

Emerging Impact of COVID

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Context re Impact of COVID on children and young people across Southwark.

- 112 schools of which 20 are secondary
- Approx 40,000 children and young people
- Range of data and statistics from agencies but early for schools
- March 2021 full return to school
- Not just affecting children and young people – lets remember the adults/teachers

Attendance

- 89%+ at secondary
- 95% + at Primary
- By mid February 2021 the attendance of vulnerable children had reached: those with an EHCP 46%, those with a social worker 43% and those eligible for free school meals 17%. (data from 80% return from schools)

Context

All schools are very mindful of the need to address emotional health and well-being needs and although there will be individual strategies in place as mentioned above, they are also taking a broader approach to this on the return to school, planning units of work, activities, etc around this. This was a successful approach in September.

Measures/interventions are in place to address, e.g. 1:1s, FEH involvement, Place2Be, The NEST, Kooth, CAMHS etc

Primary Schools- common themes

- Generally, the primary school population has settled quickly and excitedly back into school;
- The vast majority are not showing specific or worrying signs of distress at this point
- Not long enough back to assess full range of MH issues (it took longer last time for issues to show for some, e.g. in relation to DV or abuse)



Secondary Schools- common themes

- Some students are struggling with sleep with many not able to leave the house at all, for fresh air and exercise
- Lots of more generalised anxiety issues, e.g. pulling out their hair and or eyelashes, trichotillomania
- For some students with prior behavioral issues have responded positively to home learning opportunities, engagement has improved
- Digital learning has enabled more students to access online yoga sessions, relaxation and mindfulness sessions, than we usually get for face to face sessions.
- Teachers recognise the importance of a “recovery focus”, just like last year.

Example from 1 x secondary school

- Higher concerns around eating disorder like symptoms
- Higher cases of online safeguarding issues
- Really positive home/family relationships
- Children accessing and seeking out MH support – support structures
- Some positive behaviour changes in teachers owning their behaviour in their classrooms



Impact on children: What Primary schools are telling us

Primary:

- Children have a shorter concentration span and easily distracted or 'zone out'
- Some children are a bit unsure and anxious
- Children are visibly less fit, and many more seem overweight and have less stamina
- Children seem more aware of the impact Covid is having on them, becoming vocal about how 'lost' they felt and the hit their self-esteem has taken
- The talk of longer days/smaller breaks has really worried some children
- Real positive is that most children are resilient
- On the whole for staff, there is a sense of relief at the return to consistency in a daily routine and going home, etc

Impact on children

- Issues for children are likely to be individual ones with most already known about, through monitoring and contact during lockdown if not in school (and most vulnerable children were)
- Covid has exacerbated some issues for known children, e.g. those who are emotionally vulnerable
- Social skills and confidence need building up, including appropriate language and communication skills
- anxiety around friendships that they will need will need to work, e.g. negotiating friendships in the playground, interacting and getting it right
- Very young children have had some difficulty with self-regulation – occasional and unexpected ‘melt-downs’ and a few have wanted to stay inside, worrying about going outside



SEND

- Pupils with SEND, and ASD in particular, can take time to adjust to the whole class/school being back
- The impact of the pandemic and more specifically school closures, on this group of very vulnerable pupils has been very mixed.
- Each school has had students/pupils who have been extremely anxious about all aspects of the pandemic
- Special school staff have been in weekly or more frequent contact with all pupils who have not been in school and have worked very effectively with other agencies including health and social care to support the most vulnerable and anxious families.
- Those who have attended school throughout have been happy, relaxed and have been learning well.
- Positive attitudes to less crowded schools, consistent routines and the usual focus on well-being and happiness.
- Some families of pupils who have not attended, due to the anxieties or other concerns, have also fed back that their children are happy, settled and have developed strong family relationships often with other members with whom, up until this point they had not been close.
- On the whole, they engaged well with the remote learning packages prepared by their schools (this appears to be something of a national picture).

What partners are telling us

- Complexity of mental health presentation and crisis
- CYP presenting with mental health concerns at A&E departments
- Rise in disordered eating behaviours
- CYP reporting feelings of anxiety, depression, and being unable to sleep
- **Referrals to CAMHS**
- Constant demand from Feb through to Nov (around 130 referrals per month) with a drop in Dec/ Jan. Feb 2021 figures awaited
- Eating disorder and crisis services saw a considerable increase in referrals.
- There is an expectation that referrals will significantly increase from schools full reopening from March 8th.

Feedback from 2 service providers

The NEST

Wellbeing Coaches I secondary schools 1:1 and group sessions – working with students and staff, online workshops- panic attacks teachers felt ill –equipped with scale

1 x On-line provider

Demand higher during term time – more F than male, more in the 11-14 age range, anxiety and stress most common factors, Black or Black British and White young people, most referrals from schools.



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Impact on staff

One quote from a teacher:

- “For me personally, I feel a bit lonely. Because we have to stick in our year bubbles, even at break times, the social aspect of having friends at school to sit and chat with and catch up with has disappeared really. I know this is how quite a few people feel. We are back, but we are isolated from each other. You think of the stuff you enjoy about the job, and a lot of it has been removed. I love taking children out, going to competitions, sitting, chatting, and being around the whole school, and it just isn't possible.”

Continue

- Keep under review the targeting of council investment in mental health in schools.
- To achieve/maintain an overarching Southwark picture of need and how this is being addressed.
- More detail on impact on groups by ethnicity and vulnerability.
- Greater information on impact on adults working with children and young people.