Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Wednesday 13 October 2021 at 1.30 pm

To be held at the Town Hall, Pinstone Street, Sheffield, S1 2HH

The Press and Public are Welcome to Attend

Membership

Councillors Mick Rooney (Chair), Maroof Raouf (Deputy Chair), Mike Chaplin, Anne Murphy, Vickie Priestley, Kaltum Rivers, Safiya Saeed, Jack Scott, Richard Shaw, Sophie Wilson, Ann Whitaker, Cliff Woodcraft and Ann Woolhouse

Education Non-Council Members
Alison Warner, Sam Evans, Peter Naldrett, Vacancy and Vacancy

Healthwatch Sheffield
Alice Riddell (Observer)

Substitute Members
In accordance with the Constitution, Substitute Members may be provided for the above Committee Members as and when required.

Sheffield
City Council

PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE MEETING

The Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny Committee exercises an overview and scrutiny function in respect of the planning, policy development and monitoring of service performance and other general issues relating to learning and attainment and the care of children and young people within the Children's Services area of Council activity. It also scrutinises as appropriate the various local Health Services functions, with particular reference to those relating to the care of children.

A copy of the agenda and reports is available on the Council's website at www.sheffield.gov.uk. You can also see the reports to be discussed at the meeting if you call at the First Point Reception, Town Hall, Pinstone Street entrance. The Reception is open between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm, Monday to Thursday and between 9.00 am and 4.45 pm. You may not be allowed to see some reports because they contain confidential information. These items are usually marked * on the agenda.

Members of the public have the right to ask questions or submit petitions to Scrutiny Committee meetings and recording is allowed under the direction of the Chair. Please see the website or contact Democratic Services for further information regarding public questions and petitions and details of the Council's protocol on audio/visual recording and photography at council meetings.

Scrutiny Committee meetings are normally open to the public but sometimes the Committee may have to discuss an item in private. If this happens, you will be asked to leave. Any private items are normally left until last. If you would like to attend the meeting please report to the First Point Reception desk where you will be directed to the meeting room.

If you require any further information about this Scrutiny Committee, please contact Alice Nicholson, Policy and Improvement Officer on 0114 27 35065 or email alice.nicholson@sheffield.gov.uk

FACILITIES

There are public toilets available, with wheelchair access, on the ground floor of the Town Hall. Induction loop facilities are available in meeting rooms.

Access for people with mobility difficulties can be obtained through the ramp on the side to the main Town Hall entrance.

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILY SUPPORT SCRUTINY AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AGENDA
13 OCTOBER 2021

Order of Business

1.   Welcome and Housekeeping Arrangements

2.   Apologies for Absence

3.   Exclusion of Public and Press
To identify items where resolutions may be moved to exclude the press and public

6.   Public Questions and Petitions
To receive any questions or petitions from members of the public

     (a) Introductory report of the Policy and Improvement Officer

     (b) Report of the Task and Finish Group – January 2021 - Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Young People in Sheffield

     (c) Sheffield City Council Education and Skills Report on the Survey of Young People's Experience of the Covid-19 Pandemic – July 2021

9.   Date of Next Meeting
The next meeting of the Committee will be held on

Wednesday, 24th November, 2021, at 1.00 pm, in the Town Hall

ADVICE TO MEMBERS ON DECLARING INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

If you are present at a meeting of the Council, of its executive or any committee of the executive, or of any committee, sub-committee, joint committee, or joint sub-committee of the authority, and you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest** (DPI) relating to any business that will be considered at the meeting, you must <u>not</u>:

- participate in any discussion of the business at the meeting, or if you become aware of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interest during the meeting, participate further in any discussion of the business, or
- participate in any vote or further vote taken on the matter at the meeting.

These prohibitions apply to any form of participation, including speaking as a member of the public.

You **must**:

- leave the room (in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct)
- make a verbal declaration of the existence and nature of any DPI at any meeting at which you are present at which an item of business which affects or relates to the subject matter of that interest is under consideration, at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent.
- declare it to the meeting and notify the Council's Monitoring Officer within 28 days, if the DPI is not already registered.

If you have any of the following pecuniary interests, they are your **disclosable pecuniary interests** under the new national rules. You have a pecuniary interest if you, or your spouse or civil partner, have a pecuniary interest.

- Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain, which you, or your spouse or civil partner undertakes.

- Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from your council or authority) made or provided within the relevant period* in respect of any expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

  *The relevant period is the 12 months ending on the day when you tell the Monitoring Officer about your disclosable pecuniary interests.

- Any contract which is made between you, or your spouse or your civil partner (or a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest) and your council or authority –

  - under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and
  - which has not been fully discharged.

1

- Any beneficial interest in land which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, have and which is within the area of your council or authority.

- Any licence (alone or jointly with others) which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, holds to occupy land in the area of your council or authority for a month or longer.

- Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) –
  - the landlord is your council or authority; and
  - the tenant is a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest.

- Any beneficial interest which you, or your spouse or your civil partner has in securities of a body where -

  (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of your council or authority; and

  (b) either -
    - the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or
    - if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

If you attend a meeting at which any item of business is to be considered and you are aware that you have a **personal interest** in the matter which does not amount to a DPI, you must make verbal declaration of the existence and nature of that interest at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent. You should leave the room if your continued presence is incompatible with the 7 Principles of Public Life (selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; and leadership).

You have a personal interest where –

- a decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing (including interests in land and easements over land) of you or a member of your family or a person or an organisation with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the Council Tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which you have been elected or otherwise of the Authority's administrative area, or

- it relates to or is likely to affect any of the interests that are defined as DPIs but are in respect of a member of your family (other than a partner) or a person with whom you have a close association.

2

Guidance on declarations of interest, incorporating regulations published by the Government in relation to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, has been circulated to you previously.

You should identify any potential interest you may have relating to business to be considered at the meeting. This will help you and anyone that you ask for advice to fully consider all the circumstances before deciding what action you should take.

In certain circumstances the Council may grant a **dispensation** to permit a Member to take part in the business of the Authority even if the member has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest relating to that business.

To obtain a dispensation, you must write to the Monitoring Officer at least 48 hours before the meeting in question, explaining why a dispensation is sought and desirable, and specifying the period of time for which it is sought. The Monitoring Officer may consult with the Independent Person or the Council's Audit and Standards Committee in relation to a request for dispensation.

Further advice can be obtained from Gillian Duckworth, Director of Legal and Governance on 0114 2734018 or email gillian.duckworth@sheffield.gov.uk.

This page is intentionally left blank

S H E F F I E L D   C I T Y   C O U N C I L

Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 25 February 2021

(NOTE: This meeting was held as a remote meeting in accordance with the provisions of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.)

PRESENT: Councillors Mick Rooney (Chair), Mike Levery (Deputy Chair), Mike Chaplin, Francyne Johnson, Anne Murphy, Joe Otten, Kevin Oxley, Colin Ross, Jack Scott, Jim Steinke, Alison Teal, Garry Weatherall, Sophie Wilson and Cliff Woodcraft

Non-Council Members in attendance:-

Alison Warner, (School Governor Representative - Non-Council Non-Voting Member)
Sam Evans, (Diocese Representative - Non-Council Voting Member)

....

1.   APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1   Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Alan Law, and from Peter Naldrett (Parent Governor Representative - Non-Council Voting Member) and Alice Riddell (Healthwatch Sheffield, Observer).

2.   EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1   No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3.   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1   There were no declarations of interest.

4.   ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

4.1   The Committee received a report of the Director of Education and Skills on the Council's response to children who are being electively home educated and setting out the issues presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.2   Present for this item were Councillor Jackie Drayton (Cabinet Member for Children and Families), Andrew Jones (Director of Education and Skills) and Rosemary Ward (Interim Head of Service - Access and Inclusion).

4.3   Andrew Jones, as an introduction, reported that the pandemic had resulted in a significant increase in the number of children being electively home educated, mainly due to concerns regarding Covid-19 infection rates. Rosemary Ward introduced the report, which set out information on the Department for Education (DfE) guidance for elective home education, and detailed the Council's duties in line with such guidance. Ms Ward also reported on the changes made in the light of the pandemic, as well as the proposed arrangements in the event of the likely increase in cases where parents wanted to send their children back to school when the pandemic came to an end.

4.4   Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- Once parents had removed their children from a school, the Council was no longer responsible for facilitating their access to examinations. Therefore, further to the recent Government announcement on teacher assessments in terms of examination grades, it would not be possible for home educated children to receive such assessments. When parents elected to remove their children from school, they would be contacted by an officer from the Access and Inclusion Service, who would explain the implications of their decision.

- The Council would always try and find the reasons why parents opted to educate their children at home, and whilst there was an awareness of a number of conspiracy theories regarding the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst the Council would continue to listen out for any news regarding such conspiracy theories, it had not been able to find any links regarding the reasons provided.

- When the Council was attempting to follow DfE national guidance, it was not able to customise the Service to work in partnership with the relevant agencies and services in the city, which had resulted in some confusion as to which organisations were doing what in terms of adhering to its statutory duties. The Council's current policy which, whilst still adhering to national guidance, was now much clearer, and sets out how the Council was addressing its statutory duties, as well as introducing more transparency. The new policy also helped to tighten the arrangements in terms of the safeguarding of those children educated at home, which had been highlighted as a concern given the recent national safeguarding cases.

- During the lockdown, the Council was making every effort to contact parents to ensure that they felt adequately supported and that they had all the necessary information to enable them to access any agencies or services relevant to their needs, as well as to check on the children's social and emotional wellbeing. Additional staff had been recruited to the Service for this purpose.

- The Council was very reliant on parents providing their reasons for educating

their children at home. Prior to the pandemic, the two main reasons parents had provided were anxiety in terms of their children attending school and Special Educational Needs (SEN). Since the pandemic, there had been a slight change in that Covid was now the main reason, followed by anxiety and SEN. A large number of parents chose not to inform the Council of their reasons.

- The Council was well aware of the rise in cases of domestic abuse, and the likelihood of home educated children being affected. In terms of safeguarding arrangements, the Council would maintain regular contact with families home educating, and would identify the level of risk in such households, based on the circumstances of how and why the children had been withdrawn from school. The Council would also review any historical information it had on the families. In those circumstances where issues were identified, the level of contact with the families would be increased to ensure that the parents felt as though they were being supported, and that they were aware of all the relevant agencies and services they could access. In those cases where the Council received information from the public regarding possible safeguarding concerns, the issue would be referred to to the Safeguarding Hub, and a decision would then be taken, in collaboration with other relevant Council Services, as to what the response to the family should be. There were a number of people who, themselves, had suffered domestic abuse, working with families, and there were also a number of other services, both in-house and commissioned, including a Parenting Team, the Haven Project and the Multi-Agency Support Teams (MAST), as well as other social care and inclusion offers.

- There was a three-month agreement with parents whereby they could return their children to the school they had been withdrawn from within this time if they found that home education was not working for any reason. The Council was aware of those SEN children being educated at home, both those on Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC) and those on SEN support, and discussions were held with the families with regard to their education. Those children on an EHC plan would still have their annual review, and the Service would work with the Inclusion and Attendance Team to look at whether the parents wanted their children to return to school, and provide relevant support in terms of the transition. When parents expressed an interest for their children to return to school after the three-month period, every effort would still be made to find a place at the school which they had been withdrawn from, and where this was not possible, support and advice would be provided in terms of finding an alternative school. Meetings were held with those parents and children who had expressed an interest in elective home education, at which the rules in respect of the three-month timescale, as well as all the other rules and implications, were explained to them. The Children Missing from Education Team would also contact the parents when they had been notified of the withdrawal, to discuss the options and implications with them. In addition, it would be referred to the Multi Agency Support Team (MAST) who, again, would discuss the options and implications with the family. Furthermore, it would be referred to the

Elective Home Education Advisor, who would discuss the education aspects with the family. In the light of an expected increase in the numbers of children wanting to return to school after the pandemic, officers had raised the issue of admissions with the DfE to see if any consideration could be given to amending the statutory guidelines.

