaking with one voice

Wellbeing during the Coronavirus crisis

- Keeping children safe in lockdown
- Prisoners' children
- Early Years support during lockdown



Also featuring:

- Meic Cymru
- The Price of Pupil Poverty Project
- Adapting work during the Coronavirus crisis
- Supporting the wellbeing of the social care workforce

Welcome to the summer edition of the Children in Wales magazine. Our theme for this issue is Wellbeing during the Coronavirus crisis, and we are very fortunate to have received a diverse range of contributions from colleagues and members, with topics ranging from how prisoners' children have been doubly affected by the lockdown to supporting the wellbeing of the social care workforce. A sincere thank you to all those who have submitted articles – we were overwhelmed by the number and quality we received.

At the risk of repeating an overused phrase, these have been unprecedented times. The challenges have been great. However, from the perspective of my new role as CEO at Children in Wales, it has been evident to me that the public and third sectors have risen to these challenges with remarkable resilience, innovation and determination. The values of public service, cooperation and volunteering have shone through.

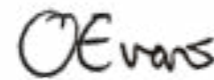
The range of perspectives provided from the lived experience of the Coronavirus crisis, across this edition of the magazine, is truly fascinating and valuable. The focus upon children and young people's wellbeing and mental health will almost certainly come into sharper focus as schooling returns to a more normal footing in September, and other lockdown-related restrictions (presumably) continue to ease. Indeed, the full extent of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated lockdown upon children's wellbeing will not be fully known for some time yet, and its effects could be deep and long-reaching.

One of the big 'known unknowns' at present is the extent of the economic impact of COVID-19 and the lockdown. The depth and length of a recession remains to be seen, but we know its impact – like the impact of the virus itself – will not fall equally across society. Our experience of previous recessions tells us that it is our most vulnerable families and

communities who will, sadly, bear the brunt of the economic consequences. Of course, this will present further challenges for the wellbeing of our children and young people – especially the most vulnerable.

One thing is for certain – those values which have shone through recently, of public service, cooperation and volunteering, will continue to be absolutely central to supporting children and young people through the next phase of this experience.

I hope you will find this issue informative, interesting and thought provoking.



Owen Evans
CEO, Children in Wales

An update from the Children in Wales team

Having now settled into a new way of working, Children in Wales has been not only facing the challenges placed upon it by Covid-19, but trying to embrace them as much as possible. Like many, we realised this was no time to slow down our work, but take it up a gear to ensure we were helping the children, young people and families of Wales, and those who support them, through these difficult times. Initially, the changes were daunting, particularly in those areas where we meet people face-to-face at training courses for example, but we believe that we have done well in the circumstances.

Our training team have been spending time learning new skills to enable them to deliver training online, and also considering methods to adapt current training exercises to a virtual environment. It has been enjoyable meeting up with staff across the organisation to collaborate with learning and practice sessions, and to share experiences of what has worked well and what hasn't. Members of the team have also been busy contacting organisations that commission training from Children in Wales, and finding out their plans going forward. This is to ensure that we can meet the needs of their workforce.



Children in Wales, with our partners in the Wales UNCRC Monitoring Group, is now embarking on a new project funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), which will deliver a series of activities for organisations in Wales throughout this year. These activities will identify the key priorities in Wales and help to build the capacity of civil society

organisations to engage with the UNCRC and the review process.

We are now gathering evidence to inform a report that will highlight the key priority children's rights issues in Wales. We are keen to hear from you as to what your priorities and evidence are, and we can then include them in the State of Children's Rights in Wales Report to help inform the UN Committee's review and make changes for the children and young people of Wales. Responses are required by Friday, 11 September 2020. Click here to find out more and respond. If you need any further information, please contact: sean.oneill@childreninwales.org.uk

We are also organising two online Capacity Building & Consultation events for this project on 24 and 27 August 2020, 10.30am – 12noon. For further details and to register your interest, please click here: [State of Children's Rights event booking form \(bilingual\)](#).

Our work in Family Support, Early Years and Childcare has focused on supporting Parenting and Family support services across Wales as they adapt and change the way they work. This has been achieved by providing and facilitating a range of information and resources, and writing virtual delivery guidance to support online parenting support. We have, alongside a range of early years colleagues, focused on promoting rights for early years children with a specific focus on participation and the voice of our youngest children, aged 0-3 years old. Find out more about our Early Years work on page 8.

Children in Wales has ensured that we have maintained our presence in conversations with Cross Party Groups and within the Welsh Government, to ensure the voices of children are being heard.

With interest still strong amongst school leaders in our Price of Pupil Poverty project, we have worked to produce a number of new resources to support schools in implementation, and drive forward the guides in the context of COVID 19 and school closures. Read more about this project on page 28.

Llwynhendy Integrated Children's Centre

Children in Wales has produced a suite of padlet resources for care experienced young people. These cover key subject areas that develop young people's independent living skills, preparing them for the transition from care to independence. [You can find the resources here.](#)

We have also now launched our resources for Anglesey. These include downloadable PDFs and padlet resources to help prepare care experienced young people transitioning from care to independence. More so, we have been delivering workshops to small groups of young people to share and build on the resources produced. Subject areas include Budgeting, Universal Credit, Student Finance (University) and Interview tips.

In July, Children in Wales released a survey on how Coronavirus has impacted low income or disadvantaged families. Research by a number of organisations in Wales has suggested that levels of child poverty have and will continue to rise as a direct result of the pandemic. A report was published alongside this survey and can be found [here.](#)

Children in Wales were also very proud to be a part

of the extremely successful Coronavirus and Me survey with the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Welsh Government and Youth Parliament. The findings of this survey can be found [here.](#)



Children in Wales is very grateful to work within a sector, and amongst other organisations, that have taken the challenges presented by the coronavirus crisis in their stride. In this issue of our magazine, we are honoured to highlight some of the incredible work that has been undertaken across Wales during a time which has been especially challenging for all.

Young Wales Annual Conference

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, this conference will now be held VIRTUALLY in March 2021. THE EXACT DATE WILL BE CONFIRMED.

It will focus on some of the key issues facing young people in Wales, and give young people an opportunity to help us refocus the Young Wales priorities for the coming year.

This conference will be FREE OF CHARGE and further details about speakers etc will be forthcoming.

As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, Llwynhendy, Felinfoel and Morfa Integrated Children's Centres (based in Carmarthenshire) were no longer able to facilitate sessions to the public from 23 March 2020. The Children's Centre staff made the decision to redesign ways of supporting and staying connected with families, so that they did not feel alone in some of the darkest times faced by our communities in decades.

We were lucky enough to be offered funding from Our Llwynhendy, a community group, to provide all children who attended services at the centre with a Craft Pack. Together with match funding, 125 Craft Packs were created and delivered. Following the success of this, we at the centres decided to provide children that attended all 3 centres with their own Craft Pack. The packs included a selection of activity kits, including everything necessary to complete that activity. In addition to these kits, we put together 7 'homemade' activities which we were hoping would encourage parents to get involved and reassure them that even those of us who aren't very creative can still create a little masterpiece with our children. With these simple activities we included craft materials including a glue stick, scissors, crayons, fabric pens, a pot of clay, pots of paint, paint brushes, pencils, a colouring book, bubbles, a word search book and a scrap book, all of which were held in a fabric bag which the children were able to decorate with their fabric pens.

The feedback we have received as a result of these Craft Packs



has been overwhelming. We had imagined the families would be pleased with the resources, as we were confident of their quality, however we didn't expect to receive the comments, pictures and videos that we did. This has confirmed our initial rationale for wanting to take on this task, given that during uncertain times, the gesture of a Craft Pack has boosted spirits, brought joy to over 400 children in our communities and most importantly, has shown our service users that even during the darkest of times, the staff at the children's centres were there to support them.

Although the outcome was positive, staff had not envisaged the depth of the challenges this seemingly simple task would bring which included areas identified below:

- Coordinating deliveries from procured providers who had reduced service under COVID-19
- Supply and provision of PPE due to COVID-19
- Separating bulk orders into individual packs according to age
- Allocation of some tasks to staff Agile Working with the provision of resources
- Photocopying instructions for each activity for each pack
- Ensuring at least 16-20 high-quality activities per pack
- Creating 7 home-made simple activities (to encourage parents to get involved)
- Coordinating delivery through telephone contact to each family to arrange a suitable date for staff to attend

The above tasks were all challenging in themselves, however that challenge was magnified due to the fact we were working in line with our COVID-19 Office and Travel Policy and adhering social distancing guidelines at all times. This of course created lengthy timescales for completion. Once we had delivered the 400+ packs, we were looking for ways in which we could support our new parents and babies that were attending provision before lockdown but were too young to really benefit from the contents of our Craft Pack. This resulted in us creating a Teddy Bears Picnic pack which included a picnic for mother and baby/toddler to enjoy together. Along with this we shared a link to a video on our Facebook page where staff were also having a picnic whilst singing songs and telling stories, trying to make things as 'normal' as possible. We also created a 'Welcome to the World' pack for mothers who had given birth through lockdown. The pack included a pack of baby towels, a big bar of chocolate, hand cream, paints, card and a brush to get baby's footprints printed on to a keepsake. We felt it was our priority to let these new parents know that even though we can't deliver sessions, we're still thinking of them and available for support if necessary, which was particularly important for the first time parents who were isolating due to social distancing regulations (many alone with their baby).

This new way of working has enabled us to continue to support families, albeit in a completely different way. We, along with many other settings I'm sure, have faced challenges we were not expecting to, however seeing other agencies pulling together to provide a new level of support in the community has made me so proud to be part of the preventative support team in Carmarthenshire.

Playworking after Covid-19

Jane O'Toole, Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Club



At Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs we recognise the vital importance of children and young people being able to play freely and to have environments provided for them, that facilitate and support their play.

Play can be everything and anything to a child, it provides them the opportunity to escape and immerse themselves into a world unique to them and the world around them, play provides them the opportunity to feel included and to be a part of something, play allows children time and space to work through worries or to play out anxieties, play allows children to conquer fears and challenge themselves to take risks and be daring. Play can be so many things to a child and as adults we need to protect every child's right to play, and a child's right to play freely and completely directed and led by themselves. Adults working with children should facilitate spaces and opportunities for children to play freely in a variety of ways.

