

'I think I am falling behind': Findings of the Born in Bradford Covid-19 Children Survey

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This summary presents findings of children's experiences during the Covid-19 lockdown within the Born in Bradford cohort. This report is to aid local schools, policy and decision makers in their planning and responses to Covid19.

Further Information

www.bradfordresearch.nhs.uk/csag

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

1. Background

There are concerns that lockdown measures implemented to contain the Covid-19 virus may have unintended consequences on the health and wellbeing of children, particularly those from deprived and ethnically diverse backgrounds, where inequalities may increase. This brief paper presents findings about children's experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown in the Born in Bradford (BiB) research study. Children aged 9-13 were invited to take part.

2. Key findings

Participant Demographics

970 children participated between May and July 2020

44% of participants were of Pakistani heritage, **39%** were White British and **17%** were from other ethnic backgrounds.

The **average** age was 10 with a range from 8 to 12 years

51% were male, 49% were female

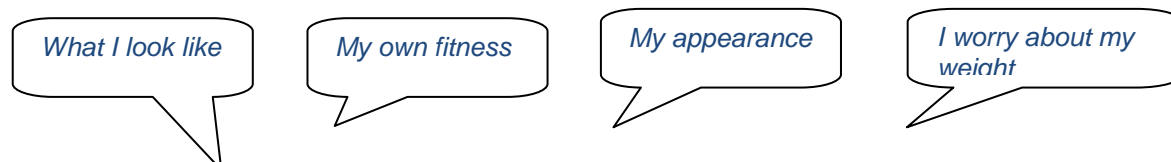
38% of respondents lived in the most deprived decile of material deprivation in England.

Physical Activity in Lockdown

Only 27% of children met the physical activity guidelines of at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity a day during lockdown. Boys were more likely than girls to meet the guidelines (30% vs 25%) and White British children were more likely to meet the guidelines than children from Pakistani heritage (34% vs 22%).

29% of children didn't leave their home to do physical activity during lockdown. This was more common in children of Pakistani heritage (39%) than White British children (18%).

When we asked children what they were worried about during lockdown, some reported being worried about having put on weight and not having done enough exercise during lockdown:



School Work in Lockdown

Almost all children (96%) said they did some school work each day. 62% of children said they did 1-2 hours work a day, and 35% more than 2 hours. Boys were more likely to do just 1-2 hours work (65%) than girls (58%). Children of South Asian ethnicity (69%) and from other ethnic minority groups (61%) were more likely to do just 1-2 hours work than White British children (54%).

There were inequalities in access to things needed to do school work at home, with South Asian children more likely to have had access to computer equipment only some of the time (25%) compared to children from White British (19%) and other ethnic groups (20%). South Asian children were also more likely to only have access to the internet some of the time (14%, compared to 8% of White British children) and to books (17% compared to 5% White British children).

When we asked children what they were worried about during lockdown, many said that they had not been able to keep up with the school work they had been asked to do at home and were worried that they were now behind. They were worried that they had been away from school for so long that they had forgotten 'vital things' and that they would fail. The thought of going back to school after a long period away from it was daunting for some, and those due to start secondary school felt 'unprepared' and nervous about it.

Forget vital things that I should know

About school because I think am falling behind

Not being prepared for secondary school

That I'm wasting my life

Friendships and Bullying

Girls have missed the social contact and support of their friendships during lockdown more than boys: girls were more likely to miss their friends (62%) than boys (50%). White British children were more likely to miss their friends (59%) than children of Pakistani heritage (52%).

25% of children said they were bullied some of the time. This was more common in White British (28%) and other ethnic minority children (32%) than in South Asian children (19%).

When we asked children what they were worried about, social anxieties were frequently reported, with feeling worried that being with their friends would not be the same due to social distancing measures. Some described anxieties around friends not liking them anymore, people laughing at them, trying to fit in, getting their feelings hurt and being bullied.