- The Director of Education and Skills was a member of the Safeguarding Board, and reported issues regarding elective home education to the Board on a regular basis. The Director and the Chair of this Committee would write to David Ashcroft (Independent Chair of the Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership) requesting that the Safeguarding Board amends its remit with regard to elective home education.

- In terms of children entering home education at the present time, there was a large proportion of families who were sending back appropriate approaches to education. As from April 2019, when the DfE guidance had changed, the Council then requested updated curriculums used by parents when their children moved to another year group. However, currently, parents were not routinely submitting updated curriculums to the Council. Due to the concern over whether children were receiving an adequate education, the Council would pursue such families. There was a rigorous escalation process, which could result in parents being served with a School Attendance Order. The Service was also working with the Children and Family Service in terms of serving Education Supervision Orders on parents where there were specific causes for concern. Whilst there were no figures available in terms of the number of School Attendance Orders having been served, the Council would continue to strengthen the escalation process.

- Approval had been given for the recruitment of three additional members of staff in the Access and Inclusion Service, which would result in more capacity to ensure that more thorough checks could be made to ensure children were receiving an adequate education.

- It was acknowledged that elective home education could often be viewed as a very positive choice for some families, despite it often being regarded as negative. The Council therefore wanted to be able to support all families choosing this option, whilst working with them if there were any concerns.

- The Council was linked into several networks, and signposted families to those official networks, and which had been verified.

- There had been a significant rise, from September 2020, in the number of home educated children, with around 20-30 de-registrations from school a day around this time. The figures had reduced towards the end of 2020, and had stabilised in early 2021. Records showed that the numbers generally peaked after school holidays. Given the improving situation regarding the pandemic, particularly the success of the vaccination programme, it was envisaged that there could be a continuing drop in the numbers.

- In terms of the age breakdown of children being home educated, there was usually an increase when children started school in Y1 and Y2, and when moving from Y6 to Y7, and also around GCSE examinations, in Y9 and Y10.

- As the Council, historically, had not made regular checks on the quality of education children were receiving, it was not easy to confirm whether or not such education was adequate. However, following the change in DfE guidance, the Council was now required to make regular checks so this information would be available in the next few years.

- By the end of each school term, approximately a third of the children who had been withdrawn from school at the beginning of the term, had expressed a wish to return.

- All families opting to home educate their children were granted a six-week offer regarding access to relevant agencies or services, and asked that, at the end of this, they should be providing sufficient evidence to show that they were providing an adequate education for their children. The Council would then make a decision as to whether steps should be taken for the child to return to school, or be offered support to enable them to continue to be home educated.

- In the elective home educated cohort, 86 children were in Y11, therefore would not be receiving any teacher assessments in terms of their examination grades. The Service, however, would be offering careers advice to all these children, either in a group session or on a one-to-one basis, in connection with their post-16 options. All the children would also be granted access to Sheffield Progress, the website that all Sheffield school children had access to.

- As well as measuring the number of children who were receiving an effective home education, the Council also needed to track those children who were known to the various Council services, and the number of children who progressed to post-16 provision. A further measure included those families who chose to home educate their children for positive reasons, such as lifestyle.

- It was difficult to compare the standard of education received by children at school and that of children being educated at home as no pupil was statutorily obliged to sit formal examinations and some parents took this option. Officers would review the data held by the Service and include it in the paper to be circulated.

- The 652 children currently being home educated came from around 620 families, therefore there were very few parents educating more than one of their children at home. Some parents chose to home educate only one of their children.

4.5   RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

(a)   notes the information contained in the report now submitted, together with the information now reported and the responses to the questions raised;

(b)   thanks Councillor Jackie Drayton, Andrew Jones and Rosemary Ward for attending the meeting and responding to the questions raised; and

(c)   requests the Director of Education and Skills to:-

(i)   in the light of the concerns now expressed regarding those children not receiving any teacher assessments in terms of their examination grades, write to the DfE, jointly with other local regional local authorities, requesting a resolution to this issue, and to report back thereon to all Members of the Council; and

(ii)   collate data and more detailed information in terms of (A) the reasons parents had given for educating their children at home, together with more information on the reasons given, and now reported, including Covid, anxiety and SEN, and (B) those children where the Council had identified specific concern regarding the standard of their home education.

5.   MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

5.1   The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21st January 2021, were approved as a correct record and, arising therefrom, the Policy and Improvement Officer (Alice Nicholson) reported that (a) the recommendations of the Sheffield Youth Cabinet, following its meeting with this Committee on 19th November 2020, had been referred to Councillor Abtisam Mohamed (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills), Councillor Jackie Drayton (Cabinet Member for Children and Families), John Macilwraith (Executive Director, People Services) and Andrew Jones (Director of Education and Skills), and Learn Sheffield had opened a dialogue with the Youth Cabinet on their needs and suggestions, (b) a response had been sent to the member of the public who had raised a question regarding the opening of nurseries during the pandemic and (c) the Director of Children and Families had not yet provided more detailed information for all Members of the Council on the Amber Project, contextualised safeguarding and signs of safety, and the Committee requested that this information be sent as soon as possible and, based on the response and views of Members, a decision would then be made as to how this issue would be considered further.

6.   PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

6.1   There were no questions raised, or petitions submitted by members of the public.

7.   MULTI-AGENCY SUPPORT TEAMS (MAST) - UPDATE

7.1   The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, People Services, providing an update on the Multi-Agency Support Teams (MAST).

7.2   In attendance for this item were Councillor Jackie Drayton (Cabinet Member for Children and Families) and Helen Sweaton (Assistant Director, Prevention and Early Services, Children and Families).

7.3   Helen Sweaton introduced the report, which contained information on the role of the MAST, the strengths of, and positive work undertaken by, the MAST, the challenges facing the MAST, the Early Help Review and the work undertaken by the MAST during the Covid-19 pandemic.

7.4   Members of the Committee raised questions, and the following responses were provided:-

- The reason why there were not enough case holding workers to undertake the key worker role for families was not because Prevention and Early Services had reduced the number of such workers, but that the number the Service believed was needed had increased. The Service was still working with the same number of families, but was aware that there were more families that it wished it could provide similar levels of support for. One reason for this was that the Service had spent the last two years working very closely with schools in order to identify those children who needed support at the earliest opportunity, in line with the Inclusion Strategy. A number of officers had not been key working with families, but had mainly been working with other professionals to help upskill them to intervene earlier, resulting in the Service having a group of professionals who had not undertaken the role of a key work for some of the city's most complex families. There were around 470 staff in the early help review, with around 250 undertaking the role of key worker, and it was hoped that this number could be increased in the future.

- The Service worked very closely with South Yorkshire Police and the Council's Community Youth Teams to address any safeguarding concerns regarding vulnerable young people.   The Service had undertaken considerable safeguarding work in local communities, particularly with regard to extra familial harm, a specific concern which had been identified. The Amber Project had been established as part of the contextualised safeguarding strategy, which involved officers working with, and visiting, schools to discuss any specific concerns.   Where children had been identified to be at specific risk, even where the risk was not within the household, this would be escalated, which included referral to the Safeguarding Hub and discussions with South Yorkshire Police.

- Whilst people applying to be a key worker were asked for proof of relevant qualifications, previous experience was also taken into consideration, such as working in the voluntary sector, the local community or schools. Therefore, the approach to qualifications was relatively flexible, with applicants more likely being required to have basic skills, specifically

regarding communication and IT.

- The Service held monthly supervision for all workers, including personal supervision, and for key workers, this included case supervision. The key workers had relatively high caseloads in that they worked with 12 families which could, in some cases, include more than one child in each family.

- Where possible, key workers would be assigned to a family until closure, a period which usually equated to between three and six months. Every attempt was made to assign the same worker to a family during this period.

- Retaining key workers had proved to be a challenge, but in a positive way, in that the low level entry requirements had resulted in a high number of applicants, with a number going on to achieve other qualifications, and undertaking other roles, some within the Council. A very low number of key workers moved to other local authorities. The Service provided a lot of staff development opportunities, which many used to progress other roles. This, however, created a challenge in terms of continuity.

- The funding received for the MAST Service was not a one-off allocation, therefore would roll over to the 2021/22 financial year. To manage the additional demand as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and to enable the recruitment of the additional 22 posts, the Service required specific funding from the Covid Relief Fund, which spanned over the two years, resulting in there being no problems during 2021/22. Whilst staff turnover in the Service meant that it was likely that the 22 workers would progress and leave the Service during the period, so that the Service could manage without the additional funding in 2022/23, this would mean the additional 22 posts would be lost.

- Details of the £2.5 million funding for Children's Services, including whether the funding of the additional 22 posts would come out of this, would be circulated to Members of the Committee.

- Family centres had provided an excellent facility during the pandemic, both with regard to online services and through normal access, where possible. The centres had worked hard to keep the parenting groups running, and providing support for families. Prior to the pandemic, the centres had provided advice and support for younger people regarding sexual health problems. The long-term plan was to move the online offer across the 0-19 age range back into delivery, when access to the family centres was reopened. The MAST Service has always worked very closely with the family centres, providing an offer up to the age of 19, and 25 for people with special educational needs, from the centres. There had been a gap in service in terms of the youth offer as this service had its own buildings, therefore was less likely to operate from the family centres.

- In terms of the review of early help services, the issue regarding the lack of data from health creating barriers, particularly for early years, and the fact

that the data was not being used for effective predictive analysis, was work in progress for the Service. Some areas of work had actually been improved during the pandemic, such as information-sharing. The Service was trying to create a system which would pull all the various services together, such as having different data sets all on one system, which would be a big help for staff. The Service had increased its robustness in terms of screening, whereby workers, following referrals, were now able to view information from different areas all in one system.

- The Service had looked at the accommodation where MAST could be based so that they were able to meet the needs of specific localities. Whilst there were benefits to being based in a locality, such as making home visits, the administrative functions could be undertaken at home, or from a school or a community building. Therefore, the Service was less restricted, and it stopped the need to keep having to look where MAST could be physically located.

- The main reason for the delays in children and families receiving support from MAST was a lack of capacity within the Service. The Service was aware of more children and families needing support, and needing such support earlier, but there was limited capacity in terms of the key worker role. Some families have been forced to wait three months or more to be assigned a key worker.

7.5   RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

(a)   notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the information now reported and the responses to the questions raised;

(b)   thanks Councillor Jackie Drayton and Helen Sweaton for attending the meeting, and responding to the questions raised; and

(c)   requests that the Committee be involved in the review of early help services.

8.   DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21 AND FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

8.1   The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer (Alice Nicholson) containing the Committee's draft Work Programme for 2020/21 and the future Work Programme.

8.2   Councillor Mike Levery suggested that the Committee includes Early Years and Family Centres as part of its future Work Programme.

8.3   RESOLVED: That the Committee noted and approved the draft Work Programme 2020/21 and future Work Programme.

9.   DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9.1   It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on a date to be arranged.

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 19 May 2021

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Chaplin, Mike Levery (Deputy Chair), Barbara Masters, Anne Murphy, Kevin Oxley, Maroof Raouf, Kaltum Rivers, Mick Rooney, Safiya Saeed, Jack Scott, Sophie Wilson, Ann Whitaker and Ann Woolhouse

Non-Council Members in attendance:-

....

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 There were no apologies for absence.

2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

2.1 RESOLVED: That Councillor Mick Rooney be appointed as Chair of the Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/22.

3. DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS

3.1 RESOLVED: That meetings of the Committee be held on a bi-monthly basis on dates and times to be determined by the Chair, and as and when required for called-in items.

This page is intentionally left blank

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 7 July 2021

PRESENT: Councillors Mick Rooney (Chair), Mike Chaplin, Anne Murphy, Vickie Priestley, Maroof Raouf, Kaltum Rivers, Safiya Saeed, Jack Scott, Richard Shaw, Sophie Wilson, Ann Whitaker, Cliff Woodcraft and Ann Woolhouse

Non-Council Members in attendance:-

....

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 There were no apologies for absence received from members of the Committee.

2. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIR

2.1 RESOLVED: That Councillor Maroof Raouf be appointed Deputy Chair of the Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/22.