Environments which are enriching and stimulating, with loose parts and resources offer children and young people countless springboards to a variety of play opportunities. The document, Playworking After Covid-19 was developed from concerns arising around the play opportunities that would be available to children and young people amidst and after this pandemic. Using the Playwork curriculum, and taking into account the new social distancing and infection control guidelines, this special edition of the Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs magazine can be used by settings and playworkers to reflect upon their 'playworkers toolbelt' and the new skills, knowledge

and resources that they will need going forward that will support them to continue to facilitate an enriching and diverse environment in which children and young people can play freely.

Playworking After Covid-19 shows how as adults working with children and young people that we can still be affording them an enriched environment in which children and young people can play freely and provides guidance and suggestions as to the steps that can be taken to ensure that resources and a variety of loose parts can still be made available.

Play, now more than ever will be needed by children and young people, for their mental health and wellbeing, friendships and for fun and relaxation, and we need to be ensuring that children have ample opportunities to access quality play provision and spaces and freedom to play. By taking positive steps and effectively planning for play (not the play) we can ensure children have time, space and opportunity to play.

<https://www.clybiauplantcymru.org/>

Keeping Children Safe in Lockdown

Ian Evans, Child Accident Prevention Trust



The long period of lockdown during the Coronavirus crisis has been challenging for everyone, but especially for children and families in Wales and throughout the UK.

The Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) focuses on creating awareness and understanding of the safety risks faced by children, especially those under the age of five who spend so much time in the home. Our homes were already accident hotspots simply because of the way children naturally develop. All parents recognise the challenge of trying to keep 'one step ahead' of increasingly mobile and curious youngsters!

Heightened risks

But lockdown has thrown a spotlight on the heightened risks faced by housebound young children. Research shows that children living in overcrowded homes are three times more likely to be badly injured in preventable accidents. And there are concerns that the pandemic may have been pushing growing numbers of families into poverty and homelessness. Job losses, financial uncertainty, health and wellbeing issues, concerns for basic necessities such as food and childcare...all these have added to the social isolation and tensions felt by families in this unprecedented time. With the pressures on the NHS, many parents are worried about a trip to A&E with their child. Exercise is essential to allow children to burn off excess energy, but less traffic doesn't mean switching off about road safety. In fact reports, including from police in Wales, suggest that some cars have taken advantage of emptier roads to speed up. Here at CAPT we have been reaching out to parents under pressure to help keep children and families safe.

Safety makes sense!

In June each year, CAPT's Child Safety Week provides a strong focus for local communities to come together to raise the profile of accident prevention in homes and neighbourhoods. Health practitioners, early years settings, community nurses, childminders, fire and rescue, road safety teams and many others have built on our key messages and resources. But this year the Coronavirus crisis has called for a different approach.

Without opportunities for face to face contact and family engagement, normally at the heart of Child Safety Week

activity, practitioners supporting families have told us that they need reliable, targeted advice that is easy to share. Families themselves need short, simple tips to keep their children safe during lockdown pressures.

So this year we have:

- Created new social media content for communications with families, whether by website, email, newsletter, Facebook page or Twitter
- Created free, easy to share advice that can be used with colleagues, community groups, and local partners
- Adapted CAPT's Child Safety Week Parents' Pack, so that it becomes a resource for families in lockdown and beyond, when the easing of restrictions means that socially distanced contact becomes possible
- Highlighted key safety themes which can prevent some of the most serious and life threatening injuries

Safety in the 'new normal'

Now that many of us are emerging from the shock of crisis, we need to make sure that the 'new normal' doesn't become the new high risk!

'Safety makes sense' is a continuing theme for every home, family and community in Wales. Whether you are a parent, practitioner, carer or community partner, we want to help you to keep children you know and care for out of harm's way. If lockdown has forged stronger social bonds and more creative neighbourhood connections, how can you use this to support child safety? In this difficult time, we have invited everyone to think about risks and hazards to children.

Our Parent's Pack shares information on fire safe families, making homes free from falls, preventing poisoning, removing choking and strangulation hazards, safety from burns, watching out in water and safety around roads. Whether you have shufflers, crawlers, toddlers or pre-schoolers, if you do a quick room-by-room check, then you're doing a great job of keeping your child safe from everyday risks such as:

Hot drinks to hair straighteners – doctors have seen an increase in burns during lockdown. A small child's skin burns really easily as it's so thin and delicate. Decide where the safe spot in the kitchen and living room is for hot drinks – well out of reach of little hands. Do the same in the bedroom for hair straighteners and curling wands – even when they are cooling down, somewhere high up is best.

Pills to pods – from the painkillers in the drawer to the cleaner by the loo, the disinfectant spray under the sink or the washing pods by the machine, they can seriously harm children if swallowed. Gather them up and put them high up out of harm’s way. And remember to put them away again after you’ve used them.

Button batteries – big lithium coin cell batteries the size of a 5p piece can be deadly if your child swallows one. Look round your home for them – in products as well as spare and ‘flat’ batteries – and put them out of reach of inquisitive little fingers.



Take part in CAPT’s new Button Battery Treasure Hunt - you may be surprised just how many you can find in your home! Visit: <https://www.capt.org.uk/batteryhunt>
Out and about - As we keep our distance but take much-needed exercise, it’s crucial to stay mindful of road safety. Remember to check for traffic before you and your family step out into the road. If you’re driving, remember there may be people stepping off pavements or younger cyclists avoiding walkers. Keep an eye on your speed while you’re making that essential trip. Take action now!

We appreciate everything that you are doing to keep children and families in Wales safe. Check our website for CAPT resources and ways in which we can help you in this vital role. Sign up here to keep in touch: <https://www.capt.org.uk/csw-sign-up>
Download and share our Parents’ Pack - it’s full of quick wins for child safety, even when you’re feeling under pressure. <https://www.capt.org.uk/Pages/Category/child-safety-week>
And don’t forget to share what you have been doing to keep children safe! <https://www.capt.org.uk/contact-us>

Supporting Families Through Lockdown Anna Westall, Children in Wales

From craft packs to virtual singing sessions, it has been wonderful to see that families across Wales have been kept entertained and supported during lockdown.

Parenting and Family Support services across Wales have adapted how they traditionally support families and have found new and creatively ways to meet a family’s needs. This report will highlight some of the excellent work they have been doing.

Lockdown has brought many challenges for families: loss of support from family and friends; lack of routine; financial worries; balancing their own and their children’s emotional wellbeing and much more.

As families went into lockdown together, Parenting and Family Support services had to change overnight. Many workers who were balancing their own family life stepped up and embraced the challenge ahead of them. Social Media became vital for connecting with and supporting families. Although families were unable to see their support workers face to face, they now received regular phone calls, WhatsApp calls and could view useful parenting advice via videos produced and uploaded by workers themselves.

Parents from Wrexham shared how valuable the support has been:

“I have found the phone calls to be thorough and well thought out. Not in any way have I felt forgotten about or pushed to one side”

“I have found these extra development care phone calls invaluable. My daughter has come on leaps and bounds since I have been given the tips and tools to help her thrive”

“Since coronavirus took over our lives I have found the phone calls to be a great help. Under the circumstances I could not ask for more”

Across Wales fantastic activity and craft packs have been produced and have included things like, books, play equipment and other goodies, all to keep families entertained. Paula from Denbighshire told us how her conservatory became the delivery centre for a range of resources as she spent hours packing them into individual activity bags for the families. The packs included a range of reward charts, certificates and an information sheet for the parents.

The delight as parents and children received these packs is evident from the happy faces below.



Jazmin (pictured above left) and Rio James (pictured above right) enjoying planting the seeds that were provided by Blaenau Gwent.

Adele Hawker from Monmouth shared how her daughter Tara (pictured below) loved the Goldilocks and the three bear’s story she received and had fun making masks for all three bears and Goldilocks.



This has been a situation we have not faced before and many of the parenting strategies that have been previously taught are now being tested and challenged. Workers are faced with having to give parenting advice to families during a pandemic no one has experienced before. However, workers have been transferring their knowledge and skills and providing tailored support to families to help them through this difficult time.

Workers have also improved their digital skills and tried new ways to engage and support families. Social Media

platforms have been flooded with a plethora of website links, YouTube links and resources providing families with support on a wide range of topics from home schooling to talking about coronavirus with children.

In Pembrokeshire one worker shared how she has successfully supported a family to connect to the internet and undertake direct work via video calling. Her resourcefulness and ability to adapt enabled this family to make progress with their Action Plan by increasing resilience and self-esteem through learning new coping strategies; which have been vital during this lockdown period.

In Wrexham workers have recorded themselves telling stories and sharing information. The picture below



captures them using puppets to read ‘Sammy Sloth goes back to School’ a lovely story about going back to school after coronavirus.

In Torfaen workers have been able to virtually bring together parent together to undertake the Incredible Years Babies programme; these parents had previously took part in an Ante Natal Welcome to the World programme pre Covid -19.

The parents have been able to introduce their babies to each other for the first time; gain vital support from workers while continue to build positive relationships and peer support. The below picture, show the virtual group in action.



Families have relished the virtual support and Stacy from Rhonda Cyan Taff tells us how her virtual group which was a planned forty minute session ended up running for an hour and a half as the parents continued to talk and share support and ideas with one another



In Conwy the playing out scheme with CADW in Conwy Castle, have taken the opportunity while the castle is closed to provide a safe place for staff to catch up with families at a social distance and for vulnerable families to have some 'free play' time in a safe environment, allowing the children have had great fun and be able to let off steam.

One family who took part in the scheme shared how fantastic the opportunity was; especially because two children within the family have ASD:

'Wow, I've never been able to take them because of the noise. This is a dream come true.'

Family Workers feedback after the visit.

'It was wonderful seeing the family enjoy the castle today. The boys were simply overjoyed and the parents were so appreciative for the opportunity.'

This article highlights just some of the fantastic and creative work our Parenting and Family Support Workers do and have been doing during this Pandemic. Children in Wales want to say a massive THANK YOU for all the Parenting and Family Support Workers across Wales.

The Welsh Governments Parenting [Give it Time Website](#) offers a range of support for families during this time and includes ten Top Tips to help you support your child's development as we continue to spend more time at home.

