

24th February 2022

Dear Convener and Members of the Education, Children and Young People's Committee,

Re: [Inquiry](#) into Covid-19's impact on children and young people.

I am Long Covid Kids' Lead Representative for Scotland. Our charity works to support over 7000 families who have been directly impacted by the pandemic with their children and young people now chronically ill with varying degrees of disability due to Long Covid.

We read your inquiry report with interest and were concerned that the report makes no mention of some of the most significant impacts that Covid-19 has had, and continues to have, on the rights of children and young people. These include the impact on:

The right to life

Scotland has recorded [9 deaths in ages 0-19](#) since the pandemic began. In addition, research by the University of Edinburgh has shown that mothers becoming infected with COVID-19 in pregnancy is associated with [increased risk of stillbirth or neonatal death](#).

Trauma and loss

Whilst we are not aware of separate figures being available for Scotland, [over 12,000 children across the UK](#) are estimated to have lost a primary care giver due to Covid-19. Others will have lost other family members, friends and/or key workers who provide them with support. Losing a parent or carer is one of [the Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\)](#) that childhood adversity and trauma research shows can potentially impact children's long-term health and life outcomes.

We would encourage the Committee to engage with the Scottish Government's Trauma, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Resilience Unit to gather evidence on the scale of children affected by bereavement in Scotland as a result of Covid-19.

The right to the best health possible

- **Hospitalisation during Covid-19 infection** – [Over 2,300](#) children have been hospitalised with Covid-19 in Scotland. Paediatric ICU data are unavailable.
- **Longer-term health impacts of Covid-19 infection in children** – The scale of Long Covid amongst children and young people is still unknown, with research estimates for post-Covid symptoms varying between 1% and 50% of children and young people who have been infected with the SARS_CoV_2. Preliminary data from the world's largest [study](#) on Long Covid in children and young people (CLoCK Study) estimates that up to [1 in 7 \(14%\)](#) children and young people infected with SARS_CoV_2 will develop Long Covid.

Long Covid Kids is currently co-producing and inputting PPI with researchers from University College London and Public Health England to better understand the prevalence of Long Covid in children and the impact it is having on their lives.

Families in our group report a wide range of concerning multi-organ symptoms ranging from relatively mild symptoms to life changing, debilitating illnesses and disabilities which affect the child's ability to engage in every-day activities, including the ability to access education. Many are struggling to access appropriate services and support. Some of the children and young people have been unable to return to in-person or full-time education as a result of their illness.

In your Inquiry report, we noticed that you raised concerns about the increase in demand for support for children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) in schools during Covid-19. Our experience of supporting families who have children with Long Covid suggests that this issue is likely to grow as more children develop Long Covid. A number of families in our support groups, who previously had no need for ASN support for their child, are now having to try and access ASN support due to the problems arising from Long Covid.

The right to access good quality healthcare and other services

High quality services require strong workforces. Many health, social care and education services, which children and young people rely on, have faced additional significant workforce challenges over the past two years. Ongoing high case rate levels have caused staff to be absent due to Covid-19 (either because they are ill themselves, they have to provide care to a child or adult with Covid-19 or they are self-isolating after being a close contact). Some staff are experiencing burn-out and staff wellbeing is a growing concern. Furthermore, ONS estimates show that Long Covid is now disproportionately affecting people in particular occupations. The [most recent estimates](#) suggest that the prevalence of self-reported Long Covid is greatest in those working in health care, social care, teaching and education. We are keen to understand the longer-term impacts this may have on the workforce for key services that children and young people require. We also have concerns about the lack of specific services available to support children and young people affected by Long Covid in Scotland.

We would like to understand why the Committee has not included the above impacts in the Inquiry. Given the potentially large impact that these will collectively have on children and young people in Scotland, we would urge the Committee to incorporate them into your future work planning, to rapidly conduct further inquiries into the impact of Covid-19 on children's rights and to involve children, young people and families in your evidence gathering.

We support the Committee's recommendations around the need for contingency planning and updated scenario planning with regard to the emergence of further Covid-19 variants to ensure the continuity of education and services. We would also encourage the Committee to be stronger in its recommendations, and recommend that the Scottish Government responds to the [World Health Organisation's call to action](#) to protect children and young people from Covid-19 and that the Scottish Government follows [WHO and UNICEF recommendations around making schools safer](#).

If we do not put appropriate multi-layered protections in place to drive case rates down and reduce the spread of the virus, WHO has made it clear that we increase the risk of further variants arising and that many more children and young people will sadly be further impacted by Covid-19 over the coming months and years. We believe the Committee can and should play a key role in calling for the Scottish Government to follow WHO advice and take preventative action to guard against further harm to children and young people arising from both current and future variants.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Goss

Long Covid Kids

Lead Representative for Scotland