

Participant 6

I: on record you give me permission to record you?

P6: yes.

I: Who lives in the family/household?

P: my husband and I sleep in the main bedroom. Then we have 3 boys in one room, the three small girls in one bedroom. The oldest boy in his own room.

I: Can you share with me what you feel were some of the biggest changes that you had to deal with during the COVID-19 pandemic?

P: Yes, the especially the time that nobody was able to go anywhere we needed to work very hard to keep the children busy. It took a lot of work to develop skills, to each child with their different grades at school. Because the school work became home work, and the home work was also home work. It really was a complicated situation.

I: How did the adults care for the children needs during this time?

P: I don't think that any household. To not be allowed to go somewhere was hard. Our children are used to go to parks. We normally take them places outside where they can run and kick ball. And that completely changed. My husband and me, we tried to keep everything in the house as normal as possible. What we have done for example, we brought in a tuck shop, like one they have at school. And then they earned points. And with their point they were able to buy something at the tuck shop. They earned points for extra work done, or a room that was very neat and so on. And every second day the Tuck shop was open. We found that it helped for the children to be less frustrated. But it was difficult to have so many children and you have to stay at home. We also came up with a lot of projects to do together. For example we made a painting out of everyone's hand prints. That painting is now in the house as a reminder that we didn't go anywhere but we survived.

I: Can you tell me how you and your family cared for the children in the household during the COVID-19 pandemic

I: Please tell me how routines and responsibilities changed

P: we really tried to keep everything the same as possible. This is because we have an autistic child in our house. So you can not make big changes to his routine. For the older children we gave more space regarding bed time and waking up time. It depended on school work and so on. But yes, we gave some room on some rules, as the

circumstances was difficult for everyone. One thing that worked out so perfectly is we were able to potty train our youngest child, as we did not go anywhere.

I: How did you feel about all the changes in the caring of the children?

P: it was definitely harder than usual. Because normally you would wake up, get the children ready for school, take them to school. Then I had a few moments to myself and to get my own things done. That was not there anymore. Something such as cleaning the house was terrible. There was never enough time for someone not being somewhere in the house for it not to be a mess. So many times I was really overwhelmed. So yes, it had a lot of challenges. Even just buying groceries was an uphill battle. Because you weren't able to just go anywhere anytime of the day. And with so many children, there is constantly something needed. We did try to buy some things in bulk, to make the process of making food easier. But what it really made it difficult for us, was my husband got covid 19, and it was needed to isolate him. So he lived in one part of the house and the rest of us lived in the other half of the house. So that was terrible. Because the younger children did not understand why they were not able to go and see dad. And why he was excluded from the family. It was only me that went into the room, and then I wore all the protective things I needed to. And then when I came out I showered before the children was allowed to come near me. These were very difficult times, but luckily no one else in our house got sick. My husband got sick a second time, but we only found out that it was covid after he was well again. Our autistic child has Asma as well, so we were very worried about him getting sick.

I: Who did you ask or go to for help and/or who offered help to you during the COVID-19 pandemic?

P: J and R. my brother and his wife. Without a doubt. We video called a lot. We were used to see each other everyday. So it was difficult not to physically see each other everyday. We also have another friend that is a priest. I felt very sorry for him, as he lived alone, but we can frequent contact with him as well. We also helped each other with new ideas, if someone was able to think of something nice to do with the children, we shared our ideas. it was helpful to keep other motivated and positive.

I: How did you keep in touch with extended family, friends, neighbours, church, or religious support?

P: telephonic calls, and video calls. We had wifi so that also helped with staying on contact.

I: How did your children understand COVID-19? (What did it mean to them? How did they make sense of it?)

P: It was amazing for us to see how adaptable the children are. The children adapted much easier as the adults to the new rules. Because, the first time that they could go to school, I was extremely worried. The children was very excited that they could go back to school. The school send us videos on how the children was doing and that helped us to know that they were okay. The smallest children did not really understand what was going on anyway. The bigger children saw it as a holiday. But being at home resulted for the children, being frustrated and to fight with each other. What really helped was, once a week we held a family meeting. So everybody got a chance to say what their feeling are about anything that was going on. It did felt at time that I went to the bathroom just to get 5 minuets of quiet time.

I: Who did your children speak to about their feelings during COVID?