Prisoners' Children Facing Double Lockdown - Pact

In response to the Covid-19 situation, prisons suspended social visits to ensure the safety, and to comply with government lockdown restrictions. For children in Wales with a loved one in prison, this meant that contact with a parent or other family member stopped suddenly. Perhaps they were able to speak to their Mum or Dad on the phone, or maybe they were in bed when the person was permitted a call, but either way, overnight, their relationship with their parent was abruptly disrupted. Many children, particularly those who were unable to fully understand the reasons, may have suffered from a perceived rejection from someone that they love.

In terms of attachment, children have missed out on what is already limited contact with their loved one in prison. For those still in their formative years, or those going through childhood challenges, these past few months

have likely been an incredibly difficult time without the support of their loved one. To help prisoners and their children to keep that connection, and have some form of quality contact during this time, Pact sent prisons in Wales a box of 'writing home' packs which were created in collaboration with the Shannon Trust. They provided paper, envelopes and a booklet of ideas for good quality correspondence with children. But whilst this has provided some short term relief, this does not replace physical contact and the warmth of spending time together.

Throughout these lockdown conditions, there has been great concern that children have had more time to feel more keenly their loss and separation. They have also suffered the loss of vital support networks of friends, extended families and schools, and may be experiencing poverty, challenging family dynamics and 'digital exclusion', with no access to the internet or technology, leading to



feelings of isolation. Pact designed two 'Pact Packets' - simple activity booklets to help families to fill the time, that could be printed at home, or printed by our staff and posted to families who do not have the resource to do that themselves.

Prisons in Wales are at different stages with the introduction of 'virtual visits', a video-link call that can accommodate an adult and up to three children at a time. Although this is a welcome addition to services for visitors, there is no research on the effects on children or consideration of best practice in terms of their needs. We continue to work towards the understanding that these are more equivalent to calls than visits, and the Minister for Prisons has recently reassuringly termed these 'video calls', rather than 'video visits'. Precious time with family members is something that we feel should be protected, not replaced with screen time, although for some families who are physically unable to visit, these are a very welcome addition.

The impact that lockdown in its wider context has had on children and young people is not yet known, and many, if not most professionals and parents share concerns about the longer term effect that this period of isolation will have on children in the future. But for children who have a parent in prison, the additional lockdown they are experiencing is one that means they are now even more detached from their parent, and the impact that this sudden withdrawal of prison visits will have is something that may not be understood fully in the short term. It may be that the effects are more visible when the person in prison comes home, and the relationship is visibly suffering due to the reduced opportunities for nurturing attachment. We simply cannot tell right now how it might manifest, but what is clear is that many children and families will be in need of support.

Over the past months, as part of a project run by the Prison Reform Trust, Pact has been asking families who

have a loved one in prison to share with us their thoughts, experiences and opinions on how the Covid prison lockdown has impacted them and their children. Through that research, we have heard the many stories of children who are suffering, who are not sleeping, not engaging in school work, displaying challenging behaviour and socially withdrawing, because of the loss they are feeling. You can hear some of those first-hand experiences by reading the report published earlier this month by the Prison Reform Trust <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/PressPolicy/News/vw/1/ItemID/889>

As we begin to come out the other side of the Covid lockdown and prison visits start to re-open, there has been encouraging, fairly widespread agreement that children should be prioritised and permitted to visit their parent in prison, in a safe way. Whilst visits themselves will not look and feel like they did in the pre-Covid world, and children will likely have to stay seated, 2 metres away from their parent and not have any physical contact, our hope is that this first step into the new normal will provide at least some relief to those children and parents who have suffered so greatly during the lockdown, and they can start to rebuild the connection that this terrible pandemic has disrupted.

Resources:

You can access free resources to support children and families of prisoners, including: 'Locked Out', a book to help parents and professionals to support children affected by imprisonment, including advice for adults and activities to do with children: <https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/locked-out>

Pact Packets for younger and older children which include daily challenges and journaling, along with printable sheets to make your own and a list of other resources: <https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/pact-packets>
Animations about children's rights and understanding the justice system, made by children for children: <https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/Pages/Category/for-children>

Supporting the wellbeing of the social care workforce

Abubakar Askira, Social Care Wales

Social Care Wales would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone working with children and young people in Wales for the work you have been doing, and continue to do, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We are aware that caring for and supporting children and young people during these challenging and unprecedented times will have left you working under huge pressure, in unfamiliar and rapidly changing circumstances. It is important that you speak to your manager or employer if you have any well-being concerns. But we are keen to support you in any way we can and so to provide you with additional support we've developed [an online health and well-being resource](#).

The page features information and resources to help you stay well and seek help when needed. The resources cover a number of topics, including:

- Physical wellbeing
- Mental wellbeing
- Financial wellbeing
- Advice and guidance for pregnant employees

As we overcome the first wave of the pandemic and lockdown measures are relaxed, it's important you look

after yourself, in addition to those you care for, both personally and professionally. Feeling overwhelmed is not a weakness nor does it reflect badly on you if you need more support, and we would encourage anyone who is feeling overwhelmed, anxious or in need of support, to make use of the resources available and seek help. Compassionate leadership is crucial in supporting the workforce during the recovery phase of the pandemic and as we prepare for a possible second wave. Social care managers play an important role in supporting their teams to develop resilient behaviours, so we have also highlighted tools and resources to support managers with this, including resources to support compassionate leadership.

We are also very much aware that the pandemic will have been a difficult and confusing time for children and young people, so we have created an online resource to [support the well-being of children and young people, too](#). The resource includes advice and guidance about explaining Covid-19 to children and young people, guidance for parents and children, as well as information about the specific support available in Wales. We want our wellbeing resources to be as useful as possible, so if you have any comments or suggestions about how we can improve them or any areas we have missed, please email abubakar.askira@socialcare.wales

Gwynedd Youth Service

We at Gwynedd Youth Service have come along leaps and bounds during this coronavirus pandemic. We all started off at the beginning of lockdown on Microsoft teams. The whole team get together every morning to keep in touch, and ensure that everyone is ok.

This has been a lifeline to some, and a bit of normality for others. We then thought; if this is good for us, imagine how the young people will feel and benefit out of this. The young people of Gwynedd have been asking for virtual sessions in the past, but we haven't had the time or capacity to do it. Now we have had the time to work on this, it has become a reality.

We have gone 'live' during youth work week 23/06/20. This week young people would register with the youth service, enter competitions and see what 'live' sessions they are interested in taking part in. Every youth worker has made a video advertising and promoting the new way and the up and coming sessions. This has been a great way for the young people to see our faces again.

We are offering many different sessions, with many of our staff members. We have been working on a project for the young people called, '5 fun ways to keep healthy'. This is based on the 5 ways of wellbeing. Every week we discuss one of the 5 ways and do a task for every week such as –

Take notice.... We ask them to send us in pictures of things they have taken notice of that week, then discuss it.

Connect – We want to know how they have connected with people this week.

Keep healthy – We are doing a Joe Wicks 5 min work out also some mindfulness and breathing techniques. Then we get the young people to re cap on the session to see what they have learnt, and set the task for the following week. In these sessions also we have an off topic quiz, game, scavenger hunt. Also time at the end to have a chat about anything.

We have had such a positive response from the young people, enjoying the sessions, and learning new things. The fact everyone is coming back week after week amazing. Also the feedback we get back from the young people is unbelievable.

This has been a massive learning curve to us staff, to go 'live', learn new technology skills and interact with the young people after weeks of not much contact. Also a massive step for the young people having the courage and confidence to come and say hello to us.

This has been such an amazing experience to be a part of, also a new future for the youth service in Gwynedd. Everyone is and has done amazing.

Thank you and goodbye! Getting More Involved in Social Care project

Emma Sullivan, Children in Wales



Since 2016 the 'Getting More Involved in Social Care' project has worked with care experienced children and young people across Wales, teaching them about their rights and working together to co-produce new guides. Our big priorities throughout the project have been listening - illustrating the lived experiences of children and young people in care and participation - enabling them to get involved, co-design new guidance and share their key messages with front line professionals who support them and Welsh Government.

We have met with some incredible young people from all across Wales who all have unique experiences, but commonly share a strong will for things to be done better in future. They want children's rights to take centre stage in the care system and more voices to be included in decisions made about their lives and in any care and assessment planning. We want to say a massive thank you to all the young people who worked with us to co-produce our 12 guides which can be seen at www.childreninwales.org.uk/resources/looked-after-children

The project ended as of April 2020, but all guides will remain available online for print and download for free. Please do share with your networks and keep using them in practice - to ensure children and young people's voices continue to be heard.

My life on track!

Our 12th and final guide is a new game for health and social care professionals to use when working with children

and young people in care. It is a simple roll the dice game where children and young people can have a say on what matters to them, ask questions and get involved in care and support planning. It isn't meant to be too time consuming - it can be played in five mins or 30! It can be used during a visit or meeting to break the ice, have fun and start a conversation.

Play and children's rights - why is play so important?

- Play helps children and young people stay safe, healthy and happy
- It gives them opportunities to explore and understand their culture
- It's inclusive and breaks down barriers

Children have a right to play under the UNCRC (Article 31), they also have a right to have a say in decision making and be listened to (Article 12). This game bridges the gap between the two and invites professionals working with children and young people to do things differently. Collaboration and partnership working is one of the key principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Now more than ever, children and young people's voices should be included in care and support planning.

Who is the game for?

Any professional can use this tool - a social worker, independent reviewing officer, foster parent, nurse, residential worker, advocate - anybody who works with children and young people in care.

Primary School Network explores the impact of COVID-19 HAPPEN

What is the impact of COVID-19 on the health and wellbeing of primary schools and pupils in Wales? Since lockdown, the HAPPEN Primary School Network Wales, based in Swansea University, has been carrying out research to gain a better understanding and help inform decision making.

Initially, HAPPEN asked primary school pupils (aged 8 – 12) to take part in their 'HAPPEN at Home Survey', to understand and identify the impact of lock-down on young people's health and wellbeing. Then with the reopening of schools in June, HAPPEN introduced the 'Return to School Survey' to gather opinions from both primary school staff and pupils on their experiences of returning to school.