This page is intentionally left blank

Report to Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee
Wednesday 13th October 2021

Report of: Policy and Improvement Officer

_____

Subject: Draft Work Programme 2021/22

_____

Author of Report: Alice Nicholson, Policy and Improvement Officer
alice.nicholson@sheffield.gov.uk

_____

This report sets out the Committee's draft work programme for consideration and discussion.

_____

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	
Other	**X**

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

- Consider and comment on the work programme

Background Papers: Sheffield Council Constitution
Category of Report: OPEN

Draft Work Programme 2021/22: Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny Committee – Wednesday 13ᵗʰ October 2021

1.0   What is the role of Scrutiny?

1.1   Scrutiny Committees exist to hold decision makers to account, investigate issues of local concern, and make recommendations for improvement.

1.2   Scrutiny Committees can operate in a number of ways – through formal meetings with several agenda items, single item 'select committee' style meetings, task and finish groups, and informal visits and meetings to gather evidence to inform scrutiny work. Committees can hear from Council Officers, Cabinet Members, partner organisations, expert witnesses, members of the public. This Scrutiny Committee includes parent governor representatives. Scrutiny Committees are not decision making bodies but can make recommendations to decision makers.

2.0   The Scrutiny Work Programme

2.1   Attached is the draft work programme for the Committee's consideration. We will take a flexible approach in planning scrutiny work, to enable us to respond appropriately as new issues emerge.

2.2   Members of the Committee can also raise any issues relating to the work programme via the Chair or Policy and Improvement Officer at any time.

3.0   Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- Consider and comment on the draft work programme

Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny Committee 2021/22			
Item	**Reason**	**Who**	**When**
Review of impact of Covid-19 pandemic on Young People in Sheffield - Update on Scrutiny Recommendations of 2020/2, and current view of young people	Continuation of established collaborative working with Youth Cabinet	Youth Cabinet Representatives	October 2021
Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report	Holding to account - consider Annual Report	David Ashcroft (Independent Chair of Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership); Tina Gilbert (Safeguarding Board Manager); Jayne Dunn - Co-operative Executive Member for Education Children and Families	November 2021
Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service Annual Report	Holding to account - consider Annual Report	Dan White (Head of Health and Targeted Services)	November 2021
Adoption Service - Annual Report	Holding to account – consider Annual Report	Jayne Dunn - Co-operative Executive Member for Education Children and Families Children's Care Council; Sheffield Care Leavers Union (?)	TBC
Fostering Service - Annual Report	Holding to account – consider Annual Report	Jayne Dunn - Co-operative Executive Member for Education Children and Families Children's Care Council; Sheffield Care Leavers Union (?)	TBC

Report to Children, Young People & Family Support Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee
Wednesday 13th October 2021

Report of: Policy and Improvement Officer

Subject: Sheffield Youth Cabinet – Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Young People in Sheffield: Review and Follow-up to Youth Cabinet and Scrutiny work 2020/21

Author of Report: Alice Nicholson, Policy and Improvement Officer
alice.nicholson@sheffield.gov.uk
0114 205 6740

During November 2020/January 2021 this Committee through a task and finish group collaborated with Sheffield Youth Cabinet on a piece of work around Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on young people in Sheffield, the report and recommendations of the task and finish group are attached for information. This Committee agenda item is a review and follow up to the previous collaborative work, members of Sheffield Youth Cabinet have been invited to share their continuing experiences around Mental Health in the pandemic, issues of concern post exams and going forward this academic year.

Sheffield City Council Education and Skills Service undertook a survey of secondary age students earlier this year and that report of findings is included in the agenda too: *Sheffield City Council Education and Skills Young People's Experiences of the Covid-19 Pandemic survey for Secondary Age Students Report of Findings; July 2021*.

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Other	X

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:
- Consider the information presented by Youth Cabinet and young people on the impact of Covid-19 pandemic, and their continuing experiences;
- Determine if there is scope for further collaborative work of Scrutiny and Youth Cabinet, and/or if there are issues to investigate in more depth

Background Papers: Voice and Involvement of Young People in Scrutiny **–** see Cabinet 18 March 2020
Category of Report: OPEN

This page is intentionally left blank

Sheffield City Council Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee 2019/20

Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on young people in Sheffield

One-off task group with Youth Cabinet - 13th January 2021

In November 2020 members of Youth Cabinet attended Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee to share their experience of impact of Covid-19. Following on from this some members of the Committee were able to meet with them again this month, attending were Cllrs Mick Rooney, Mike Levery, Jim Steinke, Alison Teal, and Diocese representative member Sam Evans. Attending for Youth Cabinet were Issac, Jude, Niamh, Nye and Rikzar, they were supported by Sarah Stevens and Emma Hinchliffe. The members of the Committee were keen to find out how it was now in January with Lockdown 3 and other announcements from government affecting schools, learning and summer assessment. Lines of enquiry included:

1. What are top priorities for Young People now in January 2021?
    a. Any from November session?
    b. New and overriding issues
2. How do you feel about exams being cancelled and alternative arrangements to be proposed?
3. What would be of most benefit for scrutiny to recommend and to who?

Committee Recommendations

Issue	Rationale, context, evidence, the ask	Action for Scrutiny Committee	January 2021 suggested recommendation from Scrutiny Committee to SCC Cabinet
Alternative Arrangements to exams 2021 - consultation	The Youth Cabinet commented the system of assessment was unfair before Covid, neither exams or CAGs (Centre Assessed Grades) alone is ideal, CAGs edges it as a preferred solution. Other measures are too complicated to be used as a moderation, for example level of disruption to an individual as a balancing measure - the disruption maybe unseen, such as home environment, or measure may be unreliable such as 2020 grade algorithm.	Scrutiny Committee to support Youth Cabinet to send submission on Alternative Arrangements to all local MPs.	**RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET MEMBER/DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & SKILLS** **The Committee recommends the Young People of Sheffield must feed into a national consultation on Alternative Arrangements; and the Committee supports the Youth Cabinet preference to be part of a Sheffield co-submission into the DfE/OFQUAL consultation on Alternative Arrangements currently underway. [i]**

	We heard that young people feel still likely to be sitting exams, another U turn but sounds like will still set exams, they see it as an indication of lack of trust in schools to grade right. First yes exams, no exams, little exams, that it is unfair and same as last year just said differently. The ask is a message to government to be clear and concise now on plans for young people and stick with it! And clear guidance for teachers now. There must be consideration of how and even if there can be curriculum Catch Up, or insist on assessment to match curriculum actually taught. Sheffield young people must be made ready to take any exam or assessment proffered – there are gaps in their learning of full curriculum because of school closures (not a teacher criticism) and accessibility to online learning, the lack of necessary tech – devices and infrastructure, such as capable laptops and home Wi-Fi. If CAGS worked, why change, just refine to manage curriculum and digital disadvantage. No lessons appear to have been learnt by government from summer 2020.	Assessment Alternative Arrangements must have certainty and clarity; no penalisation for curriculum not taught, for online learning barriers; and assessment should not include anything not taught sufficiently; what about resits	**URGENT AS CONSULTATION IS ONLY OPEN FOR TWO WEEKS UNTIL 29TH JANUARY**
Alternative Arrangements to exams 2021 – mental health	Reduce the pressure and mental health impact on young people, immense strain of uncertainty and knowing not adequately prepared, too much curriculum missed through lockdown and self-isolations. Alternative Arrangements must not assume children have completed the curriculum and must be tailored to recognise that. Evidence in mocks they were extremely difficult as not all curriculum covered prior e.g. teachers off and no learning in school, it was impossible to do unless managed to do at home e.g. Foundation Spanish		**The Committee are concerned and saddened to hear young people say "Where is the Empathy / Sympathy for Young People's learning situation" a message young people express as both local and national significance. We impress that this message is shared locally and nationally through the best channels.** **See Comms issue below**

	over 50% modules not done, and mock included modules not done. We heard in regard mocks, experiential evidence that marked down levels if self-isolating and doing exams at Home – where is the trust.		
Support for students at home or in Isolation – wellbeing, home learning environment, home and digital barriers	Recommend that Sheffield students receive 1:1 support, recommend investment to makes this happen for all Sheffield Secondary phase students. These are specialists who help organise students day for them, for them to learn, and sleep routine (self-isolation impacts leaving student ill prepared for return to school), a check-in with each student on wellbeing and access to online learning barriers e.g. device, internet (bit like most people have had in the workplace). Evidence in local school of benefit of this in Lockdown 1.0 before schools reopened. Replicate this across the whole school estate. Note this was first suggested before Lockdown 3 and when schools were open again, however it has been reinforced as most definitely still needed. Young people are concerned, and with a sense that they are judged on IT ability now, not academic ability in subject.		**RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET/DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & SKILLS** **The Committee recommend that a 1:1 support approach is pursued and put in place for all of Sheffield Secondary Phase as a minimum and as immediate as possible to change digital isolation and mental wellbeing.** **The Committee want to raise awareness and draw attention to the suggestion that it is not just small numbers of young people affected by digital isolation. The context to this is that there are hidden numbers, experiential evidence that is it is easier to be missing online than it is to be missing in class. A part solution is face to face, or regular offline non class contact to find out who is 'outside' of being online. The circularity of you don't know what you don't know, and how can we find out and change the digital isolation experience for young people in this critical stage of their life.**
Support for teachers	It was suggested there should be support for Sheffield teachers in knowledge & experiential sharing (content and method), and financial support for teachers to deliver online, develop a way to deliver for all learning styles. Managing practical learning for those topics that need it, it is an important learning style for some students, a factor behind original subject choice, and some subjects don't really exist without e.g. food tech and other technical subjects, sciences.		**RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET/DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & SKILLS** **The committee ask that if not already the Council find out what are the government departments expectations for a curriculum for whichever assessment option selected; and suggest this could be as part of Alternative Arrangement consultation response as well as ongoing; that it is crucial teachers know what they should be teaching or revising to make sure students are ready for assessment – whatever format is chosen by the Government.**

			The Committee ask that support to schools be considered to identify ways of delivering more practical learning in current situation, so as not to create inequality or disadvantage for those who online as a learning style is a barrier.
Catch Up in learning / curriculum	Consider that for current years it is essential and now; that the legacy impact for future years is acted on, the following on years are dropping further and further behind		**See above**
University Bottleneck	We heard of concerns regarding oversubscription as previous years defer, of worries that the grades obtained but not through exam may be questioned, feelings of being disadvantaged by just being the class of 2021		**RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET** **The Committee recommend that the Council engage locally with our Sheffield learning institutions, and lobby nationally for changes to university criteria to ensure the classes of 2019/20 and 2020/21 are not disadvantaged, for example having to unfairly compete with previous years cohorts who have gained exam grades 'normally'; that future years who may take exams but whose learning is affected right now are not disadvantaged at point of application to university.**
Entry requirements for post 16	We heard there are barriers to progression from Level 2 to Level 3 because unable to take exams for the A-C requirement. There is effectively a block on progression, this cohort will be left behind those who can finally take exams. Alternative Arrangements – what about resits.		**Recommendation as above that cabinet engage with Sheffield learning institutions applies here to.**
Digital Isolation	We heard that this is seen by young people as a big problem, as referred above in wider support for students, the hidden numbers, the notion that being missing online is easier than being missing in class but online. We want to know still how do we find out who is excluded? We heard it is more than devices, internet	Encourage and facilitate members of Youth Cabinet to sign up to Digital Divide Summit [NB – two have]	**RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET** **The Committee cannot emphasise enough that we engage young people in the Digital Divide workstream sponsored by Cllr Terry Fox, over the full term of the project and ongoing to ensure a better digital access in the future for young people of Sheffield; that issues such as how do we**

	too (no Wi-Fi, poor Wi-Fi, no contract, contract useage limits), do we know how many devices needed, what is the minimum spec, must be good laptops, – who can help provide? Can anything be done about the multitude of Apps and Systems		**find out who is excluded, how many devices needed, what type of device and what infrastructure, who can help provide the devices and infrastructure need urgent solution and resolution, a potential for city wide collaboration.**
Physical Resources	We heard if schools can't give out computers and Wi-Fi then they should send papers in post. Students need more physical resources - printed material. Suggestions are a single source for access to online resources, perhaps a Council web page, ask local companies like Twinkl if they can support with printed materials	Explore local solutions for printed materials. Share with cabinet Member/Director of Education and Skills	**Suggestions came up in our meetings, and we would welcome executive view on this.**
Mental Health	We heard mental health is only getting worse as go longer into pandemic, lockdown etc… Young people are finding ways to meet.	Seek a public health view on concept of can there be targeted guidance supporting young people's needs to meet, is it better than under radar	**Other views needed on this, recognise it is multi-faceted, and subject to national guidance, is it possible to have a local policy.**
Comms to raise awareness	Communications plan to help Youth Cabinet raise awareness of young people issues, for example comms that may engage Look North, The Star. A chance to reach a wider audience with issues.	Role of Committee / action still to be determined – explore with our comms team potentially	**Open for discussion on best way to achieve or facilitate this.**
	NEXT STEPS FOR COMMITTEE		**CONSIDER THESE RECOMMENDATIONS, AGREE AND SEND TO CABINET AND DIRECTORS**

