

“It’s quite clear now that they were pursuing herd immunity to the infection to begin with”

SafeEdForAll group speak out about the campaign for safe schools in the UK

Our reporter
14 July 2021

Sarah Saul and Daniella Modus are two of the founders of the SafeEdForAll (Safe Education For All) website and blog. The site was established in “November 2020 by a group of parents who recently met online, sharing a strong concern about the lack of Covid19 safety in schools.”

The two parents have helped establish a network supporting parents and teachers who have fought to reveal the truth about school infections during the pandemic. Their principled approach to following the science has led to them making freedom of information (FOI) requests to expose the lies of the Conservative government.

In challenging the government on its criminal policies, the campaign has requested the support of Labour MPs and trade unions. The requests were refused by both.

Sarah and Daniella spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* about their experiences.

Q: How and why did you start up the group?

Sarah: We are teachers and parents, most of us were following Parents United and had different views to the way that group was going, as it very much focused on the situation of high needs children and clinically vulnerable children.

We weren’t afraid to stand up to people and call people out for what they were doing. We called ourselves rebel fighters. We were forthright in how we were acting.

We thought it would only be a couple of weeks, but we are still here. Daniella is the only person in the whole country who has bothered to collect the data on case numbers in schools. Daniella has done this without any resources and is disabled herself.

Daniella: I started compiling school data because parents were coming to me saying that they had not been informed by the schools of what is happening. So, I decided to speak out and try to get parents to message me the school letters of every school, so I could list on a weekly basis how many

were affected. I have been doing this since March 8 and it’s just incredible. Near enough 600 educational settings in the week of June 28 recorded having cases.

WSWS: What are you aiming to achieve through your website?

Sarah: We are urging parents to work collectively, sending letters to ministers. We are trying to raise awareness. We are taking every opportunity with radio and media to try and get the narrative away from the polarised debate of open schools/close schools because it should never have been that, and into: why are children being treated differently? Because the data isn’t showing that it is affecting them differently. Children now are being infected and affected in the same way that a 30 or 40-year-old would be. Yes, their risk of death might be lower, significantly lower than the older age groups. However, there are chances of mutations happening, there is the chance of hospitalisation and the chances of having Long Covid are not completely different.

Danielle: The social situation has been exacerbated by Covid.

Sarah: Yes, all of the social inequalities were already there, all of those awful things that were happening in society, deprivation, the neglect and lots of other things were always there. Those of us that have children in education or work in education know that. However, to use this now to insist that children must be sent into unsafe schools as they have missed education is weaponising their fate as a reason for not doing what is right, for not protecting those who can’t speak for themselves.

You have this very British exceptionalism ideology going on here. The decision is that our children can’t wear masks. They’re doing this quite successfully in many other countries around the world through the same age groups!

WSWS: What do you think of the government’s handling of the pandemic?

Daniella: It's a scandal!

Sarah: I think it's quite clear now that they were pursuing herd immunity to the infection to begin with. We've all seen and heard Boris Johnson saying, "You've got to take it on the chin", we all know those phrases. We've all seen the [former adviser to Johnson, Dominic] Cummings whiteboard, "Who shall we not save". We all know that that was their original intention. And the only explanation for what they've done with schools is that they wanted to infect as many people as possible in the lower risk categories. That is not acceptable as far as most socially responsible people feel, because there are too many unknowns with that. It's a novel virus.

WSWS: On your website you have organised a Freedom of Information request on the clinical trial of ending isolation.

Sarah: Yes, the test was run at our children's school. The whole school was a control group. We weren't told prior to the trial what was taking place. Parents' permission wasn't obtained to keep their child in a class with a close contact who had covid, there was no consent to this.

Sarah explained that the trial ended on June 26 having started nine weeks earlier.

Sarah: It was then announced that schools were going to stop isolation. How can you call that a trial? Nine weeks? Where is the analysis? Where is the peer review and where is the information? This was very similar to what the government have done for the trials of the impact of sporting events. There is no transparency. People should be asking questions."

WSWS: The official death toll is now over 150,000 due to the actions of the government. What do you make of the lack of information about how many educators have become ill and died?

Sarah: There is a Twitter page started not so long ago. There are 570 education staff that have died so far that we can find information on. It's called UK Memorial. We post things there. Why isn't that being done by the unions, or by the department for education? Why is it being hidden? They might argue we are not hiding it, we are just not highlighting it because it's alarmist or something. Well, those people need to be remembered. We need to know that so many people have lost their lives.

WSWS: The unions didn't even raise about teacher deaths at their annual conferences in March. What do you think of their actions?

Daniella: I think it is diabolical that they haven't even gone on strike. Not even in January at the peak. To get to that peak of so many children being infected, and workers. How can they say they are protecting their members? They're not. Why not draw attention to Section 44 [of the

Employment Rights Act under which workers can invoke their right to a safe workplace] before January 5? Why not earlier on in December? Or before that?

Sarah: Before schools went back in September [2020], they saw what the government guidance was, so why not strike? They should be saying, "It's not just about the children, lets focus on the adults and their families, we are going to protect them. It's not right and until the same scientifically recognised mitigations are in place in schools as in other indoor workplaces then we don't recommend that you turn up for work."

They have done none of that. They've written very strongly worded letters, they've had strong arguments with the Department for Education [DfE], but it's not enough. We are now at the end of a full academic year and nothing has changed. Are they going to do something for September? Or are they going to just sit back and see what happens again?

WSWS: The unions were never going to take action. The National Education Union had a petition with over 500,000 signatures of parents and educators back in March 2020. They had the support and chose not to mobilise it. It's down to groups like yourself and the Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee to act.

Sarah: We are at the stage now where a few groups who have joined together are exploring taking legal action against the DfE. To do that, we've already been told the huge amount that we'd need in order to start the barristers on the judicial review. It is £10-£13,000. The only way we can raise that money is by putting a crowd funding for justice together. The unions do have a lot of money, they could be doing this. We are at the stage where we have *had* to take that step. We are in discussion with a legal firm who are willing to look at it, but it still costs money to even get someone to look at it, never mind starting to prepare a case and issue pre-action letters. Those kinds of things that we are now doing, a whole academic year on, why weren't they done from the beginning, from before last September when the guidance was issued? Why weren't the unions saying: "This isn't acceptable, this is going to unnecessarily increase infection to our workers, and we are not going to put up with it." It shouldn't have been left to people like us to do this.

To join the Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee [click here.](#)



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