That none of my friends like me anymore

Being bullied again

Hanging out with friends won't be the same

Family Support and Living Circumstances

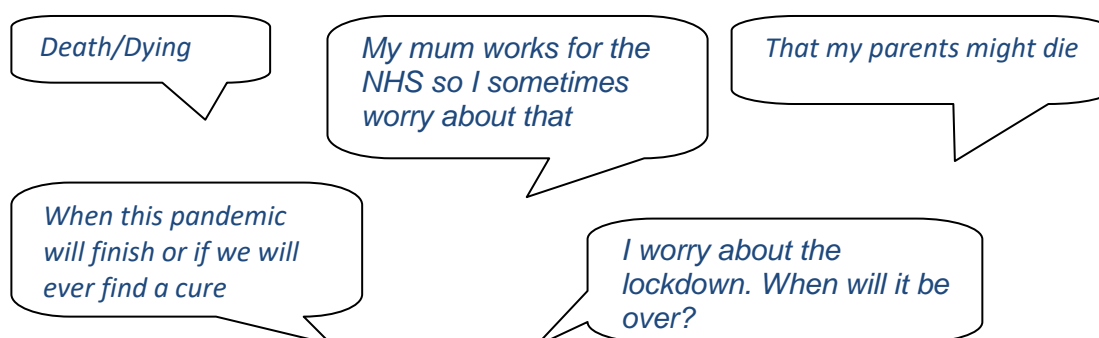
36% of children said their family only got on some of the time. This was more common in White British children (47%) and other ethnic groups (36%) than in children of Pakistani heritage (27%).

From our survey of BiB parents we know that 1 in 5 parents reported clinically significant depression / anxiety during lockdown; and many families are struggling financially with **1 in 4** worried about paying the rent/mortgage, **1 in 4** not being able to afford to buy the food they needed and **1 in 10** worried about losing their home and having to skip meals because there wasn't enough food. Many families also live in poor housing conditions: **2 in 5** families lived in overcrowded homes and **1 in 4** families live in poor quality housing (e.g. mould/damp, vermin problems, major repairs needed). The impacts of these circumstances on children may well play out at school with risks of poor nutrition, poor or disruptive behaviour, difficulties learning and an increase in mental health issues.

Mental Health

White British children were less likely to say they felt happy all of the time (59%) than children from Pakistani heritage (44%). Very few children showed symptoms of clinical depression or anxiety, but there was evidence of social anxieties in many children. The chart below shows the responses to the mental health questions

When we asked children what they were worried about, the most common worry was health anxiety around Covid-19, with children worrying about themselves or members of their family becoming ill and dying, particularly their parents, grandparents and family members who worked for the NHS. There was also anxiety about lockdown easing and being in crowded places, as well as concern about wider society and when the pandemic would end.



Childrens' Behaviour

We asked parents to tell us about their children's behavior using the validated SDQ measure. 10% of children had behavior that was of concern. Poor behavior was more common in boys (12%) than girls (7%), and was most common in children from White British (11%) and South Asian (9%) ethnicity compared to other ethnic groups (7%).

What have Children Enjoyed during lockdown?

We asked children what they had enjoyed during the lockdown, and most of them did have something positive to say, whether it was because they had more time to spend playing on their Playstation/Xbox, doing hobbies like painting and baking or going out for walks and bike rides. They seemed to have benefited from being able to contact and speak to their friends through online games, social media and on the phone. They described enjoying spending more time with their family, and many children said that they had found it more relaxing being at home, not having to stick to such a strict schedule and had enjoyed time on their own. Some had also enjoyed being able to stay up later and sleep in longer.

That I can do flexible hours for school work

My mum being there for me

Helping my dad do jobs

Playing my PS4 online with my friends

Texting and facetimeing my friends

Having more time to be myself

3. Recommendations

Most children who completed the survey seem to be ok, and appear to have coped well with lockdown. They have done some school work and have good peer and family relationships. However, many children are very anxious about the Coronavirus2 in 3 children have not done enough physical activity during lockdown, and there are a small but important number of children who are unhappy, are worried about coming back to school and are very worried about what others think, or about being bullied. There may also be a number with real behavioural problems. Based on our findings, we recommend:

1. The majority of children need interventions to increase their physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviours, in particular girls and children from ethnic minority groups need to be encouraged to be more active.
2. Boys and Ethnic Minority children may need extra support to catch up on their school work on return to school.
3. Be aware of heightened social anxieties that may hinder learning and any interventions offered: Girls and White British Children in particular may struggle with the social impact of lockdown.
4. Children (and parents) have a lot of health anxieties around Covid-19 and this may impact on their attendance and ability to adjust to the return to school.
5. 1 in 10 children may be returning to school with behavioural issues, and many more children have been living with parents who have been struggling financially and mentally during lockdown. Additional support may be needed to support children at risk of poor nutrition, disruptive behavior and difficulties learning

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