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Writer Joy Persaud spoke of her heartbreak at lockdown depriving her daughter Lilly of valuable social contact Credit: Christopher Pledger

When my daughter isolates, it's horrendous: Readers reveal lockdown's impact on their children

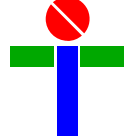
Parents share with The Telegraph their touching stories about how Covid restrictions have wreaked havoc with their children's mental health

By Patrick Sawyer, SENIOR NEWS REPORTER; Maighna Nanu and Dominic Penna

30 June 2021 • 6:00am



Campaign for Children



When The Telegraph launched its [campaign calling on the Government to put children at the heart of policy making](#) as we recover from the pandemic, the response from parents was immediate and heartfelt.

Hundreds contacted us to tell us how their children's education has suffered during the lockdown and how their intellectual, psychological and emotional development has been stunted by months of isolation away from classmates, friends and relatives.

There is particular anger that thousands of children without symptoms are being forced to self-isolate for 10 days because a child in their "bubble" has tested positive for Covid-19.

'When my daughter is isolating at home, it's horrendous'

Joy Persaud, writer, Hove, West Sussex

"My 11-year-old daughter Lilly is an only child. When she is isolating at home, it is horrendous. She is a very sociable, gregarious girl and gets a lot from being with people. It has been so devastating to see her deprived of social contact, which she so desperately needs.

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"In addition to the lockdown, she has been forced to isolate three times. Given the rising cases in our area, it is quite likely she will soon have to isolate for a fourth time. This means that she will miss all the end-of-year events that they've laid on to compensate for the fact that they have missed so much in terms of their school trips, their sports days and just normal day-to-day socialisation: all the things that make school a rounded experience.

"School isn't just about tests and the academic side of things. It is far more than that. I feel massively let down by the Government. It breaks my heart to think of the long-term impact this will have. Children will be damaged by this and the assumption that children are resilient and can put up with anything is, frankly, really damaging and very blinkered."

'There will be a terrible legacy from this'

Barbara Turnbull, associate professor of engineering, University of Nottingham

"The impact of the Covid lockdown on my children's education and their personalities has been severe and I'm worried it will also be long lasting. Self-isolating has been like being in prison for them.

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"For weeks on end, they have had no play dates, no normal interaction with other children, none of the socialising activities that help them develop as children, and no visits to grandparents. My eight-year-old has become withdrawn and has lost the ability to express himself the way he used to.

"People on the street seem scared of families with children. They even cross the road, as if you are a walking petri dish. That has had an impact as well, robbing them of those spontaneous moments that teach them how to relate to the rest of the world.

"There will be a terrible legacy from this for all our children in years to come."

'My nine-year-old spoke about taking his own life'

Steph Sprake, chartered accountant, Connah's Quay, Flintshire

"My nine-year-old Matthew had no support when schools closed. I had to pay for live lessons because offline learning just didn't work for him. And Charlotte, my 12-year-old, has been really anxious about making friends since she started at high school in September.

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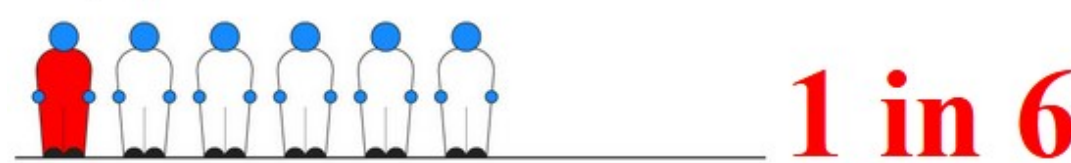
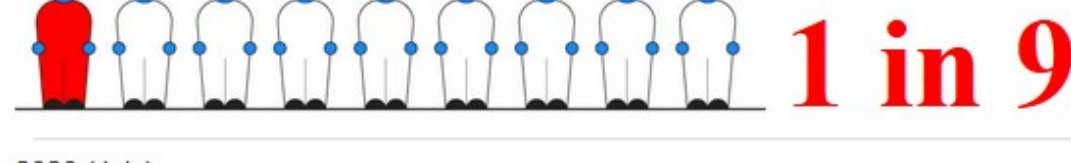
"Being at home has been so difficult. Matthew became very depressed during the first lockdown and even told me that he wanted to take his own life because of how hard he was finding it.