CYP&FS Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee 21st January 2021

---

[i] Government Consultation on Alternative Arrangements – opened 15th January, closes 23:45 Friday 29th January (2 weeks) it is an online response form, main Government information page includes link to online response form: https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-alternative-arrangements-for-the-award-of-vtqs-and-other-general-qualifications-in-2021/consultation-on-alternative-arrangements-for-the-award-of-vtqs-and-other-general-qualifications-in-2021-html

This page is intentionally left blank

Young People's Experiences of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Survey for Secondary Age Students

Report of Findings; July 2021

i. Introduction

Since the Covid-19 pandemic hit in March 2020 and the United Kingdom went into lockdown, Sheffield City Council, together with its partners and many others, has worked tirelessly to keep its young people safe.

The Public Health Team, the Communications Service and the Education & Skills Service have collaborated on a series of initiatives aimed at informing and supporting young people, families, schools and settings. These initiatives have included:

- Ongoing consultation on our communications plans with Sheffield Youth Cabinet
- New approaches used to reach young people with Covid-19 guidance, based on their feedback:
    - New channels used to communicate with young people, including Spotify and I-vans for key events such as Halloween and Bonfire Night
    - Collaboration with local influencers on Instagram and TikTok
    - Co-creation of content with young people at Sheffield College and Sheffield Hallam University
- Using behavioural science, plus insights from young people, around things that helped or hindered them to do the protective behaviours and / or support a collective effort to reduce transmission

This report looks at one of these pieces of work in detail, namely the findings from a survey for secondary-age young people.

The survey was initiated by an insightful discussion in February 2021 with members the Sheffield Youth Cabinet and SCC's Communications Service regarding the impact of the pandemic on young people. We wanted to find out more about the different experiences of young people.

On Monday 22 March 2021, we distributed a bespoke edition of the fortnightly Education & Skills News bulletin to over 900 employees within the service. In this

edition, we asked for their help to encourage secondary-age young people they knew to complete our online survey.

We saw the survey as a relatively small piece of work, one that would give us a snapshot of the experiences of a handful of young people. We estimated that we would receive in the region of 50 responses but, after being shared by colleagues and promoted on the Council's social media channels, we were delighted to achieve 299 completions.

This report summarises those responses. We hope that you find it interesting.[1]

---

[1] Please note that all percentages over 10% have been rounded up. Responses to open text questions i.e. where respondents type in their answers have been edited for clarity. The originals are available on request.

3

ii. Twelve Key Findings

Our report provides a detailed discussion of what young people told us via the survey and is divided up by questions, responses and themes. We have, however, collated and summarised twelve key findings below.

1. Being unable to see family and friends was the hardest thing for young people to cope with.

2. School, exams and education being disrupted was a major worry. Many were anxious about how this would impact on their future, for example, their chances of getting into college, university or a job.

3. Feeling isolated, the lack of support and missing out on key experiences were common issues.

4. Young people said they had been very worried about friends, family and loved ones contracting Covid-19 and that they might become seriously ill or die. Those that were worried about catching it themselves were more concerned about transmitting it to older relatives.

5. 63% of respondents said they had struggled more than usual with their mental health and wellbeing, however, 9% said their mental health had improved.

6. Those who struggled with their mental health spoke of increased anxiety, panic attacks, depression, self-harm and thoughts of suicide.

7. 56% of young people said there had been good things for them over the last year. Spending more time with their family was the most positive aspect of lockdown.

4

8. Many young people used the opportunity to take up new pastimes and hobbies or rediscover things they once enjoyed.

9. 72% of respondents said they found the government's rules "very easy" or "quite easy" to understand.

10. 56% thought it was "very important" to stick to the government's restrictions and 34% thought this was "quite important".

11. 63% of young people said they hadn't "always" followed the rules around social distancing.

12. Reasons given for not always obeying the rules included needing to see or help family and friends, confusion about, or forgetting, the restrictions and it being hard always to socially distance.

iii. Survey: Introduction

The survey began with the following introduction:

"Your Experiences of the Covid-19 Pandemic

In March 2020, everyone's world was turned upside down when we went into lockdown. We've all seen on the news about the effect the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the lives of adults - but here in Sheffield, we want to hear about the experiences of young people.

We are particularly interested in:

- *things you've done to pass the time*
- *your mental health & wellbeing*
- *any positive or negative experiences*
- *understanding and following the rules*

Our survey is <u>anonymous</u> so you can be completely honest with your answers. There is <u>no judgement</u> from us about what you tell us."

iv.   Survey: Responses

Q1: What have you done to pass the time during lockdown?

- 59% of respondents said "Physical activity, such as running, walking, cycling etc."
- 59% of respondents said "Gaming"
- 40% of respondents said "Reading"
- 80% of respondents said "Watching TV, films, etc."
- 59% of respondents said "Listening to music"
- 49% of respondents said "Cooking / Baking"
- 57% of respondents said "Been on social media"
- 14% of respondents said "I have taken up a new hobby or activity"
- 12% of respondents said "Other things"

Q1: What have you done to pass the time during lockdown?
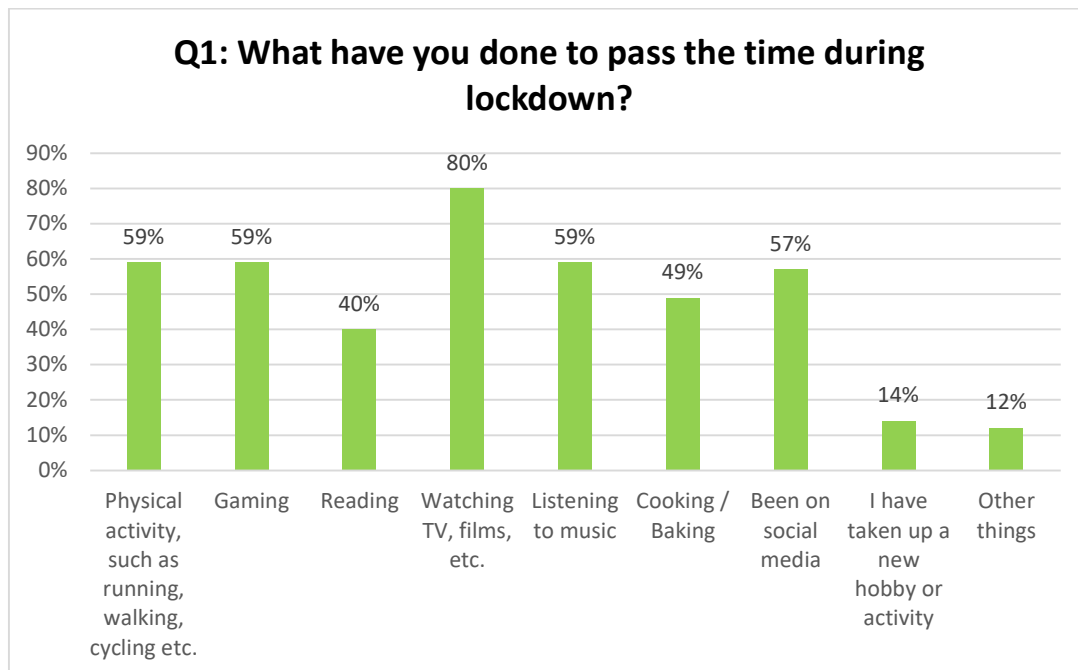
Q2: How else have you passed the time during lockdown?

Those who ticked 'other things' in the previous question were asked this. There were 31 responses with many of them listing or describing creative activities (drawing / painting, cosplay[2], arts & crafts, gardening etc.) or keeping up with school work.

A selection of others is listed below:

- *"Few bike rides with mum and little sister in nicer days and played on Roblox."*
- *"Working towards my A-Levels and my Uni Application to get into Medical School."*
- *"Helping to better the environment like recycling and doing barbecues."*
- *"Walking our dog."*
- *"I learned how to sign."*
- *"Food shopping and cooking for older relative."*

Q3: What new hobby or activity have you taken up?

This was only asked of those who said they had taken up something new in Q1. Broadly, the hobbies and activities taken up by the handful of respondents were creative (painting, crafting, digital art, sewing etc.) or were physical (cycling, running, dog walking, yoga etc.).

A handful of the more unusual responses is listed below:

- *"Photo editing and music mixing."*
- *"Paper round."*
- *"Gotten back into photography and writing."*
- *"Piano and sewing."*
- *"Cosplay."*
- *"Horse riding."*
- *"Ukelele."*
- *"Warhammer."*

---

[2] Dressing up as a character from a film, book, or video game.

- *"Origami."*
- *"Making songs."*

Q4: What have been the hardest things to cope with over the last year?

- 45% of respondents said "Worrying about me or someone I know getting Coronavirus"
- 74% of respondents said "Being unable to see my friends / family"
- 63% of respondents said "School and learning being disrupted"
- 58% of respondents said "Not being able to do the things I want to do"
- 46% of respondents said "Being stuck indoors"
- 60% of respondents said "Not knowing when it's going to end"
- 49% of respondents said "Being worried, stressed or anxious"
- 4% said "Other things"

Q4: What have been the hardest things to cope with over the last year?

41%	74%	63%	58%	46%	60%	49%	4%
Worrying about me or someone I know getting Coronavirus	Being unable to see my friends / family	School and learning being disrupted	Not being able to do the things I want to do	Being stuck indoors	Not knowing when it's going to end	Being worried, stressed or anxious	Other things
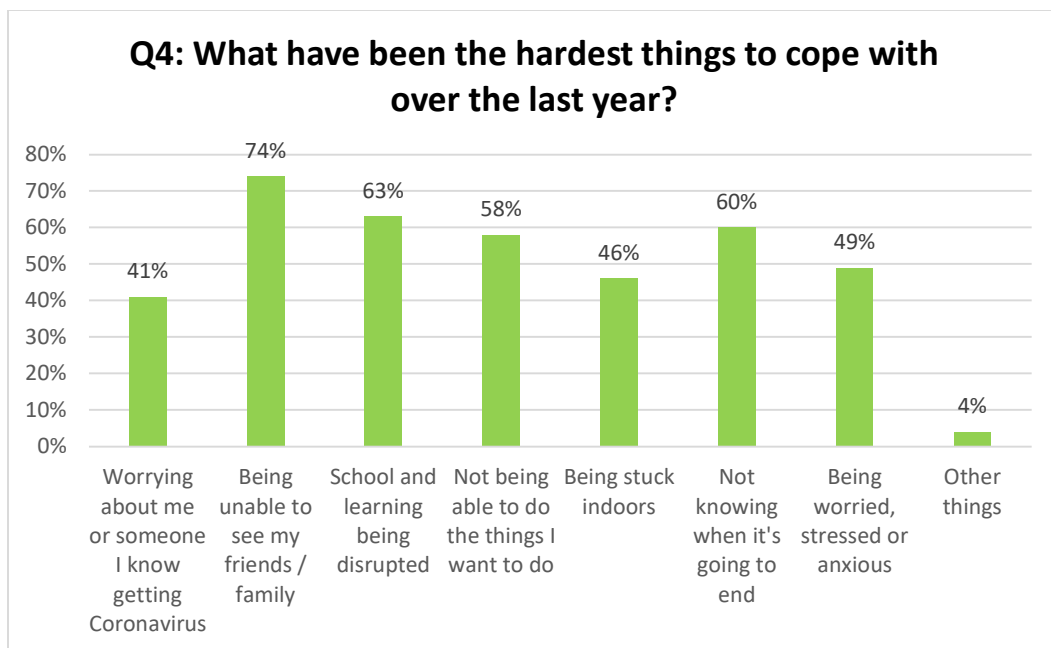
Q5: What kind of things have you been worried, stressed or anxious about?

