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## **UK parent calls for children to be taken out of unsafe schools**

**Evan Blake**  
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*This is the fourth in a series of interviews with UK parents and educators opposed to the reckless reopening of schools. Part 1 is here, Part 2 is here and Part 3 is here. We urge all parents, educators and workers seeking to organise opposition to this homicidal policy to join and build the Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committees in the UK and internationally.*

Leah, a parent of two young children, spoke to the WSWS about her family’s experiences during the pandemic. She is a member of the parents’ advocacy group SafeEdForAll (Safe Education For All).

“My family’s personal pandemic story is long-winded, but briefly we were infected in February 2020, before it all kicked off. We pulled our kids out of school long before lockdown. The kids returned for four days in September 2020, but we pulled them out as soon as they fell ill with another virus. It took 11 days to secure a COVID PCR test!

“We fought the school and the local authority. We were fined in October 2020 but refused to pay with help from Public Interest Law Centre.

“In January, 2021, after the reopening fiasco, the head teacher at my children’s school revoked the fine retrospectively, issued 100 percent attendance and supported our remote learning.

“This is not the end of story, as we were suffering Long COVID. My children, 5 and 8 years of age, had been suffering bouts of illness over lockdown consistent with Long COVID. We hid our initial

infection, fearing implied immunity would be used to force attendance. Unfortunately, my 8-year-old daughter has only worsened. She has been diagnosed with CFS/ME [chronic fatigue syndrome/myalgic encephalopathy] and CPS [chronic pain syndrome] and she couldn’t now return to school even if it was safe.”

Asked about the UK-wide reopening of schools from this week, in the middle of a surge in the pandemic, Leah said, “In the UK it’s currently terrifying. Our schools are going ahead with reopening with infection rates that would put any other sensible country into lockdown. New rules mean close contacts of confirmed infected people can go about their business if they are double jabbed or under 18. Schools will have no mitigations for an airborne virus in place and children will be able to attend even if their household is currently infected! Children’s attendance in school is mandatory and enforced with fines and prison sentences of up to three months. I’m sure the rest of the world must be watching with horror! The UK has a total of 322 PICU [Paediatric Intensive Care Unit] beds. It’s going to be carnage.”

Leah urged readers to “look into the disinformation spread by UsForThem and the HART [Health Advisory & Recovery Team] group,” both right-wing organisations arguing for the full reopening of schools while minimizing the effects of COVID-19 on children. “They’ve had the ears of our politicians since the start!”

Asked to comment on the role of the government, political parties and unions as well as the need to

organize independently via groups like SafeEdForAll, Leah said, “The whole current government are dirty. It’s clear they’ve taken influence from the Great Barrington Declaration lot. They have stripped the public coffers for a disastrous SERCO [private corporation] track and trace system and are set on an American-style public health system. I read that the National Health Service has dropped on the world stage [in international health service rankings] from 1st to 4th! It’s starved of staff and funding, many have not had routine access to care for chronic conditions for nearly 18 months. It’s basically a field hospital and it is close to capacity with many hospitals declaring black alerts.

“But government messaging is ‘all is well’ and sole reliance on the silver bullet of vaccination. Too many accept this on face value. Everyone is keen to get back to normal. The shielded are suffering the most. Trapped in isolation as very few venues/shops/public places have any meaningful mitigations in place or enforced. I believe this is by government design to bolster infection levels in the young and bring about herd immunity. It will be at great cost to many. Our government are reckless. Knowingly and willingly exposing the youngest to infection and imprisoning the vulnerable by exclusion. It’s the Great Barrington Declaration in full effect.

“Our groups have contacted just about every MP [Member of Parliament], prominent personalities, reporters, school governors, teaching staff we can think of. We’re making waves but are repeatedly fobbed off. It’s clear that government policy is #DontMentionTheSchools.

“Unions have made some big gestures and are asking for the changes needed, but when government dismisses their calls for action, the unions proceed no further. They need to ballot to strike. They need to level with their members on what great risk they are at.

“All that parents have left is #parentStrike. And numbers were low last time.” This was a reference to the attempt by parents to organize a strike last November that was opposed and boycotted by the trade unions.

On the economic and class issues surrounding school reopenings and the pandemic policies of the ruling elites, Leah said, “It’s clear this will disproportionately affect the poorest in our communities. Those on lowest

income less likely to have the means and support to isolate, more likely to mix with more of the public, more likely to work when infected, more likely to need childcare in the education system. Very few vulnerable children have access to vaccines [they have been allowed for the clinically extremely vulnerable 12-15 only recently], most are unable to secure appointments.

“More affluent members of society are far less likely to be as exposed. Private schools, favoured by MPs, have mitigations in place and were able to enable distance learning. State schools were not authorised to close and sanctioned when they did. They [the private schools] also have good mitigations in place and smaller class sizes. Boarding schools are well isolated ‘bubbles’. Outbreaks in the schools were managed quickly and effectively.

“Our SafeEdforAll page has details of Freedom of Information requests on outbreaks in specific schools showing alarmingly high numbers. There is a distinct disparity between the ruling class’s children’s learning environment and those on low incomes.”



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