HAPPEN at Home Survey

During lock-down, the normal, day-to-day routines were disrupted with school closures, home learning, and social distancing - all having an impact on young people. The 'HAPPEN at Home Survey', was launched during lock-down and gathered the opinions and experiences of over 1,200 young people. The Survey aimed to give children a voice. Pupils were asked about physical activity, wellbeing and how they were staying connected with friends, family and school. **Early findings showed that lockdown may have been a positive experience for children.** Insights from pupils showed that children were being more active; 58% reported doing an hour or more of activity on 5+ days compared to 37% before lockdown. It may have been that they had more free-time to play and more time to be active with their families. As well as this, children also felt safer in their areas (84% reported feeling safe playing in their area now compared to 76% before lockdown). With less traffic on the roads and fewer groups congregating, it may be that children felt safer during lock-down.

Children also slept more; 83% reported having 9 and a half hours a night compared to 62% before lockdown. This could be because they were being more active or perhaps, they were lying in longer rather than waking to get to school.

There were some negative impacts of lockdown. Screen time increased. Over half (54%) reported watching screens for more than two hours a day compared to 36% before lockdown. Home-schooling may underpin this, with parents using tablets and laptops to help educate their children. Parents may also have been using screens to help occupy their children while they work from home. Fewer children were brushing their teeth with 62% brushing twice a day or more compared to 76% before lockdown. Disruptions to daily routines could have been one reason for this. Children were worrying the same. A total of 64% said that they worry a lot, but this is the same as before lock-down. They also reported that they were happier during lockdown; 91% say they are happy with their lives compared to 81% before

lockdown. Increased time with family members could account for this, alongside being more active. Activity is associated with improved mood and wellbeing.

Professor Sinead Brophy, Director of The National Centre of Population Health & Wellbeing Research and HAPPEN, said: 'Covid-19 has caused challenges for everyone. As early year's researchers, it was important that HAPPEN take a closer look at the impact that the coronavirus is having on young people's health and wellbeing and to provide findings that can be used to inform decision making going forward.'

The early findings indicate that lockdown was a positive experience for most children. However, not all experiences were positive - with data results showing screen time increasing and children living in a deprived area being less active and playing outside less. Furthermore, whilst children living in deprived areas are represented in this survey, there will be children including those with limited online access who will not be represented in these findings.

The aim now will be to anonymously link the survey data to geographical, education and health data – allowing us to investigate in more detail the social impact of COVID 19 on children's health, wellbeing and educational outcomes.'

Return to School Survey. To coincide with schools returning on the 29th June, HAPPEN launched the 'Return to School Survey' to explore the opinions and experiences of teachers, support staff and pupils. Emily Marchant, Researcher at HAPPEN, commented: 'The aim of the Return to School Survey is to gain an understanding of what is working, what isn't, and what teachers and pupils think should happen when classrooms reopen after the summer break.' Charlotte Todd, Researcher at HAPPEN, added: 'Our research can enable us to understand what has been both positive and negative during the pandemic. This all helps in our aim to improve the health and wellbeing of children living in Wales.'

HAPPEN aims to bring together education, health and research to help schools have a better understanding of pupil's physical, psychological, emotional and social health. This enables everyone to work together to improve child wellbeing and academic achievement. Schools receive an individual report from HAPPEN to help with this. Over the last five years, HAPPEN has expanded to include over 300 schools and 12,000 children across Wales. HAPPEN is part of the National Centre for Population Health and Wellbeing Research (NCPHWR). NCPHWR is funded by the Welsh Government through Health and Care Research Wales. Find out more about HAPPEN and their ongoing COVID related research on their website: www.happen-wales.co.uk

Conwy Youth Services



In March, we announced that we would follow government guidelines and shut down Conwy youth clubs. The disappointment on the young people's faces was clear evidence of how much they enjoy our clubs. Having said this, COVID-19 has not stopped us; even though face-to-face provisions have closed, youth work has continued in Conwy.

We have had to think outside the box to find ways to continue to offer support, fun, reassurance or just someone to talk with through this difficult time. We have spoken to over 200 young people and parents. Telephone conversations have been beneficial to keep in direct contact with young people. We feel that these helped build stronger relationships between our young people, their parents and us. We have spoken with young carers, LGBTQ young people, young people who were involved in mental health services prior to COVID-19 and young people in supported housing and that are living independently. We have been able to share with parents all the great achievements our young people have made whilst accessing youth club over the past year, bringing joy to homes in uncertain times. Molly aged 18 said: "The youth workers phone me to keep in touch asking how I am and how my day has been. Sian shared with me the Facebook page with activities for us to do at home. The phone calls with the youth staff have helped me during lock-down and encouraged me to do things."

As the pandemic took hold of the world, those that could, turned to the internet to fill their void, for education, work, social life, family life, shopping and so on... Using social media has been a high priority. Young people are connecting with us and have been enjoying watching the videos that we have shared.

Throughout this period, we have been actively involved in seeking activities that young people could be doing from the comfort of their own homes. We have:

- Encouraged young people to complete the 'Five ways of wellbeing' to support their physical and mental wellbeing
- Recommended that young people try something new
- Challenged some of our young people to run 5k in the fastest time. They have enjoyed trying to beat the Youth Worker's time and get a lot of satisfaction in letting them know!
- Created a walking challenge on Facebook for young people to count their steps towards a tour of Conwy County. #CamuConwySteps the challenge was 270,000 steps, so far we have received 300,000!
- Posted daily crafts, recipes and interesting websites for young people and parents to help find ways to keep them entertained and inspired.
- Shared videos of ourselves at home sending messages of support out, letting young people know how they can contact us.

We have also provided youth friendly versions of the lock-down guidelines, making clear the differences between England and Wales. We have been working very closely with other professionals to continue supporting the most vulnerable children and families in Conwy.

There is a growing concern of how lock-down is effecting young people's mental health. Throughout lock-down, young people, who were previously encouraged to have screen-free time, have been left to their own devices - phones, tablets, games consoles and PCs. Gaming, social media, video calling and chat have become their whole world.

They no longer have a daily regime of getting up for school or set bed times. Some young people are staying up later and later, messaging their online 'friends' throughout the night.

Coronavirus has removed our ability to work with young people face to face. Suddenly their opportunity to have a chat with an adult that they know supports them, encourages them with a smile and is part of their coping mechanism, has been snatched away. They have been stuck in their home environment for weeks without that support. Some home environments are wonderful and nurturing spaces. Some, are very far from that.

Here are some of the challenges our young people have shared with us over the last few months.

- Completing school work at home
- Revising for university exams or getting tutor support
- Young carers not being able to access their support groups
- Not being able to have one-to-one, face-to-face support. For example, mental health
- Young people with ADHD finding it difficult to get things done or complete tasks
- Confusion around the Government guidelines
- Feeling isolated in supported housing
- Online bullying
- Using inappropriate apps
- Missing access to sports sessions

- Keeping a routine

Additionally, during the last few months, we have supported the wider community as well as continuing to support young people. Our whole team was re-deployed from March to July, to run part of the Conwy Community Support Service. One of the highlights was getting to know people of all ages and backgrounds in Conwy. In some cases, we were their only contact outside of their home, being able to comfort them was essential. We offered advice and helped them to relieve some of the pressures they face. It has meant a lot to us.

Some of our Youth Workers attended mental health seminars to learn more about supporting young people when lock-down ends. We are developing resources to help with their transition back to the new "normal".

We have also researched the apps that young people are currently using to keep in touch face to face with their friends/family. The information they gave us provided us with a clear picture of our way forward with certain apps as well as the necessary safeguards to put into place to start up Virtual Youth Groups and Drop Ins.

Children in Wales training during lockdown - how we've adapted

Mike Mainwairing and Claire Sharp, Children in Wales

Mike: So, it has been an interesting time here in Training at Children in Wales. I won't use the word unprecedented, as over use of the word unprecedented has been unprecedented.

Like you all we have undergone some radical changes in light of the pandemic. I was working from home on Monday, 16 March thinking I had four days left in work before I went on annual leave and was going to fly to New York for my birthday. As Monday progressed, my Wednesday training was cancelled, then my Tuesday training was cancelled and then my Thursday training was cancelled. Alongside this, New York was closing museums, then bars and restaurants and so on. The plans for training that week fell, one by one like dominoes. On my birthday the whole country went into lockdown.

Claire: Building on Mike's experience of this time, I can echo that all of us in the Training Department were in shock as we tried to adapt and respond to the scientific and Government advice on what was, and was not recommended, on what seemed like an hourly basis. Our administrators, Kelly and Julie, were flat out on

the phones trying to rearrange bookings, when no-one knew whether it was safe to assume that things would be back to normal in July, September or even next January. Five months later we are still busy negotiating with organisations, with us all trying to guess at what will be possible in terms of safe practice going forward. This may involve some face-to-face training at a social distance.

As trainers we managed to get through the lockdown, being furloughed, learning new skills and redesigning all our training for the new virtual training brave new world. We learnt to master Microsoft teams and Zoom by practice, practice and practicing some more. We had a lot of help from Phil Kilburn of Caswell Training Ltd who held our (virtual) hands through the process.

We made it, our practice paid off; we delivered training online to our loyal partners and new customers. We trained staff from Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Gwynedd, Ynys Môn, across North Wales, Newport, Cardiff and across South Wales. It was so interesting to have people on the same training event from Anglesey, Wrexham, Swansea, the Valleys and Aberystwyth, which is a

real privilege. The ability to share experiences, issues and ways of tackling them from across our homes in Wales was wonderful, and will remain with us as a special time. We have been able to provide online training to part-time staff in nurseries and youth work settings who would have struggled to attend training previously due to travel and time constraints. We have run courses in the evenings and on weekends, and experimented with dividing longer full day courses into several shorter sessions. A positive from this experience has been the opportunity to be more creative about delivery options.

As well as delivering digitalised versions of our core training such as Safeguarding, Understanding ACEs, Supporting Young Carers and Essential Child Development, we have developed new courses. We have created and successfully run new courses on Trauma in the context of Covid-19, and Knife Crime.

And it is not just us who have enjoyed and learnt new skills from these changes. We have had some excellent feedback from those who have partaken in our courses.