We asked those who ticked 'being worried, stressed or anxious' to elaborate in Q5. There were 124 responses; just under half of the total number of young people who completed the survey. These have been themed with supporting comments below.

9

Page 43

(It is worth noting that there is often overlap between worries and concerns; young people may list two or three in their response. These usually correlate but where appropriate, we have split them here.)

i. Education / School

Around a third of the responses were about young people's education. Comments around not going to school, school work, exams, the future etc. cropped up the most, with concerns about online or home learning following them.

- *"School, life decisions, life, what A-Levels to choose."*
- *"Exams and how we are going to be assessed in school."*
- *"GCSE grades and whether I have chosen the correct sixth form as I couldn't look around them."*
- *"How my school could ruin my university career by giving me a bad grade."*
- *"Mostly school and the mock examinations being basically my result."*
- *"I have been stressed about college, and the fact that I might not pass my course due to the struggle of online learning."*
- *"Don't want to underperform at school / get bad grade for KS2 SATs."*
- *"How will this impact me at A-Levels, university, getting a job."*
- *"Getting studying done."*
- *"My school work because of delays and the uncertainties."*
- *"Missing out on Y6 things I've been looking forward to all through school like the residential and the party and not feeling like I finished school properly. The transition to secondary school."*
- *"That my learning won't be at the standard it should be, that everyone will be ahead of me and my teachers will be disappointed / expect more of me."*
- *"How will I catch up with my education?"*
- *"My academic studies – not getting the chance to actually do my A-Levels feels like my school years have been wasted. My first year at university has been a shambles with no face-to-face learning or chance to make new friends."*
- *"That we have missed so much school and we are expected to be able to do our exams like normal next year."*

- *"I have been worried about my transition to college and being away from school hasn't helped that, I've missed out on a lot of education too."*
- *"If WiFi or my Chromebook stopped working, that would mean I couldn't take part in my online working."*

ii. Family, friends and loved ones contracting Covid-19

Some of the respondents had directly witnessed the effects of Covid-19 on people they knew. For others, it was a fear of losing loved ones that caused them anxiety.

- *"Family and friends get Covid."*
- *"Feel bad and sad for people that have died or lost loved ones."*
- *"Not knowing if friends or teachers are OK."*
- *"Losing loved one – bereaved by suicide during lockdown."*
- *"Dad going through chemo, knowing an infection could kill him, seeing too many people not wearing masks or giving space, meaning could catch something and pass to dad, then not wanting to go out."*
- *"The virus and not seeing the people we love and worrying they will get it or we will get it again as we had it in September."*
- *"Scared not wanting my parents to catch is as they're high risk."*
- *"Deaths in the family."*
- *"My mum got Coronavirus and I didn't want her to die."*
- *"Family getting ill 'cos it's always in the news."*
- *"My mum is at risk but working from home for 12 hours."*
- *"I've been scared that my mummy will die."*
- *"My dad getting ill as he has a health condition. Other family members getting Covid."*
- *"My dad died last May (2020) from a heart/ lung condition, so I've been worried about my mum catching Covid 19."*
- *"That my parents or siblings will get a severe case."*

iii. Respondents contracting Covid-19

A smaller proportion of respondents expressed concerns about contracting Covid-19 themselves. Interestingly, most of those who did talk about this said they were

worried about getting it and *passing it on to others*. None of these mentioned any of the other negative impacts of *them* having Coronavirus, such as risk to their lives, long-term health etc. They were more concerned about transmitting it to other people.

- *"Me getting the virus and not knowing it and spreading it to others and therefore me being the cause of their death."*
- *"Not knowing if I have Covid."*
- *"Worried if I caught it, I could give it my family."*

iv.   Missing friends and family

A lot of the responses under this theme simply said things like, "Miss my friends and family" but a few others expressed worries about losing – or not making new – friends:

- *"I have been anxious about friendships and that I might lose friends."*
- *"Not seeing my friends and not hearing from some friends as if we had fallen out."*
- *"My friends and losing them due to not seeing them for a long time."*
- *"Harder to make new friends."*
- *"That my friends forget me."*
- *"Feel I don't have a social life."*

v.   Mental health

Around ten respondents mentioned 'mental health' but didn't elaborate. A few of those that did said:

- *"My anxiety about going out in public has become really bad, where I overthink new situations."*
- *"It's really affected my mental health. I was all on my own."*
- *"Sleep schedule."*
- *"Coping with addiction."*

vi.   The future / uncertainty

'The future' itself is a very broad theme as the responses referring to it covered a range of things, from personal issues to global ones, but we've grouped it with 'uncertainty' as there was a very significant overlap between the two. Here is a selection of what young people told us they were worried about relating to these themes:

- *"Job security."*
- *"Not getting back to normality."*
- *"Things going back to 'normal', seeing people in big groups at parties / gatherings again."*
- *"When I can start my life?"*
- *"Being scared about going back into society and being around others again."*
- *"How the future's gonna be."*
- *"Will there be any work in the future and how the pandemic will affect businesses and work prospects for mine and future generations?"*
- *"If the pandemic will ever end."*
- *"I used to use going to football matches at Bramall Lane, watching the Steelers play at Sheffield Arena and playing for my roller hockey team as ways to cope [with my anxiety]. I have not done two of those things in over a year and now my roller hockey team's rink has closed down and the future is up in the air. I am very worried about this."*
- *"The fear of the unknown."*
- *"Everything changing all the time and not knowing what will happen next."*
- *"The whole uncertainty of things."*

vii.   Miscellaneous worries, stresses and anxieties

As one might expect, there were a number of concerns for young people that didn't fit into the above categories – and also a few responses we felt summarised the situation the respondents were in. These are listed below:

- *"That my mask is going to stop me breathing."*
- *"Not fully understanding the rules."*

- *"Having to self-isolate after only 2 days back at school."*
- *"Uncertain situations."*
- *"People being too close when outside. I now can't deal with crowds."*
- *"Government changing policies weekly, not clear on why they are implementing new rules and why they lifted lockdown quickly."*
- *"That my life won't be the same anymore."*
- *"Will I get used to being inside then nervous when I'm allowed out?"*
- *"Everything."*

Finally, we've included this comment on lockdown as it struck us as especially poignant:

- *"I feel like I've been grounded without being naughty."*

Q6: What else have you found hard to cope with?

There were only nine responses to this question and generally, they were covered in the one asked previously.

Q7: We know that the Covid-19 pandemic has affected people's mental health and wellbeing in different ways. How has it affected yours?

- 63% of respondents said "I have struggled more than usual with my mental health and wellbeing"
- 29% of respondents said "My mental health and wellbeing has been unaffected"
- 9% of respondents said "My mental health and wellbeing has been better than usual"

Q7: We know that the Covid-19 pandemic has affected people's mental health and wellbeing in different ways. How has it affected yours?

Chart showing responses:
- I have struggled more than usual with my mental health and wellbeing: 63%
- My mental health and wellbeing has been unaffected: 29%
- My mental health and wellbeing has been better than usual: 9%
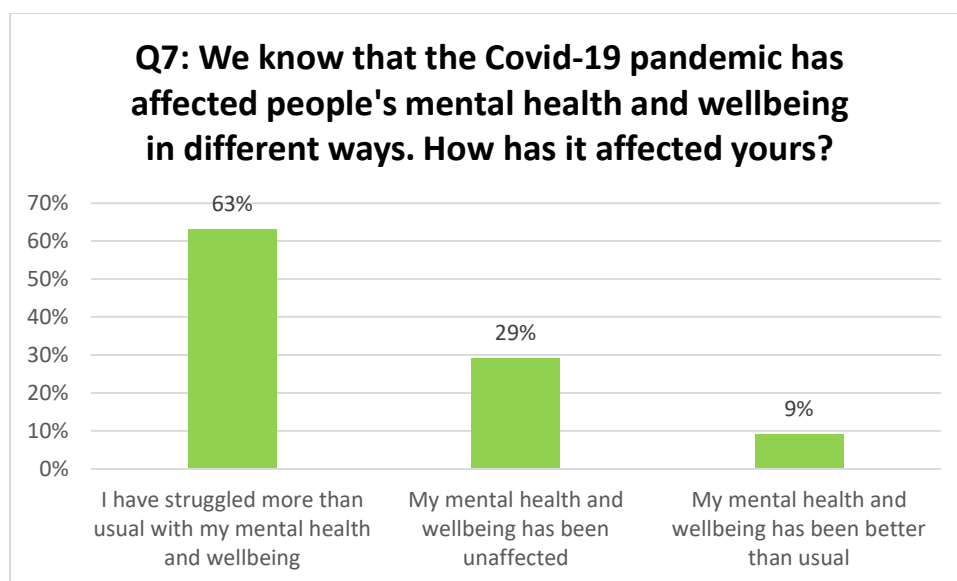
Q8: Is there anything you would like to tell us about how the pandemic has affected your mental health and wellbeing over the past year?

Around half of the young people who completed our survey had something to say about the effect of the pandemic on their mental health and wellbeing. Many young people told us that the pandemic had had a severe impact on their mental health.

One again, it is noteworthy that there is often overlap between how Coronavirus has had an impact on the young people's mental health with several describing two or three other things it has affected and how and why. Again, where appropriate, we have split them.

i.   Increased anxiety

The words 'anxious' and 'anxiety' cropped up in several responses with many stating that lockdown either led to anxiety or increased it. Some of these were coupled with other mental health issues such as low mood, depression, anger, frustration and even physical responses such as sickness.

- *"I have been more anxious than normal."*
- *"I have struggled with new situations, my anxiety about meeting new people has become really bad and sometimes makes me feel vulnerable when I'm in them [sic] positions."*
- *"My mood is lower. I am more snappy and angry."*

- *"I am crying a lot."*
- *"I have had to be put on medication due to extreme anxiety and depression. I have been to hospital twice as I feel I no longer had a purpose in life and I hate being a burden to my parents."*
- *"All the things I had in primary school to help with anxiety had to stop and they don't exist at secondary school."*
- *"More panic attacks and feeling uneasy. Panic attacks causing symptoms- sickness, physical shaking and increased heart rate."*
- *"Made me more anxious, low in mood at times and frustrated and angry with family members."*
- *"More panic attacks, sickness, more headaches, anxiousness and depression."*

ii.   Other effects

Anxiety seems to be the main strain on mental health caused by the pandemic and lockdown etc., but many respondents reported other impacts, several of which are listed below. Panic attacks, depression, stress, fears (of various things) were commonplace, as were eating disorders, lack of confidence, loss of focus and sadness. Some respondents took care to point out things such as "completely new emotions" and "lot more than normal" after describing their issues. i.e. these were a result of the pandemic which triggered mental health issues in them. Others had prior issues that were exacerbated.

