

Annwyl Prif Weinidog a Y Gweinidog Addysg,

Rydym yn Seicolegwyr Clinigol ac Ymarferol sy'n gweithio yng Nghymru. Rydym yn galw am blant a phobl ifanc i ddychwelyd yn llawn i ysgol o ddechrau tymor yr hydref.

Rydym yn deall bod Llywodraeth Cymru wedi wynebu argyfwng digynsail ac wedi cymryd camau i amddiffyn y cyhoedd. Rydym yn gwerthfawrogi eich ymdrechion i ystyried yr effaith ar blant a phobl ifanc yng nghyd-destun y cloi cychwynnol. Ond wrth i aflonyddwch ar hawliau plant a'u haddysg barhau rydym yn dod yn fwyfwy pryderus. Mae tystiolaeth o flynyddoedd o ymchwil seicoleg gymdeithasol yn dangos y gall yr arwahanrwydd cymdeithasol a'r esgeulustod a allai dod o fesurau pellhau cymdeithasol niweidio yn ddifrifol lles, datblygiad a chyfleoedd plant yn y dyfodol. Gall mesurau o'r fath ddyfnhau a sefydlu'r anghydraddoldebau presennol yn ein cymdeithas ymhellach.

Mae cau ysgolion, clybiau, meithrinfeydd a chanolfannau chwarae wedi arwain at arwahanrwydd cymdeithasol oddi wrth ffrindiau ac i'n plant mwy bregus oddi wrth oedolion gall ei hamddiffyn hefyd, gan arwain at newid sylweddol i'r strwythur a'r gefnogaeth gymdeithasol yn ei fywydau.

Rydym yn gwybod y gall diffyg cefnogaeth gymdeithasol effeithio'n sylweddol ar ymdeimlad plant o gysylltiad a all yn ei dro gael effaith hirdymor negyddol ar iechyd meddwl a chyfaddawdu cyfleoedd ar gyfer datblygiad corfforol, cymdeithasol ac emosiynol. Mae'n hysbys bod arferion a strwythurau ysgol yn bwysig ar gyfer ymdeimlad plentyn o ragweladwyedd a diogelwch.

Mae'n debyg iawn bod cau ysgolion wedi cynyddu bylchau mewn anghydraddoldebau o ran addysg. Rydym yn rhagweld bydd y bwlch cyrhaeddiad addysgol yn debyg o ehangu ymhellach ar gyfer plant gydag Anghenion Dysgu Ychwanegol sy'n ei chael hi'n anodd i gael mynediad i cwricwlwm nad yw wedi'i addysgu i raddau helaeth ac sydd ar y cyfan yn

Dear First Minister and Minister of Education,

We are Clinical and Practitioner Psychologists working in Wales. We are calling for the full return to school of children and young people from the start of the autumn term.

We understand that the Welsh Government has faced an unprecedented crisis and taken steps to protect the public. We appreciate its efforts to consider the impact on children and young people in the context of the initial lockdown. However, as disruption to children's rights and education continues, we are becoming increasingly concerned. Evidence from years of social psychology research shows that social isolation and neglect that could result from social distancing measures, development and future opportunities. Such measures further deepen and entrench existing inequalities in our society.

The closure of schools, clubs and playcentres has led to social isolation from friends and for our more vulnerable children from protective adults as well, resulting in a significant shift in the amount of structure and social support in their lives.

We know that lack of social support can impact significantly on children's sense of connection which can in turn have a negative long-term impact on mental health and compromise opportunities for physical, social and emotional development. It is well known that school routines and structures are important for a child's sense of predictability and safety.

It is highly likely that school closures have increased gaps in inequalities in terms of education. We anticipate that the educational attainment gap may have further widened for those children with Additional Learning Needs who struggle to access a curriculum that has largely not been taught and is for the most part based on reading and writing. A particular concern in Wales is for

seiliedig ar ddarllen ac ysgrifennu. Pryder penodol yng Nghymru yw i'r plant a'r bobl ifanc hynny sy'n cael eu haddysgu trwy cyfrwng y Cymraeg ac sydd â rhieni di-Gymraeg.

Bydd gallu pob teulu i gefnogi dysgu eu plentyn wedi cael ei ddylanwadu gan lawer o ffactorau gyda teuluoedd sydd eisoes yn fregus ac o dan anfantais yn profi'r heriau mwyaf. I'r teuluoedd hynny a oedd eisoes yn ei chael hi'n anodd ymdopi, mae plant yn debygol iawn o fod wedi profi lefelau uwch o esgeulustod a chamdriniaeth.

Efallai'r pryder mwyaf yw nad yw llawer o'r plant a'r bobl ifanc hyn sydd wedi bod yn byw mewn amgylchiadau cartref anodd iawn (a fydd wedi eu gwaethygu ymhellach yn ystod y broses gloi) wedi cael eu gweld gan unrhyw weithwyr proffesiynol. Gwelsom ostyngiad yn y gwasanaethau ymyrraeth ac atal cynnar oedd ar gael wrth i staff gael eu hail-leoli neu eu gorchuddio. Cynhaliodd rhai gwasanaethau sgôr RAG o achosion gyda dim ond achosion 'coch' yn cael cynnig o wasanaeth parhaus er gwaethaf achosion melyn a gwyrdd yn cario eu heriau sylweddol eu hunain ac yn dirywio ymhellach o ganlyniad i gloi i lawr.