"Really impressed with Claire's knowledge of Zoom – I had no idea that that there were breakout rooms and post it notes etc" – Administrator, TGP Cymru – Safeguarding Children & Young People
 "Excellent course, found the information and the delivery very useful. Thanks you very much". – Multi skills sports coach, Cardiff City FC Foundation - Understanding and responding to trauma – in the context of COVID-19
 "I found the course very enjoyable. The interaction and discussion points really helped. I think Claire run the course very well" – School Counsellor, Eye to Eye Counselling Service – Advanced Safeguarding Training
 "All very informative and I loved that we received the power point after so could focus completely on the session and did not have to make notes." - Young carers Wellbeing officer, NEWCIS – Supporting Young Carers

We are running virtual training courses in September on topics including Supporting Transgender Children and Young People, Training for the designated Child Protection Lead and Safeguarding Children from Abuse linked to Culture or Religion. Children in Wales also offer bespoke training. [Find out more about all the training we offer here.](#)

Children in Wales Autumn Magazine Callout: Education News and Life After Lockdown

We would be delighted to hear from you with an article for our Autumn magazine. The theme this time will be Education News and Life After Lockdown. We would be particularly interested in articles around:

- The new curriculum in Wales
- How schools, colleges and universities have had to adapt since the pandemic
- Blended learning
- Thoughts on the return to school in September for both pupils and staff

We are welcoming content that will highlight any work, research or insight on this theme. Articles should be between 500 - 750 words and be available in English and Welsh. Images need to be high quality JPEGs and the deadline for articles will be Thursday, 1 October 2020.

If you are interested, please contact louise.oneill@childreninwales.org.uk

Wellbeing packs go down a storm with Pembrokeshire Women & Girls Action for Children



Action for Children's Women & Girls Together project has been busy delivering wellbeing packs to the girls and young women the service supports across Pembrokeshire during the coronavirus crisis. Theresa Davis, Lisa Morgan-Thomas, and Donna Marie Morris are the Young Person's Practitioners with the Women and Girls Together Project Pembrokeshire

who have developed a series of wellbeing packs that have contained items such as wellbeing advice booklets, 7 'Stress Less' cards, feminine hygiene products and scratch art cards as well as colouring books and pencils.

The second wellbeing pack was designed around the girls participating in an event as well as helping their physical and mental wellbeing. The project invited them to enter a sunflower growing challenge in which they are aiming to grow the tallest sunflower. Seeds, compost, a pot and instructions were sent out with the pack also including art and craft activities, some pamper and hygiene items, as well as ideas on organising their day and building resilience. Images of the

sunflowers grown have been posted by the project's Facebook page, @womenandgirlstogetherpembrokeshire that promotes the work of the project, shares information and good news stories, and promotes positive well-being.

Lucy is supported by the project and said: 'I've loved receiving the wellbeing packs, they are so thoughtful, useful and interesting. The sunflower challenge was great as I've never grown anything before and to watch it grow was very special. It was lovely to care for it and see it flourish. Pembrokeshire Women & Girls Together have been brilliant at keeping in touch and providing support throughout lockdown and the wellbeing packs have been a great part of it. It's been a really difficult time and the project has been a lifeline for many of us. I can't thank the team enough.'

The third wellbeing pack is being put together at this moment and Lisa has been collaborating with the Female Red Cycle Project who are donating much needed female hygiene and sanitary items for the girls. Theresa said: 'The wellbeing packs are a lovely mix of practical wellbeing aids, pamper products and interactive challenges that have gone down really well across the board. It's been a joy to deliver them in addition to the normal services and support Women & Girls Together provides in Pembrokeshire.' Donna added: 'This remains a very challenging time for girls and young women who are already vulnerable. As a project we were determined not to be blown off course.'



Inspire

Several student volunteers have created a project in lockdown to support the wellbeing of children aged 8-12. Following the 'NHS 5 Ways to Wellbeing', the project aims to create fun, educational activities that are released weekly on Discovery's social media platforms. The activities range from exercise videos, to mindfulness activities, to learning new languages. More recently, the Inspire volunteers put out an educational video about how to be an ally within the BLM movement to help children understand the movement and how their actions can help others facing discrimination.

With coronavirus cancelling schools and stopping children and young people meeting up with their friends and peers, Inspire wanted to create a safe social space online to combat this. By creating fun activities and online resources, the volunteers hope that the resources can create 'stay at home' fun and can be shared with friends and family to do together, even if it is done over Zoom or Facetime. One volunteer on the project said, "We're trying to share activities that promote entertainment and learning opportunities whilst remaining in a safe environment. It is especially important right now because it promotes a social environment where we can communicate with different people maintaining physical distance."

Inspire are currently working to send activity packs to families and schools, to refer a child please email inspire@discoverysvs.org

Building Blocks: LEGO Based Skills

Who doesn't love Lego? Our Building Blocks project has been running for the last four years and helps children in schools develop their social skills, confidence and team-work skills by creating a range of team challenges and activities. During each session, the children take turns in a variety of roles and work together to follow instructions with the opportunity to creative build as well. The 4-week course ends with a celebration and each child receives a certificate to say they have completed the course! By having separate roles, the children are able to work as a team to complete the Lego set and help each other whilst also having fun.

While Lego club hasn't been able to run while schools have been closed, the volunteers have been working behind the scenes to make sure they are prepared for September when they will be running a range of accessible monthly challenges and activities that children can do in their own homes, both with LEGO and with other items for those who may not have LEGO at home. The volunteers will also be working hard to create a webinar of a Building Blocks session that can be used by schools and other organisations that allows an opportunity for children to practice team work and communication skills whilst staying in line with

Welsh Government safety guidance including physical distancing and not sharing items.

While our projects focus on the wellbeing of children and young people, these projects have also impacted on the



wellbeing of the student volunteers running them. Many found their studies hugely disrupted and routines dashed. For some, the pandemic meant they had to graduate without their friends beside them

and return home, while others haven't been able to return home due to family members shielding. During this stressful time, the volunteers on our projects have been able to focus on something other than what's going on in their life and do something meaningful that would benefit others.

One volunteer even said, "Continuing to volunteer in the current circumstances has been really helpful to keep a positive outlook and to keep a momentum and motivation. I've been able to connect with other Project Coordinators and staff members, which has been essential for my own mental health!" Our volunteers have channelled their newly found free time and creativity into a wide range of activities, written letters and more through our children's projects. Since March they have made 14 activities, written 21 letters and volunteered over the past 20 weeks in lockdown to help improve and maintain the wellbeing of children in the Swansea community.

To keep up to date with these projects, please consider checking out our Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. Just search Discovery SVS!

Wellbeing in lockdown Discovery Student Volunteering Service

Before Coronavirus, Discovery Student Volunteering Service had over 30 projects working across Swansea with a range of different people. Several projects supported children and young people and were led by student volunteers, who use their free time and skills, to run fun and engaging projects like reading schemes, Lego club, Youth Club and several day trips once a month. Funded by Children in Need, our children's projects aim to build self-esteem, improve relationships and broaden horizons with our volunteers being positive role models. Throughout lockdown, our volunteers have worked to adapt and create new projects so that we can continue to support the children on our projects who may now be isolated following the closure of schools and their usual activities.

PenPals

It's always exciting when you receive a letter in the post! Our PenPal project uses letter writing to connect children and young people with our student volunteers to raise aspirations around attending university. Penpals

are matched based on their likes, hobbies and goals for the future. The letters can be about anything from their favourite LOL dolls, what they miss about school and what they hope to achieve in the future.

They can talk to their PenPal about ideas of things to do while not at school, tell jokes and gives them a role model to look up to during lockdown and the chance to ask questions about what is like to be at university and realise that university is possible for them in the future. This project helps the children reduce isolation, broaden their horizons and improve wellbeing.

When asked about the impact the letters have had on their child, one parent said, "She had been really down on herself lately, it was so lovely to see her brighten up when the letter was dropped off. She is so chuffed with her letter and already planning her reply."

Play and Therapies in Palliative Care: making moments count

Anna Bowyer, BAPT Play Therapist, Ty Hafan

Childcare on the Front Line

Early Years Wales



Tŷ Hafan is a Children's hospice based in South Wales. True to its name (Haven House), our beautiful hospice is nestled between wildlife-filled woodland and prehistoric Welsh coastline. For over 20 years, children with life-limiting conditions and their families have been coming to Tŷ Hafan to receive bespoke, expert care in a supportive and comforting environment. With the onset of COVID-19, our carefully constructed care structure had to be quickly re-designed to ensure that our ability to provide care and support to those most vulnerable was not compromised. In line with the theme of this edition, wellbeing during the Coronavirus, this article hopes to show how our Play and Therapies Team have adapted during these times and discovered unexpected positives to this new way of working.

The families that we work with are already vulnerable, due to complex physical health diagnoses, additional pressures of informal caring and the emotional and psychological impact of having a life limited child in the family. However, since the onset of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdown measures, the impact on families' wellbeing has been immense and both children and families are faced with reduced care opportunities, access to play and therapies, alongside increased financial pressures, and fears around death, dying and isolation due to shielding. Recent research from Together for Short Lives identified that 93% of families with life limited children felt isolated as a result of the Covid pandemic.

As a Play and Therapies Team we needed to adapt our care delivery, to ensure we were there to support families with their wellbeing, from a safe distance. The core ethos of paediatric palliative care is making moments count, ensuring short lives are full lives, even when there is overarching tragedy or sorrow. Taking into account the research from Together for Short Lives and the engagement with our families it was evident that therapeutic work and therapy interventions would be vital in the coming months. Due to this, it was felt that our families needed a virtual platform to receive emotional support, peer support and specific interventions. With this in mind, we developed:

Facebook groups: Prior to COVID-19, we had a small number of groups for family and staff interaction. Since lockdown we have set up two additional groups: a group for all Tŷ Hafan families and a group for bereaved Tŷ Hafan families. When taking into account the chaotic nature of family life, the vast geographical area that our hospice covers and ease of cross-demographic accessibility that virtual support provides; it is no surprise that these groups have quickly grown to 424 active members. Not only are these a way of connecting families and staff, but they also connect families with other families, who are uniquely equipped to provide peer support using

their collective lived-experience. Creating a safe, closed-group has enabled emotional expression, particularly around anxieties and fears, therefore relieving feelings of stress and isolation. The exclusive, closed bereaved group has facilitated a safe, understanding environment that aids grief expression, peer-supported grief journeys and a platform for memory sharing. These groups are now so successful due to the invaluable support they provide; we expect them to continue to remain strong following the easing of lockdown measures.

