

Parents' Voices:

Connect's Parent/Carer Second Lockdown Survey Spring 2021

This is a selection of parents' comments from Connect's survey of parents and carers about experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown of early 2021. The survey ran from 7 February to 31 March 2021 and received 784 responses from parent/carers in 31 local authorities.

The final question of our survey asked for any other comments. 225 parents left responses, which are grouped under the following themes:

Concern about isolation/lack of socialisation of children/young people	Difficulties with remote learning
Learning at home going well	Feel school/nursery has done well
Challenges of supporting child's learning while working	Concerns for mental health/stress for parent/child
Want child back at school	Concerns regarding how COVID-19 measures will affect child
Lack of live teaching	Concerns regarding transitions
Young people sitting qualifications	Financial difficulties
Additional support needed for mental health and learning	Impact on children with additional support needs
Lack of communication from school	Lack of consistency of learning between schools
Concern about the focus on 'catching up'	Quality of feedback from teachers
Lack of Gaelic Medium Education support	Call to repeat year

Concern about isolation/lack of socialisation of children/young people

'I think children who are the only child in the household have been particularly disadvantaged during the last year. They have become more isolated'

'My son is suffering greatly with the isolation from friends and the routine of school. He has become demotivated and totally disinterested in school work online. I fear that this age group [S1-S3] will be last to return to school and they are at an age where socialisation is so crucial to their development'

Difficulties with remote learning

'Work sent home assumes that you are able to take time to do things with your children. Having one in P3 and one in P6 and working full time at home was very stressful for all of us'

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'I feel like my child's school has put too much pressure on kids and parents to do a certain amount of work every day. This is not always possible depending on individual circumstances'

'My child is feeling very despondent with home learning. He is struggling without a teacher and has lacked motivation. I am concerned about him falling behind, especially in subjects he is already struggling with'

Learning at home going well

'Home learning has been challenging but the benefits have been that my children who normally (quietly) struggle in class have been able to complete work they don't normally get finished, no note taking which has positively impacted on learning and my children have experienced better scores on unit tests because we have gone through the work at their pace and have had support to discuss what they are learning which has helped their understanding'

'This home learning experience has been much better [than the last one]- the school have listened and learned and implemented change based on feedback. I pads have made a massive difference, plus huge creativity on the part of teachers'

Feel school/nursery has done well

'The two schools and nursery we are attached to have done everything they can to provide work and support and keep the children as buoyant as possible. We feel we have been listened to when we have needed changes for individual children, and we are grateful to staff for prioritising wellbeing and individual needs over attainment. It is really important that staff also have their wellbeing cared for, and I hope they know they are appreciated'

'My daughter's teachers have gone above and beyond to support her. They have provided lots of fun, engaging things to do. They have worked so hard and I really appreciate them'

Challenges of supporting child's learning while working

'Trying to work from home while hubby is offshore and do school work is a nightmare'

'Very little understanding of families where parents are working from home, trying to help children get school work done and manage additional support needs. Primary school great, academy terrible - do not listen to parent concerns or young people. Constant negative texts from school affecting young people's mental health. There is no actual teaching being done at all'

'Despite me (mum) being a level 1 key worker and my husband working full time from home in a capacity which does not allow him to provide adequate childcare to three kids, we were unable to access school places. I understand this, but if it wasn't for Granny's willingness to help us and take the children for two days a week when I am at work as a doctor, the children would not have been able to do home learning or be adequately looked after. We struggled alone with this during the first lockdown and it nearly broke my husband and the children. Thank goodness essential childcare rules were relaxed this time round and we live close to grandparents. Many will not'

Concerns for mental health/stress for parent/child

'This has been horrendous for my daughter - normally she is sporty and sociable but since Christmas she has become increasingly withdrawn and rarely chooses to leave her bedroom. She is much less engaged with learning than during the first lockdown. S1-3 kids are being neglected and disadvantaged'

'I support lockdown and fully understand the reasons but I am able to go to work so I'm coping better. My partner and son are not and seem very affected by being at home everyday. Mental health all being affected'

'Access to mental health services was really difficult before the pandemic - was impossible during the pandemic and is now still needed but even more remote'

Want child back at school

'I absolutely believe our children need to be in school normally with no further disruption'

'When will this nightmare end? Kids need to be back in school full time. Parents aren't teachers'

'I am glad that P1 to 3 are going back to school, as my 5 year old is starting to refuse school work. I feel she has had enough. She is showing signs of being unhappy learning from home. She misses school'

Concerns regarding how COVID-19 measures will affect child

'We are desperate to open schools but the kids can't mix, need to eat at their desk, are not allowed out of seats. This has a big impact on the children too. I also struggle to see the benefits of this'

'Schools should never have been closed again, risk in schools has always been low. Incredibly angry that senior pupils now have to wear face coverings all day, highly detrimental to their mental and physical wellbeing'

Lack of live teaching

'My son's online schooling consists mostly of homework set by the teachers but very few online lessons. I keep hearing from both governments that online teaching is working well but in our experience there is virtually no actual teaching which is a big worry'

'Only had four live lessons since lockdown started. Pretty poor, really'

'There should be more contact with teachers - no registration and one live lesson per week is not sufficient. Teenage boys would prefer to be in bed than up doing schoolwork if they are not being monitored. School should be doing more live contact time'

Concerns regarding transitions

'This has really damaged my son's confidence in all areas! He's due to move to secondary in August and he's not ready at all!'

