## Children aged 0-11 and COVID-19: A conversation event

Thursday 3$^{rd}$ June 1-3pm.
Twitter hashtag: **#CCCE21**

**CHILDREN AGED 0-11 AND COVID-19: A CONVERSATION EVENT**

Good afternoon, everyone.
Prynhawn da, bawb.

Welcome to the conversation, jointly hosted by the Open University's Children's Research Centre and Swansea University
Croeso i'r drafodaeth, wedi'i chynnal ar y cyd gan Ganolfan Ymchwil Plant y Brifysgol Agored a Phrifysgol Abertawe.

We will be starting at 1pm today.
Byddwn yn dechrau am 1pm heddiw.

**Some housekeeping**
- We have structured this event as a 'conversation' and an opportunity to network, to learn more about what others have been doing and to look forward.
- We would like to archive this event on the ORDO platform.
- No names/organisations will be listed and no verbatim quotes will be used.
- The aim of the notes is to capture general themes discussed in the room. These notes may offer useful ideas for research/continuing research or areas of development for attendees and their organisations.
- By speaking in the breakout room sessions you are indicating you have given permission for your contributions to be noted.

**Origins of the Conversation**

Dr Jacky Tyrie
@DrTyrie

So I am just putting this out here... WHO ELSE IS REASEARCHING IMPACT of COVID on young children in UK? I feel there must be more research being done than is published #earlyyears #ECEC
@OpenUni_CRC

- Started with Twitter
  12,123 impressions
  529 engagements
- Connections
  Children's Research Centre at the Open University and Dr Liz Chamberlain
- Gap in knowledge exchange
  This event

**What to expect today**
- Keynote Speaker: Professor Carol Robinson, EHU
- Research Gallery
- Breakout Rooms
- Keynote Speaker: Sally Holland, Children's Commissioner for Wales
- Live tweeting via #CCCE21
- Event protocols, networking via chat

**The research gallery**

**CHILDREN AGED 0-11 AND COVID-19: A CONVERSATION EVENT**

Prifysgol Abertawe
Swansea University

Welcome to the gallery of research shared by many participants prior to today's event.

'Walk through' the gallery by clicking the arrows above. Use the sticky notes to comment on the posters you view, the questions you have or to make connections with your own work and interests.
[You can find the sticky notes on the left-hand toolbar.]

Yellow sticky notes for questions or to request more information.

Green sticky notes for connections with your own work.

I have a question?

**What next...**
- Your thoughts.. back to Jamboard for 'As a result of today...'
- We'd like to chat about future events. We were thinking:
    Working group
    Research / funding
    Larger scale conference
- Contact: J.Tyrie@Swansea.ac.uk and liz.chamberlain@open.ac.uk
- Anything going on that's relevant, share with others.
- We'll be in touch about any potential impact as a result of today's event on your work.
- Keep the conversation going on Twitter #CCCE21

### Keynote 1. 'Children's Right to be heard'

Carol Robinson (Prof of Children's Rights at Edge Hill University)
- Children impacted by COVID globally (scale and negative impact)
- 15 million children in the UK – some have experienced...
    - Reduced access to healthcare
    - Increased food insecurity
    - Increased anxiety and stress
    - Increased witnessing, or being on receiving end of, domestic abuse
- 12 million children in England
    - 2.3 million in vulnerable family
    - 1.6 million in risky family situations
    - COVID – weakening of support received and reduction in referrals to children's services (not a reduction in need – fewer people to refer children for support)
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
    - Children are 'the silent and silenced victims of the pandemic'(UN 2021)
    - England Children's Commissioner has commissioned a survey of children's perspectives on impact on pandemic
- Carol's argument – Children's views need to be considered in any actions that impact them and their future opportunities

### Keynote 2. 'Coronavirus and me: A nationwide survey for children and young people'

Sally Holland – Children's Commissioner for Wales

- Two major surveys of children's experiences of COVID-19

- Survey 1 - May 2020 (24,000) and Survey 2 - Jan 2021 (19,737 responses)

- Results – reports and videos available online...
    - https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/coronavirus-our-work/coronavirus-and-me-results/
    - https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/FINAL_formattedCVRep_EN.pdf
    - https://youtu.be/hdvPB45v0MM
- Survey explored children's feelings (data collated by year group from 7- to 18-year-olds – generally older worse than younger)
    - happy and safe
    - sad and lonely
    - not feeling confident about learning
- Further information on website and FaceBook site...
    - https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/
    - https://www.facebook.com/childcomwales