Therapy: Since the start of lockdown our music therapy and play therapy has moved online, when safe and ethical to do so. Many of our children and young people have been left dealing with fears and anxieties, which have been heightened by the pandemic and magnified by time to ruminate. Referrals for 'virtual' Therapy have soared, in particular for our siblings dealing with a magnitude of emotions and/or grief. Due to our large geographical spread, this has meant a reduction in travel time which has not only been good for the environment, but it has meant that we are able to support more children at one time, reducing waiting lists. Whilst we hope to resume face to face therapy as soon as possible, this provides us with new service delivery options for the future.

Therapeutic play: Usually our hospice building is bursting with music, play and massage activities for children on respite to enjoy. Activities that would have usually taken place in the hospice, are now being delivered online via social media and video calls. This means children can take part in their own homes, as well as during essential hospice stays. For many of our families, interactions are now limited, and many support services have been removed leaving families feeling isolated and alone; and complex children feeling frustrated and unstimulated. By providing therapeutic interventions within the home, families are experiencing a sense of increased social engagement and interaction, therefore improving child and parent wellbeing, by facilitating parent/carer a short time of respite, while their child is having therapeutic fun.

Complementary therapies: massage can provide a multitude of benefits for wellbeing for the whole family. Interventions that would have been run in-house are now accessible via videos. This empowers parents by enabling them to watch videos and learn new techniques to use at home and to have a new tool box at their fingertips to provide positive physical touch at exactly the right time. For example, pulling up a relaxing massage on their phone at night, to aid sleep in turn improving wellbeing or a bespoke massage to reduce pain and provide distraction.

To learn more about Tŷ Hafan, please take a look at our website <https://www.tyhafan.org/> It has been, and continues to be, such a difficult time for so many, but it is more important than ever that we do not forget those most vulnerable in our society.

Thirty per cent of Early Years Wales members have been open and on the front line throughout Covid-19.

The power of social media: After a month in lockdown, Early Years Wales posted a 'shout out' on their social media channels asking for members, who were open and caring for the children of key workers and vulnerable children, to share their experiences with the sector. Undoubtedly the 'new norm' will bring about new ways of doing things and having to be innovative in our daily practices. The settings that responded proved that they were already doing that. As a result of having to adapt quickly to new ways of working during Covid-19, they were already seeing so many positive changes in the ways the children are learning and developing. The following is a slimmed down version of the original feature that was published in the summer 2020 issue of smalltalk magazine. The original case studies can be downloaded and read in full at: www.earlyyears.wales/news

A few words from Dave Goodger, CEO, Early Years Wales:

The last four months has seen our sector respond to unprecedented changes and challenges. There have been challenging days in our recent past and there are challenging days ahead too. We know that funding, sustainability, operating with new procedures, and parental confidence all make the coming weeks and months problematic. As CEO, I continue to make the case that the childcare sector has been incredible (they always are) and deserving of more recognition for the vital role it plays. We know that children in settings that are open have enjoyed the very best support and care in difficult circumstances. I know those preparing to re-open will do a fantastic job, welcoming children back and make their time positive and engaging. And we all know that behind this lies hard work, a myriad of changes and challenges, and that concerns and tears have been shared. Opening, smiling and looking after our young people positively in these times is quite simply AMAZING!

Marford Playgroup Little Explorers, Wrexham: Tracy Nevitt, co-owner and manager of Marford Playgroup Little Explorers provided a very candid and emotional report on how she and her setting adapted to life during the pandemic. We share a snippet below...

W/C 23 March 2020

What a strange week! Numbers drastically decreasing – Covid-19 awareness is everywhere. Children are asking

questions, and some are a little anxious. I came across a fab experiment to explain the virus to the children – it prompted lots of questions, but they understood that clean hands kept the virus away. Ref: <https://bit.ly/2CsB2q1>

Rainbow Reef Daycare, Pembrokeshire: Despite a huge drop in numbers at Rainbow Reef Daycare the positive impact on the children has been apparent. Bronwen Parratt, Manager, explains how. "At Rainbow Reef, we are only able to care for children where both parents are classed as critical workers As a result, our numbers have decreased from over a hundred on the registers to as few as three in attendance. As unfortunate as this pandemic is, the children have really enjoyed the nursery being quieter and having that time to spend with the staff without them having to rush off on school runs etc. The children have been brilliant at understanding why they can't go on the walks and visit their friends at the nursing home like they are used to. The ages of the children vary, one day we had a 1-year-old, a 3-year-old and a 6-year-old and it was amazing to watch them play together and enjoy being in each other's company. On busier days where we have 10 children in, there is more structure and routine needed. The children are grouped according to their development and age, however most of the children have varying days and they all enjoy the quieter days where they are more child-led"

Rachael's Playhouse, Rhondda Cynon Taff

Despite the impact of lockdown Rachael's Playhouse remained open as a small hub offering care to the children of keyworkers and vulnerable children.

To the team, helping to relieve the fears and anxieties of the parents (new and existing) was just as important as the children. New parent checklist:

- Welcome pack
- Photos and videos of children happy in play
- Parents' wellbeing is just as important as the children's.

We always make time to ask how they are doing.

We engage with and support our families that are at home via our Facebook page; we share stories, songs, yoga tutorials etc. We have also held a virtual graduation for the children that are transitioning to school as we are unable to host our usual celebration providing individual videos that families can treasure forever.

Play - Mental Health and Wellbeing

Marianne Mannello, Play Wales

Playing is central to children's physical, mental, social and emotional health and well-being. Through play, children develop resilience and flexibility, which contributes to physical and emotional well-being. Play involves children doing as they wish in their own time and in their own way. It has the key characteristics of fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility and non-productivity.

Children have a right to play, as recognised in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Playing is one of the most immediate and important aspects of their lives; they value time, freedom and quality places to play. As an indication of the significance the United Nations places on children's play it has published a General Comment on Article 31. This is an official statement that elaborates on the meaning of an aspect of the UNCRC that requires further interpretation or emphasis. The General Comment specifically states that play is 'essential to the health and well-being of children and promote the development of creativity, imagination, self-confidence, self-efficacy, as well as physical, social, cognitive and emotional strength and skills.' Playing allows for peer interactions that are important components of social and emotional well-being. When playing alone, children begin to recognise their own emotions, feelings, and thoughts, as well as how to control them. Children also learn to feel comfortable with being by themselves and learn ways to manage their boredom on their own.

Through playing children experience a range of emotions including frustration, determination, achievement, disappointment and confidence, and through practice, can learn how to manage these feelings. How playing contributes to children's emotional wellbeing:

- Creating and encountering risky or uncertain play opportunities develops children's resilience and adaptability and can contribute to their confidence and self-esteem
- Socialising with their friends on their own terms gives children opportunities to build emotional resilience, to have fun and to relax
- Fantasy play allows for imagination and creativity, but it can also be a way of children making sense of and 'working through' difficult and distressing aspects of their lives.

Play and wellbeing during lockdown

Epidemics, and pandemics, are listed as a situation of crisis by the International Play Association (IPA) in its Access to play in situations of crisis toolkit. Crisis is generally defined as difficult or dangerous situation that needs urgent attention. Despite the new stress that coronavirus has created, children will still want and need to play. Play did not stop for lockdown and is as important as ever. During times of uncertainty, playing:

- Helps to give children a feeling of normality and joy during and experience of loss, isolation and trauma
- Helps children to overcome emotional pain and regain control over their lives
- Helps children make meaning of what has happened to them, and enable them to experience fun and enjoyment
- Offers children an opportunity to explore their own creativity

Children will find opportunities for play, even in the most adverse of circumstances, and adults can support by creating favourable conditions for play – in the home, in school and in childcare settings, through the provision of:



Time – enabling children to play freely and valuing play

- Space – creating opportunities for play using everyday objects, and recognising that play can sometimes be noisy and boisterous
- Permission – acknowledging that it is okay for older children to play, for children to play alone, and for children to decide how they want to play

Some children can rise above adversity to adapt to serious challenges, stress and risks without much help. In times of uncertainty, children might find this less easy and they will need the support of others to make the most of the environment around them. It is important to remember that playing is something that children do whenever they have the chance. It is their way of supporting their own health and well-being. Understanding this helps us to advocate for a rights-based approach to support children's play and the importance it holds for them in their immediate lives and their everyday experiences.

As part of our response to the coronavirus pandemic, Play Wales has created a wide range of resources to help practitioners who continue to work in different ways to support children's play and well-being:

Focus on play: reopening schools When children return to school, efforts to improve well-being should focus on providing sufficient time and space for play. This briefing offers information and guidance for head teachers, teachers and school governors. It considers the crucial role of children's play in promoting positive mental health and discusses ways schools can promote play when they reopen. Play for Wales magazine The 'play and being well' issue of the magazine highlights the importance of play during times of uncertainty and stress. The need to provide time, space and permission to play is as important as ever as demonstrated in the articles featured.

Playing is central to children's mental, social and emotional health and well-being. This updated information sheet briefly explains the importance of playing for brain development and mental health. It also explores how playing contributes to children's emotional well-being and how it relates to the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing'.

Top tips: playing and well-being Playing contributes to improved well-being during times of uncertainty and it helps children manage their emotions and make sense of their situation. These top tips aim to help parents to support children's play during times of stress.

All of these resources, and many more, can be found on the [Play Wales website](#).



Children's mental health during Covid-19

Dr Sarah Witcombe-Hayes, NSPCC Cymru/Wales

At NSPCC, we have seen that the global health crisis has had a significant impact on the mental health and well-being of children and young people. Over recent years, mental health has been the top concern for children contacting Childline. However, since the outbreak of COVID-19, there has been an increase in children reaching out with worries about their mental health.

Childline data reveals there have been more than 2,000 counselling sessions delivered to children in Wales since lockdown (April-June), with more than a third (N=807) of sessions during this time relating to mental health and emotional wellbeing concerns. Prior to lockdown we received on average 191 contacts from children about mental health over a 30 day period, so this represents an increase of over a third on pre-lockdown levels. In April-June, suicidal thoughts and feelings were the second top concern for children living in Wales.