- *"More panic attacks and stressful moments caused by minor things that wouldn't normally trigger them."*
- *"I have lost a lot of confidence in dealing with other people."*
- *"Rapid decline in mental health and well-being – constantly worrying about death (completely new emotions)."*
- *"Worrying about money and the health of my family."*
- *"Makes you feel a bit hopeless."*
- *It's made me feel really sad and scared."*
- *"Worrying about lack of social distancing while I've been out. Afraid to go to shops and worried at school."*

- *"I have been worried a lot more than normal and it has affected my sleep."*
- *"Felt trapped."*
- *"No patience like before Covid."*
- *"Started hating my body more as of the weight I'd put on in lockdown."*
- *"My social skills have gone."*
- *"The loss of routine has been very bad."*
- *"I've been worrying about losing my mummy and other family members."*
- *"Both of my parents have been working from home and have overworked so I have felt lonely a lot of the time. As a result of this I have been talking to myself too much and my head can be a depressing place at times."*
- *"Found it difficult to do things and look after myself since systems and routines have been thrown off after four years of doing them."*
- *"I disassociated myself from everything and felt like the days were just passing by right fast."*
- *"I have been less focused on work and I have been getting distracted very easily."*
- *"It has made me more dependent on myself for happiness."*
- *"I don't know how to be normal anymore."*

iii.   Self-harm / suicidal thoughts

We've listed three responses as a separate section as we feel it is important to be aware of the physical manifestations of impacted mental health and wellbeing.

- *"I have started self-harming."*
- *"Without my coping structure of football, ice hockey in stadiums and playing for my team, I have been driven in to a dark place. I am often having suicidal thoughts and no longer wishing to live. My mental health is worse than ever and I just want it to end."*
- *"It stopped the treatment I was receiving, making me contemplate hurting myself."*

iv.   Education worries

As one might expect, uncertainty about education across the age ranges affected the mental health and wellbeing of some respondents.

- *"The results of my A-Levels feeling out of my control."*
- *"My learning and chances of getting the occupation I want."*
- *"Not being able to attend college."*
- *"Not being able to sit my GCSEs in the usual way."*
- *"Government plans for exams / school not being clear or having last minute changes as well as exam boards not being clear on how they will regulate exams has been stressful."*
- *"I feel anxious about my future and resentful that the pandemic has affected two really important years of my life - the end of thirteen years of school and the start of my university life. I feel that my age group have been affected very badly by the pandemic yet no one seems to care. I have a student loan debt for this year that totals over £16,000 when university has been a waste of time. The online lectures have been poor and with no face-to-face lessons or contact with other students, I feel that I am struggling and on my own trying to learn a new subject. I don't know how this will impact my career but I am stuck paying an awful lot of money for very little return. The government don't care about my generation, they have nothing to ease the financial burden on us or help us with our mental health."*
- *"I hope my college work doesn't suffer; I was unable to take my exams when I left school last March 2020."*
- *"Not knowing what I'm doing home learning. School thinks everyone can use a laptop; they've not taught us."*

v.   Separation from friends, family and loved ones

Isolation and separation were big, recurring themes and their impact was keenly felt. Respondents talked about missing physical interaction such as giving and receiving hugs, missing face-to-face conversations and regret at not being able to physically meet up with friends.

- *"I just want to hug my best friend and my grandma but I couldn't even see them."*
- *"I've had to make more of an effort to get out, do exercise and reach out to friends and family so it has been harder to maintain a healthy balance. It would have been easy not to do those things and end up very isolated."*
- *"I just feel so lonely."*
- *"I have missed seeing friends and family."*
- *"Isolation and lack of opportunity to do things and experience things with friends, not being able to experience my 18th birthday."*
- *"Not being able to talk physically with friends has affected how I deal with things. I have a healthy relationship with my parents but I don't talk to them the same way I do my close circle of friends and it's just not the same over a video call and not as private."*

vi.   Deaths of family members

Three young people reported losing loved ones and the added grief, sadness and frustration caused by the restrictions placed on funerals. All three comments are listed below.

- *"Lost family members but unable to attend funerals due to restrictions."*
- *"My dad died in May 2020. The funeral was limited numbers, we had to travel in our own cars and then come straight back home. I don't feel like I've said a proper goodbye to my dad. I was 15 when he died."*
- *"I am having problems with my mental health as my dad caught Covid from his work and died. I am 12. My dad should not have died."*

vii.   Lack of support / missing support

The word 'support' cropped up in various guises several times in response to this question; namely a lack of it. This varied from young people missing the support of their friends, being unable to access professional support or support from school and, in one case, from a much-loved pet.

- *"I've struggled to get the right support for my health issues and support with access to school."*
- *"I've felt cut off from my friends who are my support group."*
- *"Not enough support from people other than my parents."*
- *"I feel schools need to talk to us more about mental health and offer support alongside our studies."*
- *"My hamster died in lockdown and it was a joke that he was my emotional support hamster but actually he was and I've been upset ever since and now I've got nothing for support."*
- *"My mental health was bad before the pandemic it's just made it harder to get help and support."*

viii.   Missing out on things

There is a strong element of missing out and lives on hold, with these young people not getting to enjoy key rites-of-passage and experiences.

- *"Not being able to do the things with Dad that we would normally do like go karting, arcades, going out on the boat, playing in the parks with other children."*
- *"[Not being able to] go to clubs especially holiday club."*
- *"Found it difficult to go out just to exercise because there are so many people about still. The first lockdown I felt I could go out once a day to cycle but now I cannot due to all the cars on the road. I miss socialising in my weekly clubs such as running clubs."*
- *"Not being able to celebrate my 16th birthday and not having a school prom, so I have missed out on important memories."*
- *"My 16th birthday last August was a meal out with my mum and my two brothers. I wanted to see my friends or have a party but it wasn't allowed because of the pandemic."*
- *"I feel my life is on hold."*

ix. Miscellaneous frustrations

Some respondents expressed misgivings about the national handling of the pandemic, in particular the impact on young people.

- *"Constant locking down has not worked well and has caused unnecessary issues."*
- *"No, although, the government didn't put anything on to help young people to cope with this. They need to get more engaged other than politics."*
- *"I had to stop watching the news because it made me worry more. They make everyone more fearful."*
- *"No one has thought about the impact on young people."*
- *"Not understanding the different rules we have had to change to and not understanding why some places have been shut such as shops and places of activity."*

x. The less negative effects of lockdown

Finally, a handful of respondents listed things about the pandemic which didn't have an adverse effect on their mental health.

- *"Some things have been good like school quieter."*
- *"I felt better away from school though I missed being able to be social outside school."*
- *"More time for exercise and to be outside."*
- *"Less expectation to have to do things and school being closed has meant I'm less stressed."*
- *"I have felt safer and more close to my family with us all staying in together. I don't want to go out and I'm not bothered about having friends. This was the same before COVID. Me and my sister usually had to go to holiday clubs while my nan worked and not have much time during the week because of work. Things are much better in lockdown."*
- *"My mental health as not been affected."*
- *"My mental health is better because I got to do more relaxing."*

- *"Free time due to exam cancellation allowed me to get a better understanding of my mental health."*
- *"Great response from organisations in Sheffield. Greg Fell deserves a big award - and his team!"*
- *"I quite enjoyed lockdown; it was relaxing."*
- *"It's kind of improved me and my thinking way as a person and my self-acceptance because there was no one to compare to and it's made me figure out who I am and what I want."*
- *"It has affected it negatively but during the third lockdown I have been able to do a lot more walking and reading and that had helped."*

Q9: Have there been any positives or good things for you over the last year?

- 56% of respondents said "Yes"
- 22% of respondents said "No"
- 22% of respondents said "I don't know"

Q9: Have there been any positives or good things for you over the last year?

	Yes	No	I don't know
	56%	22%	22%
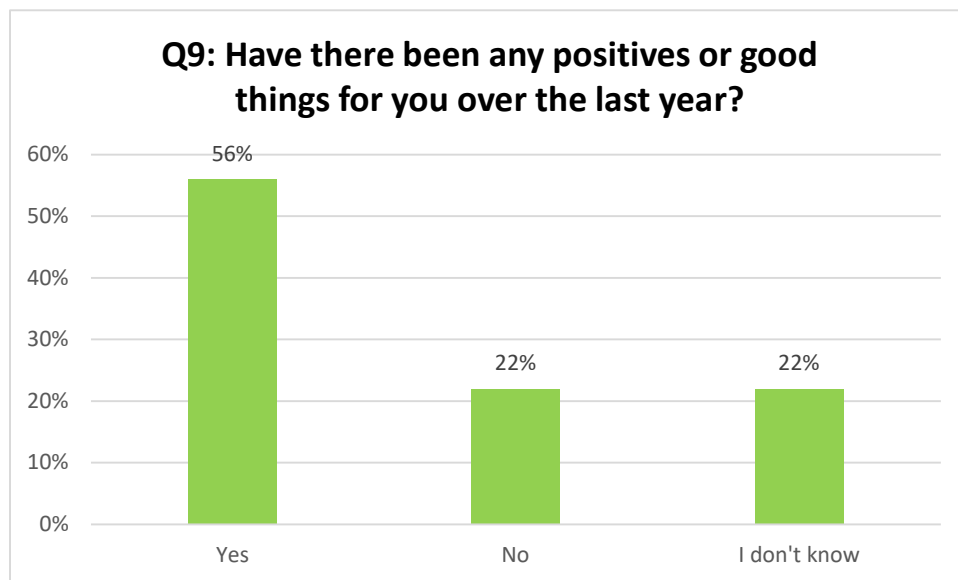
Q10: Can you give us an example of something positive or something you've enjoyed?

This question was only asked of those who ticked 'yes' to Q9. 153 young people gave us examples of positive things or things they've enjoyed since March 2020. These have been edited and themed below.

i.   Family time

The most popular thing the respondents enjoyed doing was simply spending time with their family. Around a quarter said this with many using the phrases 'spending time / more time with family'. We've listed below those that were more unusual in this theme.

- *"Whilst we are all very stressed, I feel closer to my children."*
- *"Seeing everyone home together as a family in our house."*
- *"I've enjoyed being at home."*
- *"I developed a closer relationship with my mum."*
- *"I laughed a lot and was very happy to spend more time with my parents."*
- *"Spending time with my brother and mum. We have become a really close unit. We were strong but we are even more so now."*

ii.   Activities

Young people listed a variety of activities they had enjoyed during lockdown with being outdoors (walks, exercising, cycling, time in the garden, time under the sun) proving very popular. Others acquired new interests and skills or found a renewed passion for things, such as reading, that they previously hadn't the time for. Whilst not strictly an activity, a handful of respondents acquired new pets – mainly dogs but one young person "welcomed two kittens into the family." A selection of the more unique responses under the theme of 'activities' are listed below.

- *"I found a love for cooking and research in history."*
- *"Playing board games, baking."*
- *"Learned new skills in garden and DIY."*

- *"I got the lead role in a play for my acting company (the girl playing the character dropped out of the company) and I've found my new best friend who makes me feel like I can tell her everything."*
- *"I've learned lots of new hobbies such as cosplay, editing, cooking etc."*
- *"Getting better at art."*
- *"Developing some skills, reading things I had aimed to read but didn't have time to due to other commitments (that stopped due to Covid!)."*
- *"I have begun to write stories."*
- *"Discovering new parts of Sheffield."*
- *"Made me focus on my Taekwondo. Have passed my blue belt in Taekwondo."*
- *"Got a lot of time to practise my guitar."*
- *"I learned about money."*
- *"I've become more political."*

iii.   Home learning / not having to go to school

Some respondents admitted they enjoyed not having to go to school with a number giving reasons why. Online and home learning were popular with a small number of young people.

- *"Not going to school. I hate school. I get picked on."*
- *"Being at home more and less time at school (I suffer from anxiety and have learning difficulties so school is hard for me)."*
- *"Streaming lessons means I can access lessons without going into school."*
- *"Not having to get up so early as no journey time to join school."*
- *"My school work is better at home. I have my mum and dad to explain things and I can work without distractions."*
- *"Not feeling scared about people judging me with online learning."*
- *"I felt less pressure doing home school, therefore more relaxed."*
- *"We used to do online learning together, it was fun."*
- *"Liked home school[ing], did well. Teachers at Tapton School helped me. Very good online lessons and structure this time."*

iv. Self-reflection, introspection and appreciation

Lockdown allowed some young people the time, freedom and opportunity to become more at ease with themselves, be grateful for the things they had and, as one put it, "really see what matters most in life."