**The research gallery**

Jamboards with a collection of posters in themed rooms (will be available for a further week or so)
Instructions: 15 minutes for this task (return at 1:50pm)
- Yellow sticky notes for questions
- Green sticky notes for connections
- Orange sticky notes for answers

**Please see the *A conversation event research gallery*** PDF that details all the posters (with permission to be publicly shared), and the ***As a result of today I will… sticky note actions*** PDF attendees committed to putting into action as a result of the Research Conversation.

**Breakout/Gallery room 1 - Notes**
**Children's voices**

- Examples of approaches
    - Child to child methodology.
    - Drawing and mapping e.g., stories of children's experience of COVID.
    - Child-adult play
    - Reflective journals
    - Use of puppets
- Threads of discussion...
    - Children's ownership of space
    - Equalities and inequalities
    - Digital advantage / disadvantage
    - Consultation sessions involving children
    - Communication with younger children (e.g., early primary)
    - How classroom culture/behaviour has changed now children are returning to school
- Across the group a lot of interest in use of play and enabling space and time for children to express themselves.
- Examples of recent work and resources (links shared in the breakout room chat with permission to include in notes).
    - https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/news/press-releases/my-home-my-museum
    - http://www.childtochild.org.uk/

- o https://www.stayhomestories.co.uk/about
- o https://clarissa.global/

**Breakout/gallery room 2 – Notes**
**Children's rights**

The main focus of discussion was around Article 12 and followed on from Carol's presentation.
When we listen to children's views it brings a new perspective; it opens adults mind to what children are thinking.
Children can highlight both problems and solutions.
Many voices can lead to complexity and conflicting views. Children from different backgrounds will prioritise things differently.
The more compliant and able children are, the more readily they can/will share their views.
It is sometimes easier to listen to children's views that match our own adult views.
There are groups of children who don't feel listened too, so they don't talk.

**Listening to young children**
When listening to children it is more than gathering a verbal response; this is particular important for young children; children with additional learning needs and vulnerable children.
Great to see that the perspective of younger children is being gathered, more active work is needed in this area. Their views and experiences are valid and important
Children need to be viewed as 'having capacity' and this can be developed and nurtured; to support them to feel confident to share their views and be listened too.
Listening to children 0-3 is more complex; time consuming and relies on those who have a trusted relationship with the child. Observations are a key way to gather views when working with young children. More work needed to develop this area of work and tools to support.
Work is being done on developing a set of Principles to support listening to children 0-7 years old.

**Children as co-constructors**
Children have the right to participate in family, community decisions as well as wider policy development.
Children need to be involved in developing solutions.
Children as researchers and involvement in setting research aims/priorities. An example shared of this is the Little Voices/Lleisiau Bach 2012-2020 which supported children as researchers and advocated to bring about change. A group of children with physical disabilities worked with the community to stop vehicles parking on the kerb/pavement; this is now being discussed at policy level.

**Engaging children**
How can we engage with children, in voices that they want to hear and will respond to? Sometimes adults are not the right person and can influence/direct responses.
When UNICEF carried out an evaluation of the Rights Respecting Schools they asked children what questions they would like to ask. Then got children to ask the questions to each other; this offers a different response. Need to be careful when gathering results that children don't filter responses.

**Wider Children's Rights**
We acknowledged that Article 12 is only one of the UNCRC Articles and Children's Rights is wider than this.
During first lockdown there were concerns in regards Children's Rights being upheld when in custody/prison.

**Breakout/gallery room 3 - Notes**
**Children's well-being, physical & emotional health**

**Theme 1 – Using surveys to elicit children's responses**

Survey – children's experiences and transitions into school.  Barriers in place for children being heard.  Issues around surveys being hosted through a gatekeeper.  Shared experience for a number of projects, without having schools to go through.

When you see in numbers children's experiences that feels very stark, we know it but don't fully appreciate it until we see it in numbers.

Things that have worked for children's voices to be heard.

Children have contributed their own perspective by contributing drawings of (7-15 year olds)

Researchers have to adapt to the changing atmosphere – the use of online technology, Zoom calls instead of working children in school, which is the usual method.