UK-wide Childline data reveals similar patterns, with mental health being the top concern for children contacting Childline about coronavirus. Across the UK, nearly 22,000 counselling sessions about mental health have been delivered to children since the beginning of lockdown,

with the proportion of mental health counselling sessions increasing from 33% pre-lockdown to 37% by June 2020.

Throughout the pandemic children have told Childline they are feeling low, unhappy, overwhelmed and more recently anxious about coming out of lockdown. An 18-year-old girl told Childline: *"I am scared about the Coronavirus. I'm finding it hard to cope at the moment and it feels like it's the end of the world. When I was little I developed OCD and had been to therapy which has helped me to deal with the stress better. However, the Coronavirus has triggered it again and I'm really struggling, I don't know what to do. Please help."*

Some children talked to Childline about family relationships, sharing that arguments, increased parental stress and abusive home environments are impacting their mental health. For some children, lockdown has intensified the situation, concealing abuse, and isolating them from their support networks. Worryingly, counselling sessions about abuse has increased by around a quarter, across the UK since lockdown: *"I am feeling sad and worried. I am scared of Covid-19 and feel like my family don't care about me. I don't get any attention and am always fighting with my mum. I live with just my mum and don't see dad"*

much. We live in a tiny flat and sometimes we get so angry with each other we end up fighting. After we have had a fight I hurt myself because I feel like I am not good enough.” (Girl, 8)

Emerging research findings have captured the negative impact of the pandemic on young people’s mental health. A survey by Young Minds indicates that 83% of young



people who responded felt that the pandemic had made their mental health worse. Research has also captured concerns from teachers, with recent survey findings from Wales showing that 85% of school staff fear their pupils’ mental health has been affected by lockdown. Anecdotal reports from the reopening of schools in Wales suggests there has been an increase in young people needing well-being support and mental health services during the last three/four weeks of term.

It is crucial that all children can access mental health support to overcome the trauma of COVID-19. However, we are concerned about reports from children that they are experiencing a reduction in specialist mental health support. *“I’m going through a lot right now. I feel really anxious about everything. I’m stuck at home and having a horrible time. I feel so upset and lonely. My child and adolescent mental health (CAMHS) appointments have been cancelled because of the Coronavirus. The news has made my mental health worse and now all the schools have been closed there are more arguments at home.” (Girl, 16-18)*

Research highlights similar concerns, with the Young Minds survey showing that of the respondents accessing mental



health support prior to COVID-19, 26% said they were not able to access support during the pandemic.

For some children, lockdown has heightened or created new risks of abuse and neglect in the home and has had a negative impact on their mental health. As we move towards recovery from COVID-19, ensuring that the right support and services are available to tackle emotional and mental health issues and any trauma experienced by children and young people, must become a national priority. With the anticipated surge in demand for children’s mental health services following lockdown, it has never been more important to action the Mind Over Matter recommendations.

Schools offer an ideal setting for early mental health support, and we welcome Welsh Government’s increased funding for enhanced school counselling and mental health support for under 11s. However, we urge Welsh Government to consider whether counselling is the



most effective model for younger children and suggest exploring other evidence-based interventions for under 11s. We must also ensure that schools are ready to help all children that need it. As we move towards recovery, there is an opportunity to develop a universal trauma informed resilience programme, embedded within a whole school approach that’s available to all children in schools affected by COVID-19. It is also vital to ensure that teachers are equipped to support children’s mental health with a programme of professional development, as fewer than one in five (18.5%) feel they have the skills necessary to support children’s mental and emotional health needs post lockdown.

Learning in lockdown - The impact on Family Wellbeing

Kathryn Newman, Practitioner, Child Poverty Action Group

Child Poverty Action Group works towards a society free of child poverty, where all children can enjoy a childhood without financial hardship and have a fair chance in life to reach their full potential. Our UK Cost of the School Day programme aims to ‘poverty-proof’ education systems in Wales through a participatory children’s rights approach. Poverty proofing involves in-depth consultation with pupils, parents and the wider school community about the hidden costs of school. We aim to speak to each learner in the school about their experiences, and work with them to present their findings to teaching staff and senior leadership teams, helping create sustainable change in school policies and day-to-day practice. Our work complements Children In Wales’ Price of Pupil Poverty guides, offering a range of different methods that can help to reduce the cost of the school day across settings in Wales.

Our research: Prior to the Covid-19 crisis, we already knew that children and young people living in poverty were at a greater risk of lower educational attainment (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2010, 2015), and poorer mental health and wellbeing (Children’s Society 2016). As schools closed their doors to most learners, we wanted to give children, young people and their families the opportunity to talk about their experiences of lockdown; what was working well for them, what support they were accessing, and what support they needed when they returned to school.

We wanted to understand more about the support offered to families during the initial period of school closures, with a particular emphasis on the experiences of households living on a low income. We used surveys and in-depth interviews to speak to 76 parents and carers across Wales. Between them, these parents and carers had 132 school-aged children. We also collected the experiences of 17 children and young people to understand what school closures have been like from their perspective.

Our findings were broad ranging and covered a number of key topics. Some of our learning included:

- More than half of families reported not having all the resources needed to take part in learning during lockdown. Low-income families were more likely to report missing at least one essential resource (for example, a laptop or broadband)
- Low income families in Wales were more likely to have bought learning materials (for example, stationery, printers, craft materials)
- Two thirds of families reported finding it difficult to continue their children’s education at home. These families were more likely to have low-incomes

Wellbeing during the crisis: Across Wales children, young people and their family members told CPAG about the impact of the crisis on their wellbeing, mental health and support networks. Both adults and young people reported significant wellbeing challenges, including the struggle to keep motivated, the loneliness of social isolation, and the impact of learning in a different way. When asked about returning to school, children and young people were most looking forward to seeing their friends and teachers, and being able to socialise again. Parents and guardians reported being more concerned about children’s wellbeing than lost learning.

- My daughter is finding lockdown really hard because she is an only child and misses her friends at school so much. I wish the school could arrange some kinds of social interaction for her as I think it would really engage and motivate her. She is not interested in learning unless it is a social experience or involves a lot of play.” Single parent with one child, Rhondda Cynon Taf

Informal opportunities to engage with school staff were extremely valuable to both pupils and parents alike. From welfare phone calls to filmed assemblies, schools across Wales developed innovative approaches to continue to engage pupils as part of the school community.

- “The phone call was genuinely to check how the children are, to hear the teachers really do miss the kids and their personalities and care about us functioning as a unit rather than checking on homework tasks. That’s lovely.” Mother with two children, Neath Port Talbot
- “It’s not necessarily the resources, it’s been the phone calls and offer of any support that I have found the most helpful” Single parent with three children, Neath Port Talbot

In terms of preparing to return to school in the autumn term, parents and carers were clear that they wanted schools to prioritise the social and emotional wellbeing of learners.

- “Make sure the social distancing policies don’t negatively impact my children’s mental health, make sure they can play with other children” Single parent with two children, Carmarthenshire
- “Be warm, be understanding, don’t scare them” Parent with two children, Cardiff

Recommendations: Poverty proofing schools is now more crucial than ever, as many more families are likely to be facing poverty and financial hardship because of the pandemic. We have made a number of recommendations for how pupils, schools, local authorities and government can work together to address the social, financial and emotional difficulties that may have arisen as a result of school closures and the Covid-19 crisis.

Below is a summary of our recommendations:

- Schools develop poverty sensitive approaches through policy and practice to support pupils on their return to school
- Schools ensure regular engagement with pupils and their families is maintained while pupils learn at home; supporting both learning and family wellbeing
- Schools ensure there is widespread awareness among school staff of the likelihood of increased numbers of children living in poverty as a result of the pandemic, and ensure that families are supported with school costs and resource needs so that no pupil misses out
- Schools prioritise safe opportunities for pupils to socialise and interact with their peers, friendship groups and teachers
- Schools involve the whole family in the planning for return. Parents should be consulted on plans to feel as prepared as possible (for example, organising childcare, work arrangements)
- Schools are mindful of learners' individual circumstances, concerns and anxieties around returning to school, and implement measures to overcome them.

If you would like to find out more about our research, the full report is available here.

For further information about the project and our work in Wales, please get in touch with us; our email address is UKCoSD@cpag.org.uk.



TGP Cymru during the COVID-19 pandemic



At the time of writing, we have been in COVID-19 Lockdown for 20 weeks and it has been a remarkable time for TGP Cymru.

For those of you who are familiar with our work, TGP Cymru is a Children's Charity based in Wales. Formally known as Tros Gynnal Plant, the organisation was set up in 2002 to take over the work of the Children's Society when they decided that they would no longer be working in Wales.

of independent professional advocacy services for children and young people in Wales. TGP Cymru also provides restorative engagement services for Veterans and their families, Family Group Conference services for families, community based engagement and advocacy services for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Families as well as Refugee and Unaccompanied Children and Young people. More recently, we have been helping EU citizens and their families resident in Wales to make applications to remain after Brexit. In recent months, we have developed one of the fastest growing services to support Care Leavers with housing, support and homelessness issues.

TGP Cymru has been facilitating Junior Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (JLSCB) like "Safe Stars" in Ceredigion and "Eat Carrots Be Safe from Elephants" in Powys for over 15 years as well as providing Safeguarding and Advocacy Training for professionals and volunteers.

So what have we been doing during the disruption caused by the COVID 19 pandemic? We are very proud to say that we quickly built on and developed innovative engagement techniques so that all of our services could continue throughout the lock down period.

Our Team Around the Tenancy (TAtT) service, for care experienced young people at risk of homelessness in North Wales, created a whole raft of online support services, including cooking sessions on Friday afternoons,

where the ingredients were delivered to the young people in the morning so they could cook along with the instructors and prepare themselves a tasty evening meal. TAtT also organised art workshops, including painting by numbers, where again materials were delivered to the young people to take in part in the session. The project was awarded emergency funding from the organisation Crisis to provide over 50 mobile phones, 25 tablets and Netflix vouchers to young people to help ease their feelings of isolation.

The Ceredigion "Safe Stars" JLSCB quickly moved its "Open Mike" event online and we all enjoyed a very entertaining afternoon in April where the young people "show cased" their many talents. The group continue to meet virtually and composed a song to encourage people to "stay safe" during the pandemic. They have also been interviewing professionals and supporters via their weekly session, 'Question-time Safe Stars v the Professionals', which can be viewed on our website, and we are pleased that the Children's Commissioner, Sally Holland joined the brilliant Professionals taking part over the summer.