"He'd just sit there every day and cry a lot. All he wanted to do was to play Fortnite because it was the only way he was able to connect with his friends for so long.

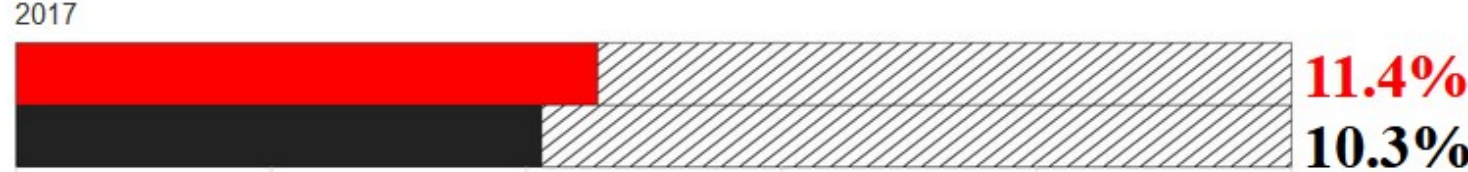
"I worry for the coming winter because I don't know how the kids would cope if schools closed again."

Rise in mental health referrals

Proportion of children experiencing a probable mental disorder



In children aged 5 to 16 ■ Boys ■ Girls



SOURCE: NHS DIGITAL

'I find it hard to forgive Sage'

Emma Louise Cubbitt, photographer, Kent

"My 18-year-old Caspar lost those precious sixth form years, which we can never get back. He was a key member of the music department, which was like a family. That was all ripped away over the last 15 months.

"The final straw was his prom being cancelled. I will find it hard to forgive Sage etc, for ruining his sixth form and my elder son Jamie's first two years at Bath University.

"Lots of money is needed for counselling, so they can talk things through. We need lots of emphasis on the fun things that they have missed out on. My biggest worry is this is going to run and run."

'Granddaughter cries when she sees a strange face'

Lynda Clifton, grandmother

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"My 15-month-old granddaughter has been in a bubble, and if strangers get too close, she cries. Parent and carer groups not being open during lockdown has meant that babies have not been able to socialise with other children and adults.

"We need to let children get back to normal and not sacrifice them on the altar of Covid on behalf of older people, many of whom have reached the average age of when people actually die."

'My daughter puts on a brave face, but I'm furious'

Bharat Patel

"My 15-year-old daughter has had to self-isolate three times. It has been devastating to see the educational and mental harm it has inflicted on her and her self-confidence. She has never tested positive, but has been a victim of this crazy bubble isolation policy.

"She puts on a brave face and says she has to do this for the greater good. I am less forgiving, and I am furious with Boris, Hancock and Williamson for not balancing the risk equation with the harm done to the millions of young kids affected."

'I'm worried about my daughters' mental health'

Richard Whitticase, programme manager, Elton, Peterborough

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"My 16-year-old old, Flora, has been sent home four times to self-isolate on seemingly spurious grounds, i.e. the pupil who tested positive wasn't in her form or friendship group. When at school, she has to spend all breaks outside and all windows are left wide open. Chilblains became a much bigger issue than Covid.

"My 19-year-old, Phoebe, has just completed her first year at Exeter University. Overall, it was a pretty rubbish experience - only one face-to-face seminar per term, no sport, no clubs/societies and on occasions banned from leaving her flat.

"I'm not worried about my daughters getting Covid. But I am worried about their education, their general health and their mental health. The system needs to start putting children first rather than putting its employees first and treating children as an inconvenience."

‘My teenage sister has missed out on key personal development’

Calum J Fiske, sixth former

“The lack of social contact and face-to-face teaching has really lowered morale. When schools finally reopened, some subject content was cut. To exacerbate the damage, exams were brought forward by the Government, adding to students’ stress and anxiety.

