

HEADLINERS

Children dealing with conflict

Teenagers can have some surprising views about how they think war with Iraq will reflect children and young people in Britain.

War makes adults feel vulnerable and afraid. But what does it do to children? Childrens' Express asked young people for their thoughts and fears.

I know war will affect young people and children but not in the way most of us think it will. Youngsters will cope with war a lot better than adults think. They will not be scared or terrified because children grow up a lot faster than they used to. We are stronger and very resilient, and have a lot more responsibilities at a younger age than children would have had in the past.

Brooke-Leigh Wright, 14, Rotherham

Tony Blair thinks we'll be alright if we know what's going on in the world instead of being kept in the dark.. But we're not. Some adults can cope with a war. Children can't. There's already nerves and pressures on them like starting a new school, fitting in, being 'in' with the crowd - as if that's not scary enough for them. Then there's the worry of 'Will I die?' That's everyone's question.

Jodie Mitchell, 15, Shiregreen

Young people will be affected by war with Iraq because young people want to live in peace. War will cause division and hate between young people from different races and this will have a negative outcome. Young people will then grow up with that same hate and division. It will lead to a dark and sad future. War will harm relations between the different communities in Britain because the majority of the British population is against war. It will create a lot of difference between extremists on both sides.

Omar Mohammed, 15, Firth Park

The war could change the lives of thousands of people all over the world. I, for one, am deeply disappointed by the vague, flippant remarks made by British citizens. As a community, it seems that the general feeling is that the war is nothing to do with us despite the number of ships carrying our very own British soldiers to the Gulf. Everyone in Iraq is a human being, just like everyone else in the world. Why should there be a war on Iraq when the only given reason is to stop one person?

Wei Jun Chung, 15, Bents Green

Leaders seem to have forgotten that war doesn't involve just material objects such as nuclear weapons, but, more importantly, countless billions of people. These leaders do not think about the irreparable after-effects on human beings.

We have already seen the results of prejudice towards Asian/Muslim communities post 9/11, and do not want a repeat performance of the many bloody attacks upon peaceful Muslim civilians. Surely the government should have learned something from all those horrifically killed and shell-shocked participants in the Gulf War.

As long as we remain wrapped up in our bubble of an affluent, somewhat powerful Western country, the vague possibility of a dirty bomb at Heathrow won't damage our psyches half as much as if we were Iraqi citizens, who had just lost their families due to an 'accidentally' mis-aimed Daisycutter.

Saarah Choudhury, 17, Woodseats

To assume war would not affect me would be very naïve. Even with the best possible outcome - a short campaign with few casualties - the issue involves everyone. No war has really touched my life; with just a few blurry images of victims in far off lands, young people could be forgiven for feeling quite safe in our cosy old country.

But I think since September 11, these views are changing - we are beginning to see just how much pain and death war can cause. In such a global conflict as this one, maybe a third world war is not as unlikely as we would like to believe.

Lucy Taylor, 15, Bradway

Some young people will be untouched by the whole problem. I do think that some will be upset, angry and confused. Young people aren't normally into politics and watching the news, therefore I feel that going to war will make young people want to know why. They will want answers and in a lot of cases are going to be scared.

War equals death; death scares a lot of people, including me. Young people will be afraid of Iraq retaliating and attacking us with their hidden weapons. There is going to be a lot of upset and anguish if we go to war, and young people are going to need support and reassurance from close friends and family.

Laura Smith, 15, Wincobank

Much as I would like to say that it has made me spend more quality time with my family, and to value my friends more, it hasn't. Neither has it made me consider the lives of those children in Iraq who will be orphaned and starving if war begins. It sounds callous, but they are too far away from my life to seem real to me. Sorry.

On the other hand, the other week I went paintballing, and we played "war games". We hid behind big drums and boards and shot at each other and tried to get to the other side of the room. Let me tell you, paintballs hurt. I sat there, breathing hard, and I could not move for fear. It was too real. That's how war affects me.

Jennifer Matthews, 17, Beighton

Someone needs to come into schools and do talks to help educate youth as to the reasons for war because right now it all seems a little hazy. With so much

violence in media at the moment, it is really worrying that the gun culture is growing. But all the while children are being told 'It's just a film, it doesn't happen like that in real life' when people are just going round shooting other people. And yet now we're contemplating taking large nuclear bombs half way across the world to drop on thousands of innocent Iraqis. How is that supposed to give teens the image that guns are wrong?

Holly Gillway, 14, Beauchief

About the team

This story was produced by members of the Children's Express Sheffield bureau. A slightly shorter version was published in the [Sheffield Star](#).

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