'P7 really need back do that they can get a proper transition. We have fine the bare minimum in terms of schoolwork so I worry about me eldest moving into academy after summer'

'When P1 started in 2020, the school did nothing to engage with children or parents. My son was just 4.6 years old, some of the children were nearly 6. Children have needed to visit the new place, parents want to see teachers who will take care of their children'

Young people sitting qualifications

'SQA assessments need to be clarified urgently. Senior pupils need help and support in preparing for these. Lots of anxiety around what is happening with return for senior pupils'

Financial difficulties

'School closures have had a massive negative impact on our family. We have went from both parents having full time employment to only one income'

'I'm really concerned about affording clothing that will fit my younger child going back to school. I don't want him to be embarrassed. But he has put quite a bit of weight on and the uniform is tight, so I'm not sure what to do right now. It's far too short notice financially'

Additional support needed for mental health and learning

'I am not in favour of summer schools but I think many children will need additional support, both for mental health and learning. Additional staff are needed to support small group learning to identify and support kids with any gaps in their learning - this should be done as part of the school day. Emotional and mental health support should also be approached in small groups - assemblies about resilience are NOT enough. The transition from P7 to senior school should be addressed and help offered to those children who are anxious about it. Visits to the new school should be made, these could be in small groups after school hours to limit contacts if necessary'

'Home schooling worked for two of my children but ASN support has been poor, managing sensory meltdowns etc has been the hardest thing and affected family relationship as takes up 80% of my attention, leaving two siblings very resentful'

Impact on children with additional support needs

'ASN kids are the ones let down the most. They are vulnerable in their own way and this is not always supported and the pressure of this on rest of family is huge. Especially if working, juggling more than one child!'

'Children with ASN of all ages should have been given full time schooling. It is extremely harmful for them to be out of their routine and has a serious impact on the whole family. We have had self-harming behaviour and a lot more meltdowns. My two year old has developed a stutter and anxiety. It is far more harmful for them to be home now than at school'

Lack of communication from school

'Our school seems to think that it's appropriate to communicate directly with children and parents or carers are an after-thought'

'Not enough consistent communication between teachers and pupils at the school, most of my daughter's friends have had online classes, my daughter has had no online classes. Just piles of work issued with little or no help'

'I feel our children have been severely let down and the work being set is very poor. Communication is almost non-existent'

Lack of consistency of learning between schools

'Inequity across schools regarding remote learning is shameful. Some schools offer full timetable with every class being taught live, some schools offer practically nothing. This needs to be addressed immediately. How can pupils be effectively graded on subjects that are barely being taught?'

'The lack of consistency and approaches from different teachers across different schools and within the same schools is marked. The closure of nurseries was unnecessary in lockdown 1. The lack of support for my son's private nursery compared to the school nursery was shocking'

Concern about the focus on 'catching up'

'Both my children are finding school very slow and boring since lockdown because there is an assumption kids have forgotten everything and have suffered. Many have, but many more haven't. Support needs to be targeted only at those who need it'

'I feel passionate that the adults surrounding children should let go of the notion that our children need to 'catch up'. It is not our children's job to catch up - the curriculum needs to bend and flex for them and, if need be, have things removed in order to accommodate. These children have missed out on so much more than school this year - playing with friends, seeing family, extra-curricular social activities, sadly the list goes on. The idea that school days should be extended or holidays cut short is outrageous, given the experience children have had'

Quality of feedback from teachers

'While feedback has been received for both children, it has been minimal and we have no real idea of how they are getting on. No school reporting since November 2019'

'I say my child has had feedback but it is literally "well done". I know they can't really do more than that at this age but I have no idea if my child is okay or falling behind'

Lack of Gaelic Medium Education support

'There isn't enough support for GME pupils, little or no contact with class teacher for language acquisition and practice. People are looking to move children into English streams where they are able to get adequate support'

'Need more Gaelic tutoring resources. Not websites or BBC Alba but actual tutors for kids'

Call to repeat year

'At the beginning of the year my child made a comment that his education should be paused until things go back to normal and I tend to agree with the sentiment of what he said. This year has been an absolute disaster in terms of his education. He should be given the opportunity to repeat S4 and then still be allowed to attend school for S5 and S6 to complete his education'

'As a P6 parent I feel that the year needs repeated. Most are not prepared enough to move in the pre-transition to secondary work'