



In isolation instead of in school (INISS): young people's experiences of Covid-19 and effects on mental health and education

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Research Questions

Research Question 1

- How do isolation, school closure and exam cancellation caused by Covid-19 affect the mental health of the generality of young people in Scotland??

Research Question 2

- Are there additional impacts on the mental health of groups of young people typically identified as vulnerable?

Research Question 3

- What do young people, as students, think would help address their mental health concerns in the context of the pandemic?

Strands

A Online national survey open from
July- Sept 2020

B Online focus group interviews,
Sept-Oct 2020

Preliminary findings

School closures

- A total of 9% of young people met clinical threshold levels for depression, 7% for anxiety and 28% categorised as having elevated avoidance and intrusive thoughts and behaviours in relation to the pandemic
- Between 1/3 and 2/5 of all young people surveyed reported school closure had negative effects on mental health and wellbeing
- 34% of survey participants reported feelings of anxiety got worse; 44% reported feelings of depression worsened

Return to school

- Return to school generally had a positive impact on wellbeing, though this was coupled with anxiety about Covid-19 related risks

What would help?

- There were strong views on the need for greater mental health and well being support in schools

Focus groups: Findings 1

Key themes:

1. Vulnerabilities exacerbated
2. Exams 'fiasco', 'uncertainty', 'lack of transparency'
3. Home learning positive for some, negative for many

'Especially people with OCD, with all the focus on handwashing'

'Even if you're not talking about LGBT issues directly, just being around somebody who, you know, has a shared experience with you. And that wasn't really happening in the same way'

'There was quite a lot of uncertainty at the beginning of lockdown about how long it would last for and when we'd come back to school and how our results would be decided. And I found that really stressful. I think a lot of people did, because we didn't know exactly what to do and we didn't know how long this could go on for'

'It's been a bit jarring and a bit frightening, because my mum contracted coronavirus and was quite ill. She got the long form of the virus and is still recovering so that added to my stress. I have to make dinner around the house and help out more'

'I actually felt lockdown had a positive impact on my mental health... It felt nice not to be told like what to do by a bell. I could just get work done at my own pace... A lot more independent'

Focus groups: Findings 2

Key themes:

1. What had helped?
2. What would help?

'Our teachers would give us all the work we needed to do at the start of the week so we can do it over the week. So I think that put less stress on us, we didn't have to fulfil the normal structure when it wasn't a normal time for us. It felt like we were actually being considered'

'Spending time on social media, connecting with people e.g. lots of "Challenges" going around!'

'Being more active really does help, like nature and going for walks outside'

'In my council we have chrome books for every single secondary school pupil so most people going into lockdown had them'

'The PE department offered if anyone wanted to borrow a mountain bike'

'The way we view PSE [Personal and Social Education] needs to be completely changed. This would be a place to help people with their mental health, like signposting to services and getting experts in'

'There is a need for more awareness, for teachers to get basic training in mental health.. There needs to be more openness around suicide rates to highlight the problem to show it's really an issue'

Next steps

- In depth analysis of survey data
- Dissemination via UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools network
- Dissemination via INISS Advisory Group including NHS, Data for Children Collaborative, UNICEF and Scottish Youth Parliament
- Liaison with Scottish Government and national education agency (Education Scotland)