- *"I have got to know myself better and I enjoy my own company a lot more now."*
- *"It's made me more appreciative of the things I've taken for granted."*
- *"Having more time to focus on myself."*
- *"I got to be more independent about what I want to focus on in life and learnt to be less angry / petty at others just because I'm having a bad day / time."*

v. Seeing friends

When lockdown restrictions lifted and schools reopened, young people enjoyed reconnecting with their friends in person while others talked about maintaining friendships online i.e. FaceTime, Zoom etc.

- *"Become closer with my friends."*
- *"Seeing my friends after not [seeing them] for a few months."*
- *"I've made a few new friends."*
- *"I have appreciated seeing my friends in person more."*
- *"Slowly seeing friends and family again after so long – in a way it's more special."*
- *"Lockdown lifted for a small time so we could see our friends somewhat."*

vi. Going to / returning to school

Returning to school or starting at college was popular with a small number of students.

- *"Be able still to go to school part time has helped break the week up."*
- *"Being at school during lockdown in a small bubble."*
- *"Starting college at Sheaf Training."*

- *"It made me like going to school because I realised that without school life would be boring."*

Finally, we'll end with one positive that doesn't belong in any of the categories above but is worth noting:

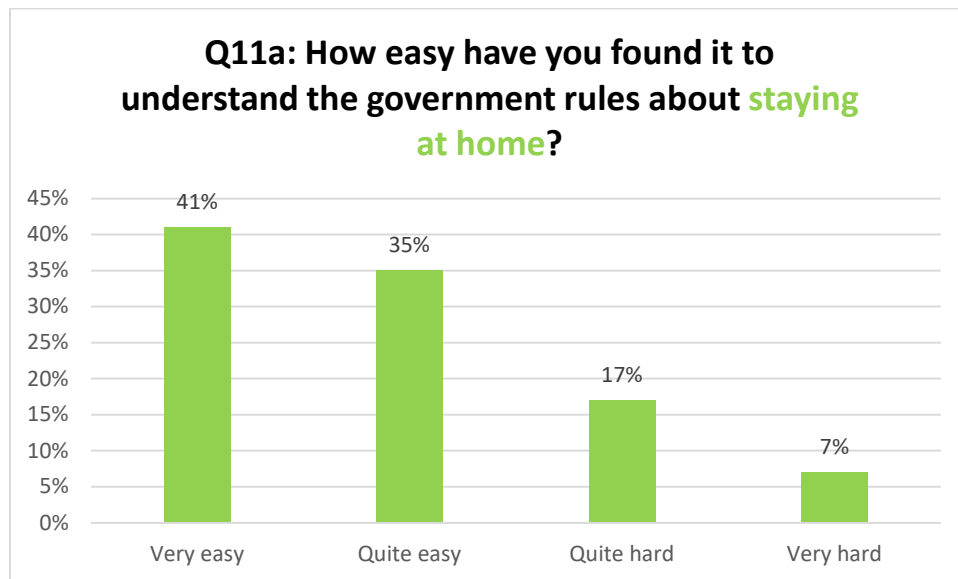- *"Knowing that my dad and grandparents have had their vaccine."*

Q11: How easy have you found it to understand the government rules about…
- **Staying at home**
- **Not mixing with other households indoors**
- **Handwashing / sanitising**
- **Social distancing (2m rule)**
- **Wearing a face covering**
- **Gathering in groups**

Generally, the majority of respondents found following the rules "very easy" or "quite easy" and appeared to take them seriously.
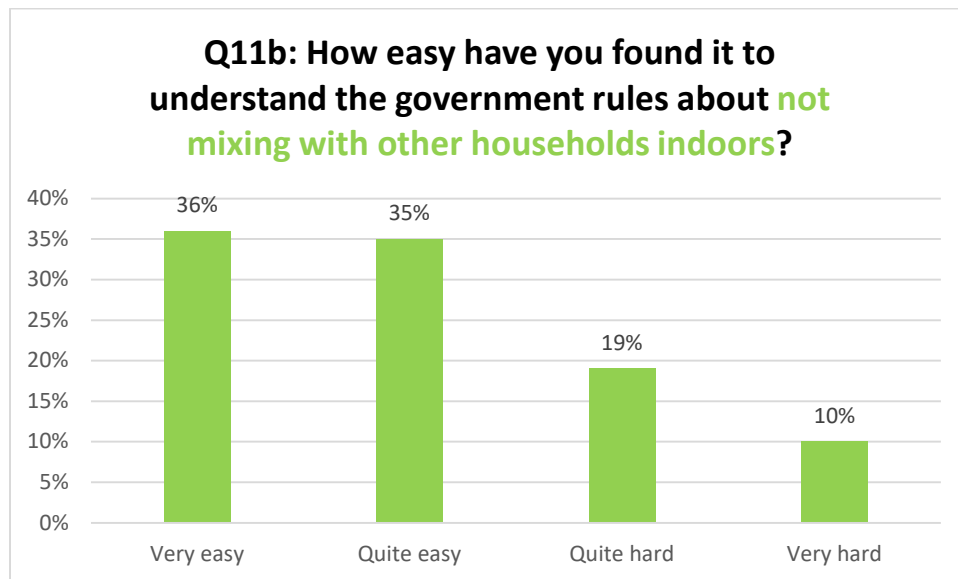
Q11a: How easy have you found it to understand the government rules about staying at home?

- 41% of respondents said "Very easy"
- 35% of respondents said "Quite easy"
- 17% of respondents said "Quite hard"
- 7% of respondents said "Very hard"

Q11a: How easy have you found it to understand the government rules about staying at home?

| Response	Percentage
Very easy	41%
Quite easy	35%
Quite hard	17%
Very hard	7%

Q11b: How easy have you found it to understand the government rules about not mixing with other households indoors?

- 36% of respondents said "Very easy"
- 35% of respondents said "Quite easy"
- 19% of respondents said "Quite hard"
- 10% of respondents said "Very hard"

Q11b: How easy have you found it to understand the government rules about not mixing with other households indoors?

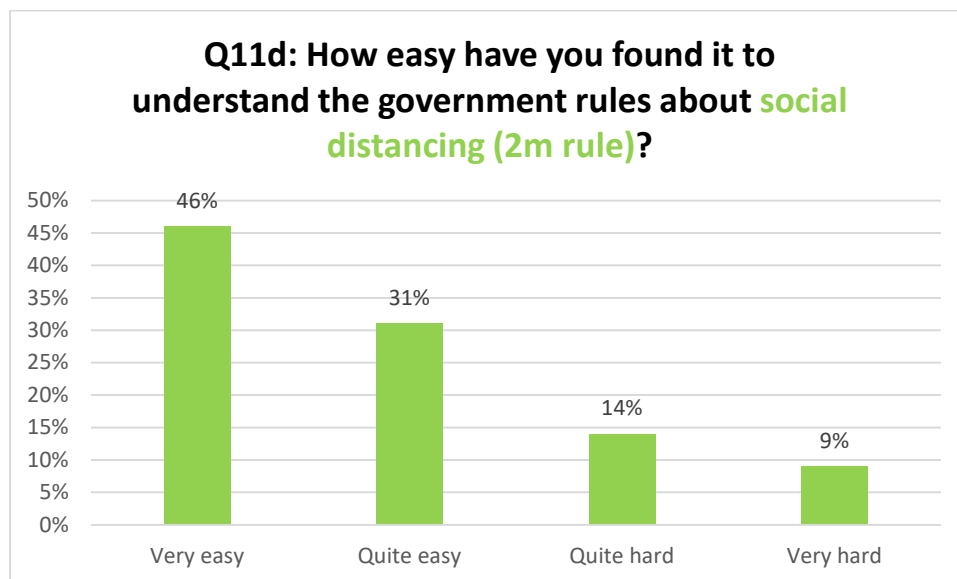|	Very easy	Quite easy	Quite hard	Very hard
	36%	35%	19%	10%

Q11c: How easy have you found it to understand the government rules about handwashing / sanitising?

- 66% of respondents said "Very easy"
- 25% of respondents said "Quite easy"
- 5% of respondents said "Quite hard"
- 4% of respondents said "Very hard"
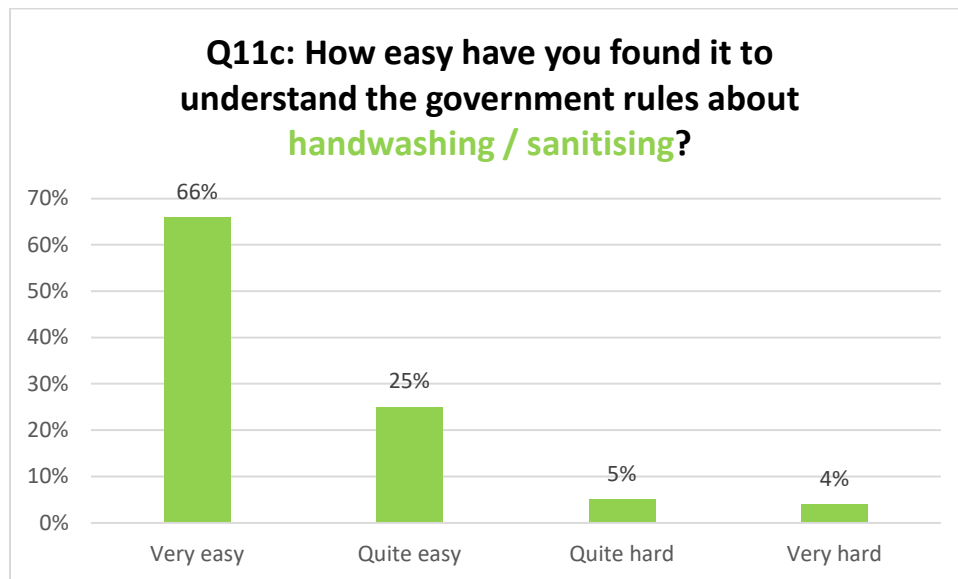
Q11c: How easy have you found it to understand the government rules about handwashing / sanitising?
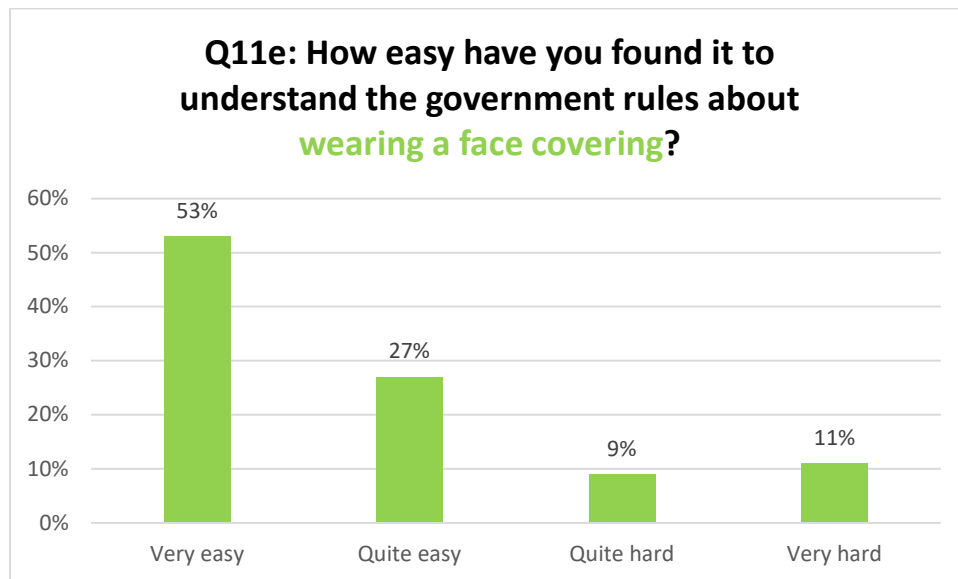
29

Q11d: How easy have you found it to understand the government rules about social distancing (2m rule)?

- 46% of respondents said "Very easy"
- 31% of respondents said "Quite easy"
- 14% of respondents said "Quite hard"
- 9% of respondents said "Very hard"

Q11d: How easy have you found it to understand the government rules about social distancing (2m rule)?

| Very easy	Quite easy	Quite hard	Very hard
46%	31%	14%	9%

Q11e: How easy have you found it to understand the government rules about wearing a face covering?