Our Advocacy Services continued to provide both issue based advocacy and the active offer across Wales. Our workers introduced innovative engagement techniques with children and young people including sending them games, seeds and activity packs to play (and plant) during virtual meetings.

Early in 2020, TGP Cymru launched research into Residential Visiting Advocacy Services in Children's Homes across Wales. The research entitled, "Out of Sight, Out of Rights?" was funded by Welsh Government and can be found on our website. It highlighted that of the 178 children's homes in Wales only a fraction have a visiting advocate as an added safeguard. We provide this service to over 35 homes, and during lock down we secured some emergency funding from WCVA to start to expand this service. These children are particularly vulnerable and isolated. They really appreciated being able to talk to the visiting advocate even if they could only meet via Zoom or What's App. One young person said, "I was really frightened in the beginning, we all had to stay in the home. I imagined all sorts of awful things happening in the outside world, like you see in the disaster films. But the advocate was able to reassure us that things were quite safe on the outside."

TGP Cymru were also able to access further emergency funding to enhance, expand and extend services to EU Roma families, Refugee and Unaccompanied children and young people and the Team Around the Tenancy in North Wales. Our Travelling Ahead Team supported Gypsy Roma and Traveller History Month in June by posting cards and images that depicted a piece of Gypsy Traveller and Roma History. During Refugee Week, also in June, Saba, a member

of our Young Refugee and Asylum Forum shared a very evocative Poem entitled "Imagine". The celebration of Pride also fell in the month of June and our Team Around the



Tenancy joined in by making banners and flags on line.

We are proud of the work we have undertaken through the COVID19 pandemic and have fed the experiences of our service users into the various Welsh Government forums aimed at developing a strategy for the post pandemic period.

We have supported young people to take part in the National Lockdown Survey organised by the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Children in Wales, Welsh Government and the Youth Parliament; also the research by Voices from Care and Cardiff University Cascade on what support care leavers will need if there is a future lock down.

The past 20 weeks for TGP Cymru has been both challenging and rewarding in equal measure. We worked closely with smaller local charities and services like the foodbanks and the Voluntary Councils. Our experience demonstrates how the third sector was quickly able to mobilise, adjust and adapt to the needs of its service users and worked together with statutory services to provide a vital lifeline to many children, young people and families to help keep them safe and feel less isolated during the lockdown.

We do not know what the coming weeks, months or years will bring, all I can be sure of is that TGP Cymru is prepared to adjust to the new normal and rise to the challenge.

Price of Pupil Poverty Project

Kate Thomas, Children in Wales

Schools are in agreement that they need our Guides more than ever from September!

The current Covid-19 pandemic resulted in school closures and lockdown at the end of March. This unforeseen situation had an immediate effect on the project and the way in which it was progressing. However, despite the immediate challenge this presented in continuing to work directly with schools to implement the guides and develop action plans, it was clear from conversations over this period with school leads that the work is still valued and there is a recognition that this Project will be even more critical in future months as schools reopen, with more pupils in poverty as a result of the pandemic. *"I agree that times will be tougher than ever for some of our families and that this work will be an excellent tool in supporting them"* (Lead @ Ysgol Llangejni)

With interest still strong amongst school leaders in the Price of Pupil Poverty work we have continued to work on a number of new resources to support the schools in implementation and drive forward the guides in the context of COVID 19 and school closures.

This has included a mini guide to support the main Price of Pupil Poverty guides released by Welsh Government. The mini guide is relevant to the current situation and is essentially a reminder for schools in how they can continue to help pupils from low income and disadvantaged families during Covid-19. They are available on children in wales website and the hwb.

We are also asking for schools to put forward innovative ways they are adapting to ensure pupils from low income and disadvantaged families are getting help and support during Covid-19. Schools have already evidenced their commitment

and compassion towards learners needs and much is already being done. This information will further support the guides and continue to provide ideas and solutions for schools wanting to implement the guides.

Training is now being adapted to allow virtual delivery. Schools have indicated that they are keen to pick this up with us in September. This training will provide information on the Price of Pupil Poverty guides and advice on how best to implement an action plan within the school. A new toolkit is also being developed which will provide a complete package for schools to take up the Price of Pupil poverty guides and



support them in implementing a plan which will address key areas in which pupils from low income and disadvantaged families can be best supported in order to have a more equitable experience within the school setting. The project worker is available during this time to provide information on the toolkit, advice and guidance as well as setting up and delivering virtual training on the guides if required.

If there are any schools currently using the guides independently, we would very much like to hear from you in order to capture your thoughts. Please contact kate.thomas@childreninwales.org.uk. The guides can be found here: <https://bit.ly/2uZCZ9w>

is Kind programme, supported by the Welsh Government as part of A Healthier West Wales, to support regional intergenerational projects that:

- Improve social connectedness
- Reduce social isolation
- Support young and old people to learn from one another
- Maximise potential and use of digital technologies

With the challenges proposed by the Coronavirus pandemic, RAY Ceredigion like so many charity organisations have had to adapt the delivery of the project to ensure they continue to reach out to children and families.

This was achieved with a new digital focus including an interactive online RAY Play Questionnaire. The questionnaire is in two parts, designed so that children



can interview the older generation, whether parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, about how they played as children, and then the tables can be turned and the older generation can use the Children's questionnaire to interview their children, grandchildren etc. Both questionnaires work as solo activities as well.

RAY is really pleased with the response to the questionnaires and the experience of reliving play memories for the older generations, and the opportunity for children to talk about what matters to them in the world of play. What we are finding is what we predicted, that talking about play makes everyone happy and feeling happy is really important at this period of uncertainty for all generations.

Children and young people have found it fascinating, realising (perhaps for the first time!) that their parents and grandparents were children once too, and parents and grandparents have found themselves 'fessing up to some less than angelic behaviour ...

One Ceredigion resident commented that:

"When filling out the RAY Play Questionnaire with my dad, he recalled that during weekends he would invite up to 12 of his friends over, and to feed them his mum would cook up this enormous pot of stew. This is something he had completely forgotten and it has prompted him to try and recreate it several times during lockdown. After food him and his mates would head out to play and spend their time building rope swings over the river, making dens in the woods, building go-carts and playing cowboys and Indians. They would spend hours searching for old wheels, rope or wire, bonnets off old cars and other things they could use. The other thing my dad recalled is the time his father spent with him helping with his DIY skills and this has prompted

him to spend more time with my 12 year olds son, his grandson on shared projects, passing on the skills he practiced with his friends over 50 years ago. As a family the questionnaires have brought us closer together.' Ceredigion resident MT.

Once the questionnaires are completed people have the opportunity to join the RAY Play Project Facebook group where we are creating a place for feedback and comments



on shared memories of play, from all generations, and a place to display photos, art work, visual records of play now and in the past.

Once lockdown restrictions allow we hope to involve the community in creating a large mosaic mural with three panels, play in the past, play today and in the middle those aspects of play that have remained the same. The content of the mural will be drawn from the response we receive via the questionnaires. This mosaic will be on display outside RAY Ceredigion's building in the harbour town of Aberaeron for many years to come.

All information on the RAY Play Project including links to take part in the RAY Play Questionnaire can be found at RAY Ceredigion's website: www.rayceredigion.org.uk

We would love to hear your feedback on this project – contact Project Coordinator: Steph Glover raywwik@btconnect.com



Supporting the wellbeing of children and young people during crisis

Meic Cymru



At the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis, the Meic helpline consulted with young people in Wales about how the pandemic was affecting them. Young people told us that they felt that information on Covid-19 was often delivered by “old white men in suits”. There was also an overwhelming amount of fast-changing information and guidance. This left them feeling confused, worried and isolated.

To address the needs and concerns of young people, Meic swiftly adapted our content strategy to create regular, simple, consistent and clear content for young people to mitigate the effects of information overload. This also helped to fill in any gaps resulting from reduced face-to-face contact with regular support services.

We increased the amount of content we produced, focusing exclusively on creating youth friendly Covid-19 information and support and we also actively targeted our audience to ensure we reached as many young people as we could. Our content focused on Covid-19 and the regulations; how to stay safe; reclaiming control and letting them know that the Meic service was still there to support them.

New attractive, shareable graphics and short videos were also created to appeal to young people and we came up with a new, consistent look for our social media channels.

In the last quarter, Meic broke its record for web visits (38,387), social media posts (416), number of new followers (426), social media impressions (332,495) and ad impressions (over 1.3 million), while also achieving a significant number of video views (61,394) and social media engagements (6,283). We have also continued to update the dedicated Covid-19 page as well as publishing a record number of articles.

There was an increase in Covid-19 related contacts to the helpline, with key feelings being expressed of feeling alone and overlooked; fearful and scared; worried and anxious. Key issues being presented were Covid-19 and mental health and wellbeing, relationships, education, family life

and living arrangements.

Here is a small selection of examples of how the Meic helpline has supported young people during this time:

- Helping a young person regain contact with their advocate after the transition from face-to-face provision to alternative provision caused them to lose touch
- Resolving family conflict after returning home from university during lockdown
- Supporting a young carer of an alcohol dependent mother who was looking for support after the closure of the service they were using due to Covid-19
- Supporting a young person to access school counselling via a different route following changeover to online
- Clarifying lockdown regulations to a young person who wanted to be with their partner
- Providing relaxation strategies and tips to keep calm when anxious
- Providing communication strategies to resolve, avoid, or minimise arguments with family

Now that lockdown is being eased, the support continues but with the focus shifting back to other issues and not exclusively on Covid-19. However, support and output for Covid-19 will continue for the foreseeable future as information and advice is still being given about the pandemic.

We will also be there for children and young people as they adjust to the new normal, and to inform, advise and help with any long-term effects the crisis may have had on the health and mental wellbeing of the children and young people of Wales.

Meic is a helpline for under 25's in Wales, supporting children and young people since 2010. Trained advisors are available between 8am and midnight, every single day, to help children and young people get the help that they need. Meic can be contacted on the phone (080880 23456), by text message (84001) or through online chat (www.meic.cymru)