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“It was my 14-year-old sister that was the worst affected. Over the first lockdown, she became so paranoid about putting on weight that she ate less and did enormous amounts of exercise. Consequently, she became anorexic and spent six months in care.

“She lost valuable time for educational progress and social development and I fear this experience will have a damaging effect on her future, given she has missed out on key personal development in her teenage years.”

‘University has been very isolating for my son’

Rob Mitchell, marketing director, Oxfordshire

“My 18-year-old Oscar was meant to take his A-levels last summer, but they were cancelled.

“By the time he got his university place back two weeks later because of the reassessed grades, he had lost out on his first choice accommodation, so we had to rearrange that.

“He has found his time at university very isolating and it’s been hard with limits on socialising and guards patrolling campus.

“My 16-year-old Olivia had her year 11 prom and leavers’ events cancelled, and she has found it very difficult at a time when she is meant to be growing and developing socially. She was meant to be taking her GCSEs this summer. Now it’s impossible to know how she’s going to be assessed and there are question marks over what happens next.”



‘Children playing by the rules, but getting none of the rewards’

Michaela Gartside, who runs an HR business, Warfield, Berkshire

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“The reality is that you test your child twice a week and hope it’s a negative result because you don’t want to be the child that sends your bubble home. You live on a knife’s edge.

“My 13-year-old Abigail wants to be at school. She enjoys school and used to love the performing arts and meeting friends who had a common interest. She has been deprived of interacting with her friends, and pursuing their love of extracurriculars.

“Children get frustrated when their sports days are cancelled or their award ceremonies are put online and they can see huge crowds at Wembley and Wimbledon. They’ve missed out on all the other aspects that a school has to offer rather than just the academic. They are playing by the rules, but get none of the rewards.”

‘No support for my autistic son’

Emma, artist, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire

“My 11-year-old son is autistic and dyslexic. When schools closed in March 2020, he was eligible to stay in school as his EHCP [education, health and care plan] meant he was included in the ‘vulnerable children’ category. But his primary school was hostile to him coming in and dissuaded me from bringing him. For weeks, their attitude was the same.

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“Meanwhile, I was struggling at home, unable to work - I am self-employed - and we were entirely isolated from family and friends and any support.

“My son liked not being in school as he hates school, and I found it very hard to interest him in anything vaguely educational. There was no support from school at all for either of us and the work that school sent home via text was impossible for him to even begin, as he had none of the systems of learning and individualised curriculum his EHCP set out.”

‘Heartbreaking that my daughter has to isolate’

James Clifford, volunteer, Newham, east London

“This is the second time that my daughter Lily, 4, has been made to isolate. My eldest son Thomas, 12, has spent 10 days at home and he has tested negative three or four times, but he still has to stay off school. He had to miss his year 6 Sats exams.

“I feel let down by the schools and the education department. London seems particularly bad. It seems bizarre that one of my children has to isolate, but the others don’t when they all go to the same school and share the same bedrooms. She is just stuck indoors watching them go out and have the fun she ought to be having.

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“It is the plays, sports days, all the other things that my children are being deprived of due to this needless isolation. It is heartbreaking knowing that my daughter Lily has to watch her brother Thomas go to school.”

How has lockdown affected your child? Let us know below


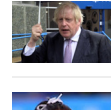
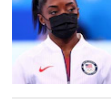



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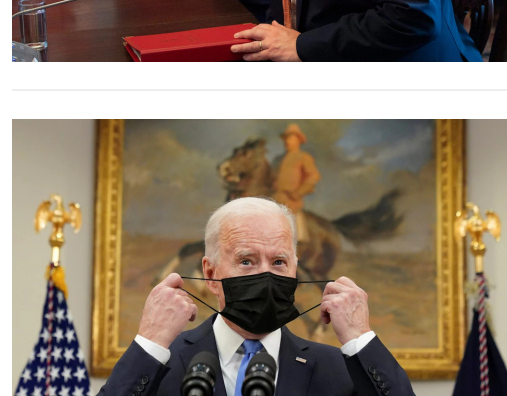
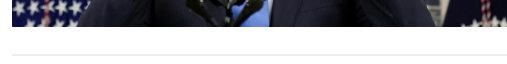
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