Parents have been the gatekeepers – recruited through social media, consent from children and parents.  There was some hesitation for parents around the project with a focus on 'well-being'.

It can be messy working with children through parents – thoughts around survey with parents, some projects were aware of this and set up ways of asking parents to complete the survey first and then a separate survey for children.  It was an opportunity to add parents' perceptions, something that may not have been planned.

## Theme 2 – Children's positive experiences of the pandemic

There were positive experiences and the question was raised whether this reflected specific demographics, i.e. high SES.  Is there more work to do around exploring positive responses and protective factors, and how impact on increasing and developmental and attainment gaps?

## Theme 3 – A sense that younger children's experiences were not represented from the start

Immediacy of some of the work that organisations undertook (start of the pandemic) and the noticing of the focus on older children.  Organisations shifted their focus to capture younger children's experiences.  Some organisations are doing and have done this extremely well.

Ongoing impact reports telling the ongoing story.

Some evidence of gaps widening in cognitive development in under 3s.

## Theme 4 – Are all children's voices being heard?

Projects are aware that they are not necessarily getting to harder-to-reach groups of children.  Some organisations shifting focus to emphasise and capture experiences from across SES groups, and to much younger children?

Importance of triangulating different sources of data – caregivers, children, surveys captured through health visiting was given as an example of a wider dataset.

## Going forward

Opportunities to make links with other organisations.

## Breakout/gallery room 4 - Notes
## Children and play

- Feel as if play is in a vacuum but there is lots of work/projects going on, but there needs to be more joined up thinking.
- Play is an overarching umbrella, it transcends themes such as children's voice, wellbeing, rights.
- Practical ways of developing play are needed for practitioners/teachers/parents – what does play mean?
- Play can support children's mental health.
- The possibility of a summer of play would restore the missed opportunities children have experienced for socialising.
- There is a need for joining up the gaps of children's experiences in play and pull the evidence base together.
- Look for connections going across play rather than tackling hierarchal structures.
- There is an undercurrent of play in everything children do.

- How can adults listen to children through their play – actions/experiences, not only words.
- Structural issues relating to learning puts pressure on teachers to marginalise play.
- Sometimes adults feel not able to facilitate play – lack of knowledge or confidence to stand up for play.
- Reach out to families and parents so they understand the importance of play and are more ready to embrace play.
- There are challenges in supporting institution such as schools in providing play provision/ experiences as education each institution is different and each location has different contexts therefore implementing play within settings is difficult
- "take both feet off the performative pedal"
- The importance of the resilience of play
- The focus of learning: Taking away teachers precious to evidenced children's learning
- Need to change the policy framework and the neoliberal structure that has been constructed in the last 50 years which determines the evidence focus of education

**Breakout/gallery room 5 - Notes**
**Children and school**
FIVE KEY THEMES:
1. Findings presented in the gallery are what we would expect.
   · We could have predicted the outcomes of school closures based on previous research.
   · Telling the same stories as before and highlighted them further.

2. Cross cutting themes.
   · Lots of the gallery had similar themes.
   · Widening inequalities is a key theme.
   · As well as losing children's voices in the midst of lockdown. Lots of decisions being made for them. Even in recovery plans, some children's voices are easier to hear than others (e.g., less deprived children are easier to engage/rural vs. urban differences)

3. Concerns over "catch up".
   · A phrase which has been mentioned a lot in return to school plans.
   · This is not just learning catch up but also developmental catch up (e.g., speech/language, motor skills, socialisation)
   · Attention needs to be paid to key transition years i.e., year 6 to year 7.

4. Language and vocabulary.
   · Language around schools has been negative particularly in the media.
   · Schools counteracting this with positive language.
   · Important to know how to use language when discussing "catch up".

5. Lessons to take forward.
   · Utilisation of online learning/teaching methods to be used in the future. For example, Saturday catch-up sessions, access to resources, online meetings (parents/governors), access to industry experts.
   · Continue multi-level collaboration which has been seen between primary and secondary settings.
   · Acknowledge there has been positives and benefits particularly around strengthening parental engagement and strengthening relationships in family units.

Dr Liz Chamberlain, The Open University
Dr Jacky Tyrie, Swansea University
*July 2021*