P: so they liked to talk to J and R, my brother and sister in law, and they also talked to our pastor friend. That it why it was important for us to have these meetings once a week, where everybody got a chance to say what they want and the others need to listen. These meetings also was a safe place, where nobody attacked anybody if you are not likening what is said. And also the children was not allowed to say nasty and ugly things towards each other. The pastor, did check in with the older children on their phones, and that helped a lot. They would also talk to him easier that they would have with us.

I: One of the biggest things that changed for children, was when they had to school from home. Can you share how your child may have experienced this? (What was challenging? What did they enjoy about this? Were they able to keep up with the work?) Please motivate your answer.

P: I think, the children liked it. They were able to see their friends again. He even said he would like to go to school everyday. But our other child was not in the mood for school. So he didn't like going back. But our school did not go on very long with this one day going ad one day staying situation.

I: How did you and the family cope with having to monitor and supervise the children's schooling during this time? (What was

challenging? What worked well? How did you have to adapt your household to accommodate schooling and working from home?)

P: this was the biggest challenge. So each child was a part of a whatsapp group. It helped, because the group helped me make sure that we actually did everything, but it also happened that I have missed a message here and there. I don't know how that happened but it did. But then I got a book for each child. And if there is a message coming in I would write in the book together with the due date. So that system made it much easier for me. So if we were done with something, I would tick it off. So it was easier for me to keep up. But I also have to say, the teachers were very nice with us. They helped us and gave more time if we have missed something. I think it was difficult because our children are wide spread between the grade and no one's work was the same. Or on the same level.

I: Do you think your child missed out on anything during the COVID-19 pandemic? Can you please explain further? (Aspects such as not being able to play with friends; extramural/cultural activities, not being able to see extended family, such as grandparents and/or cousins could be included)

P: yes. On a lot. Sport was definitely one. Our son that loved playing rugby, missed out for one whole year, and he is someone that needs to be busy. Then the interaction between friends is something they missed out on. Our children missed out on being together with friends and family on birthdays. So yes, I really think they missed out on a lot of activities.

I: Were they able to keep in touch with their friends from school and how were they able to do so?

P: a lot of my children were small, so they did not call each other. One of my children had a friend, that sent a message now and then, but not frequently.

I: Did the behaviour of the child or children change during the COVID-19 pandemic? If so, please explain.

P: with our autistic child. Yes definitely. He isolated himself a lot. He needed to work very hard to stay calm. And not being overwhelmed. There were times that he really did not cope, but we were able to deal with it. His behaviours are usually sleeping the whole day, or extreme screaming. But it can be anything. He will sit outside in the rain.

I: Please describe your family's financial position during the COVID-19 pandemic

P: our financial position was normal. Because my husband was able to work from home. The only thing that we experienced was donations that completely stopped.

I: Please elaborate on how the COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted your family's financial position (such as financial difficulties; how and where you coped and/or found support) and how these may have impacted the child/children and caring for them.

P: when we started to see the effect of covid, we immediately started to try and save, and we did not buy a lot of luxuries, and we made sure that no food was wasted. We tried to make provision for the more difficult days.

I: What did you struggle with in terms of resources

P: no. not really.

I: If there were difficulties, what were the main things that were lacking (such as enough food and necessities; technology for the children's learning or entertainment; resources that the children usually received at school such as school feeding)

P: no

I: What were your worries or concerns about these difficulties, especially in relation to the children?

P: we worried about the children's development. With so many children we were not sure if we were able to help everyone as much as they needed it. Especially for the younger ones. I was not sure if I am looking at the correct thing when they write for example. So I always wondered if they are progressing as they should. I tried to do my own research on how things should be done, or I always followed the teacher advice.

I: How did the children feel about or cope with these difficulties

P: no not that I know of. I don't think they really understood covid and what the impact can be. The older children enjoyed it not to go to school. C was scared of covid. As he knew he can get very very sick if he gets covid.

Please describe the employment situation of yourself and the rest of your household during the COVID-19 pandemic

I work from home anyway. My husband needed to work from home for the first time. But this was a challenge by itself, as the many children makes a lot of noise. But usually when he was busy with work I tried to keep the children busy with some kind of art and craft project. Although it did not always worked, we tried.

Please elaborate on changes, difficulties, or positive factors (such as loss of work, working from home, changes in working hours) and how these may have impacted the child/children and caring for them

The worst thing was the family and friends who died, and that could not have get back to normal when everything was over.