Dewisodd llawer o deuluoedd beidio â defnyddio gwasanaethau ar ddechrau'r broses gloi i lawr ac rydym wedi gweld gostyngiad sylweddol yn nifer yr atgyfeiriadau diogelu.

Yn olaf, po hiraf y bydd cyn i ysgolion dychwelyd i 'normal' y fwy heriol bydd y broses, gan arwain at straen sylweddol pellach o fewn perthnasoedd teuluol, fel yr amlinellwyd gan Gymdeithas Seicolegol Prydain, sydd eisoes wedi darparu strategaethau i gefnogi ail-ymgysylltu ac adferiad.<sup>1</sup>

Ni ddylid ystyried ysgolion a lleoliadau blynyddoedd cynnar, fel y maent yn gweithredu fel rheol, fel darparwyr addysg yn unig; maent yn gwbl ganolog i ddatblygiad emosiynol a chymdeithasol plant. Pan fyddant ar gau neu'n gyfyngedig, mae plant yn colli allan ar gyfleoedd datblygu hanfodol ac mae'n ddigon posibl eu bod yn profi trawma datblygiadol sylweddol

those children and young people being taught through the Welsh medium and who have non-Welsh speaking parents.

Each family's ability to support their child's learning will have been influenced by many factors with already vulnerable and disadvantaged families experiencing the greatest challenges. For those families who were already struggling to cope, children are very likely to have experienced higher levels of neglect and abuse.

Perhaps of most concern is that many of these children and young people who have been living in very difficult home circumstances (which will have been further exacerbated during lockdown) have simply not been seen by any professionals. We saw a reduction in the number of early intervention and prevention services as a result of staff being re-deployed or furloughed. Some services also undertook a RAG rating of cases with only 'red' cases being offered an ongoing service despite yellow and green cases carrying their own significant challenges and deteriorating further as a result of lockdown.

Many families also opted out of services at the start of lockdown and we have seen a significant reduction in the number of safeguarding referrals.

Finally, the longer school remains disrupted the more challenging returning to 'normal' routines will be leading to further significant stress within family relationships, as outlined by The British Psychological Society, which has already provided strategies to support re-engagement and recovery.<sup>1</sup>

Schools provide not just an opportunity for education but are central to children's emotional and social development. When they are closed, children are missing out on crucial developmental opportunities at best and at worst our most vulnerable, through simply not being seen, may well be experiencing significant developmental

<sup>1</sup> [www.bps.org.uk/coronavirus-resources/public/back-to-school](http://www.bps.org.uk/coronavirus-resources/public/back-to-school)

gyda risg uniongyrchol i'w bywydau. Mae yna bosibilrwydd hefyd o effeithiau tymor hir ar ansawdd bywyd a disgwyliad oes (fel y dangosir gan ymchwil Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru ar Brofiadau Niweidiol yn ystod Plentyndod).

Rydym yn cydnabod ac yn croesawu gwaith Llywodraeth Cymru hyd yn hyn, ond rydym eisiau tynnu sylw at y ffaith bod cau ysgolion a pharhau gyda dysgu cyfunol wedi agor a bydd yn ehangu anghydraddoldebau yn bellach i'n plant a'n pobl ifanc ledled Cymru.

Rydym felly yn galw am y canlynol:

- 1) Dychwelyd i addysg llawn amser a rhyngweithio cymdeithasol arferol i blant a phobl ifanc yn cael ei flaenoriaethu a'i gyflawni cyn gynted â phosibl, gan ddefnyddio datrysiadau creadigol lle bo angen megis defnyddio llyfrgelloedd cymunedol, canolfannau cymunedol, eglwysi a gofodau cymunedol eraill a mesurau eraill fel swigod.
- 2) I blant gweithwyr hanfodol dderbyn cefnogaeth gyda'u haddysg tra bod eu rhieni mewn gwaith - nid yw gwasanaeth gofal plant ar ei ben ei hun yn ddigon da.
- 3) Buddsoddiad parhaus mewn 'cyllid trawsnewidiol' a gweithredu argymhellion yr adroddiad "Cadernid meddwl" i gefnogi datblygu dulliau cymunedol-integredig i gefnogi iechyd meddwl plant a phobl ifanc wrth iddynt wella ar ôl cau COVID-19.
- 4) Ymrwymiad i atal ysgolion rhag cau ac ymyrraeth dysgu wyneb yn wyneb ymhellach trwy ddefnyddio datrysiadau creadigol fel y soniwyd uchod.

trauma with immediate risk to their lives and possible long-term effects on quality of life and life expectancy (as shown by the Public Health Wales research on Adverse Childhood Experiences).

We recognise and welcome the work of the Welsh Government so far, however we wish to highlight that closing schools and continuing with blended learning has opened up and will further widen inequalities for our children and young people across Wales.

We therefore call for the following:

- 1) The return to full time education and normal social interaction for children and young people to be prioritised and achieved as soon as possible, using creative solutions where necessary such as the use of community libraries, community centres, churches and other community spaces and other measures such as bubbles.
- 2) For the children of essential workers to receive support with their education whilst their parents are in work – a childcare service alone is not good enough.
- 3) Continued investment in 'transformational funding' and implementation of the "Mind Over Matter" report recommendations to support the development of community-integrated approaches to support children and young people's mental health as they recover from the COVID- 19 lockdown.
- 4) A commitment to prevent further school closures and interruptions of face to face learning by use of creative solutions as mentioned above.

The Association of Clinical Psychologists (ACP-UK)  
British Psychological Society, Division of Clinical Psychology (BPS, DCP Cymru)