- 53% of respondents said "Very easy"
- 27% of respondents said "Quite easy"
- 9% of respondents said "Quite hard"
- 11% of respondents said "Very hard"

Q11e: How easy have you found it to understand the government rules about wearing a face covering?

Q11f: How easy have you found it to understand the government rules about gathering in groups?

- 37% of respondents said "Very easy"
- 35% of respondents said "Quite easy"
- 19% of respondents said "Quite hard"
- 9% of respondents said "Very hard"

Q11f: How easy have you found it to understand the government rules about gathering in groups?
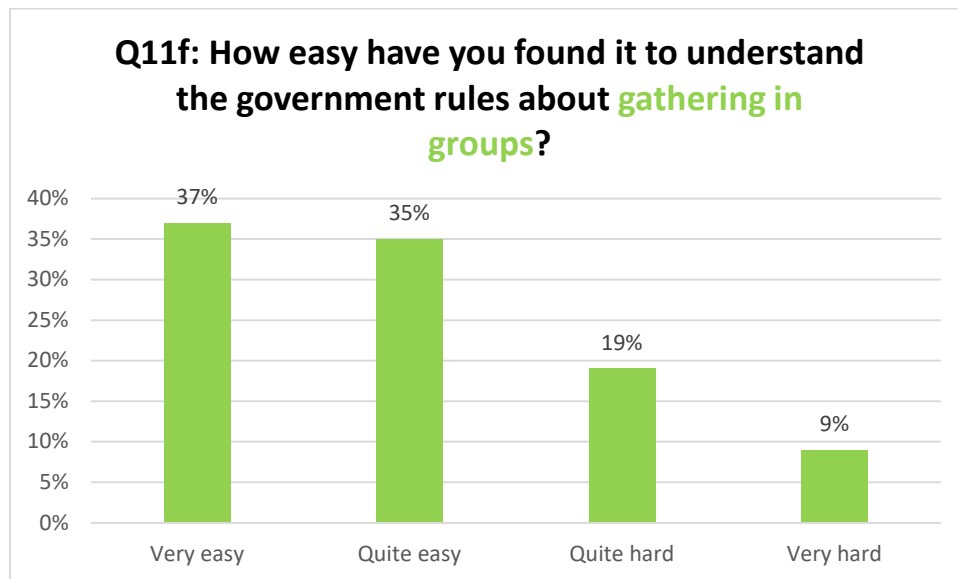
Q12: How important do you think it is to stick to the rules?

- 56% of respondents thought it was "Very important"
- 34% of respondents thought it was "Quite important"
- 4% of respondents thought it was "Not very important"
- 3% of respondents thought it was "Not important at all"
- 3% of respondents said "I'm not sure"

Q12: How important do you think it is to stick to the rules?
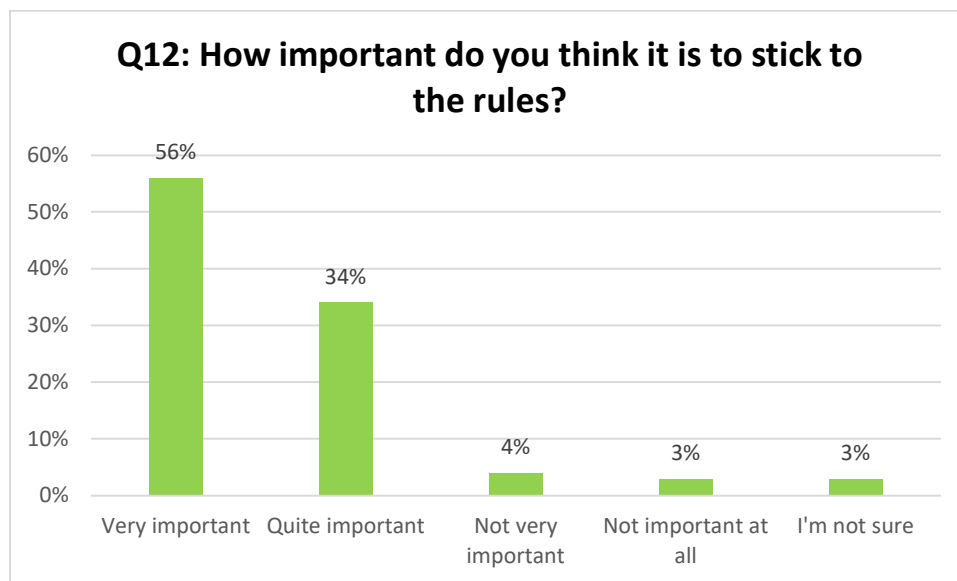
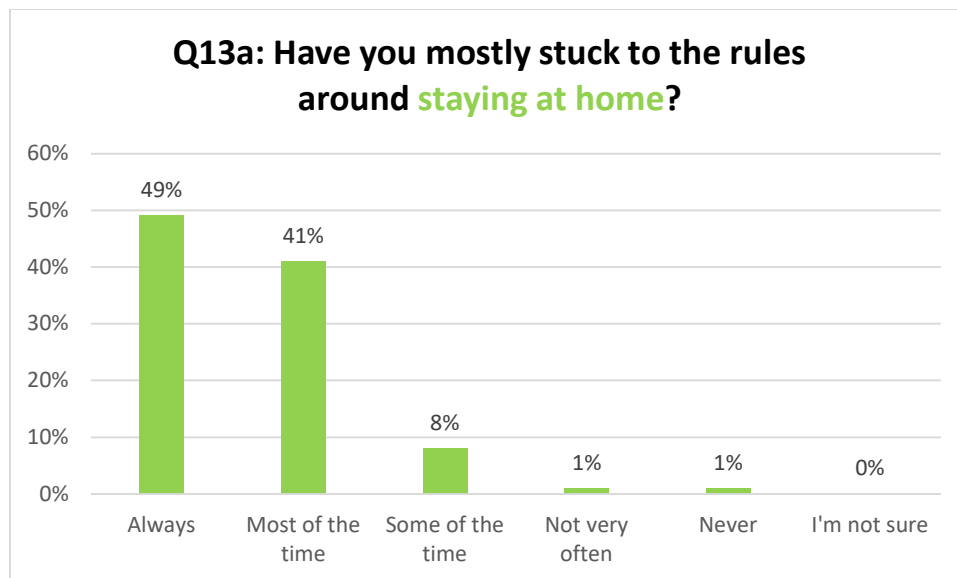**Q13: Have you mostly stuck to the rules around…**

- **Staying at home**
- **Not mixing with other households indoors**
- **Handwashing / sanitising**
- **Social distancing (2m rule)**
- **Wearing a face covering**
- **Gathering in groups**

We made it clear in our introduction to the survey that it was completely anonymous and that there would be no judgement from us about whatever the young people told us. This was important for all of the questions but perhaps none more so than Q13.

The majority of young people said that they had stuck to the rules "always" or "most of the time".
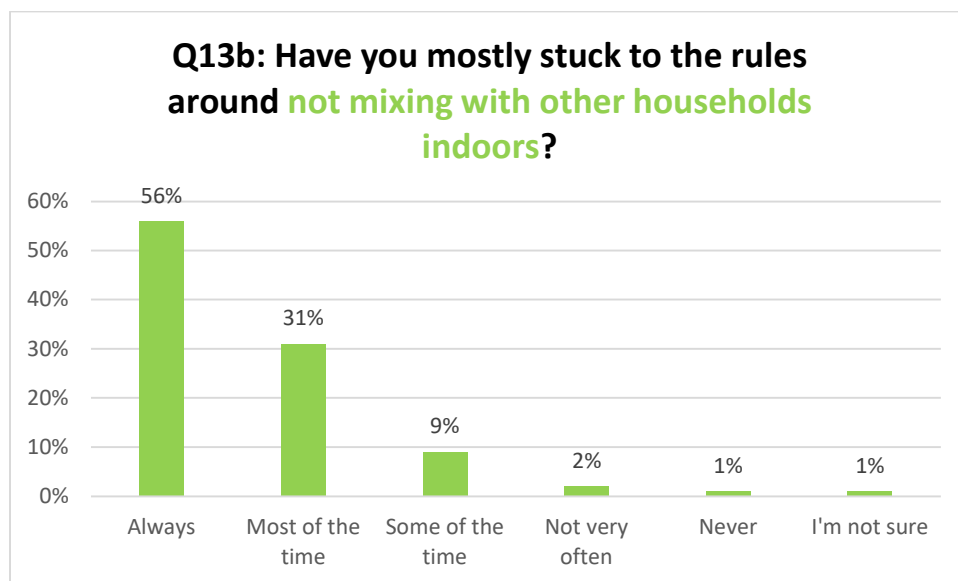
33

Q13a: Have you mostly stuck to the rules around staying at home?

- 49% of respondents said "Always"
- 41% of respondents said "Most of the time"
- 8% of respondents said "Some of the time"
- 1% of respondents said "Not very often"
- 1% of respondents said "Never"
- 0% of respondents said "I'm not sure"

Q13a: Have you mostly stuck to the rules around staying at home?

| Response	Percentage
Always	49%
Most of the time	41%
Some of the time	8%
Not very often	1%
Never	1%
I'm not sure	0%

Q13b: Have you mostly stuck to the rules around not mixing with other households indoors**?**

- 56% of respondents said "Always"
- 31% of respondents said "Most of the time"
- 9% of respondents said "Some of the time"
- 2% of respondents said "Not very often"
- 1% of respondents said "Never"
- 1% of respondents said "I'm not sure"

Q13b: Have you mostly stuck to the rules around not mixing with other households indoors**?**

| Response	Percentage
Always	56%
Most of the time	31%
Some of the time	9%
Not very often	2%
Never	1%
I'm not sure	1%

Q13c: Have you mostly stuck to the rules around handwashing / sanitising?

- 55% of respondents said "Always"
- 32% of respondents said "Most of the time"
- 9% of respondents said "Some of the time"
- 3% of respondents said "Not very often"
- 1% of respondents said "Never"
- 1% of respondents said "I'm not sure"

Q13c: Have you mostly stuck to the rules around handwashing / sanitising?

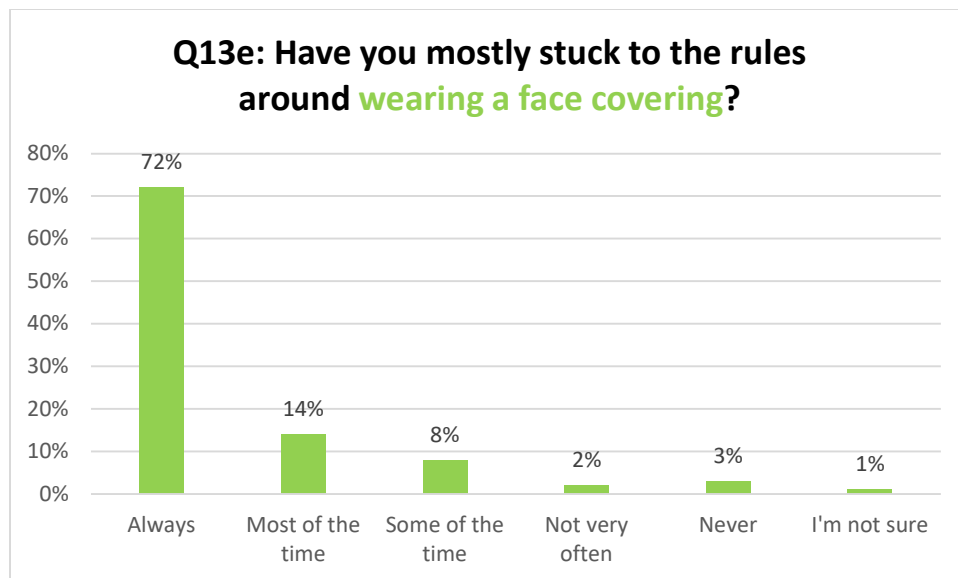| Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Not very often	Never	I'm not sure
55%	32%	9%	3%	1%	1%
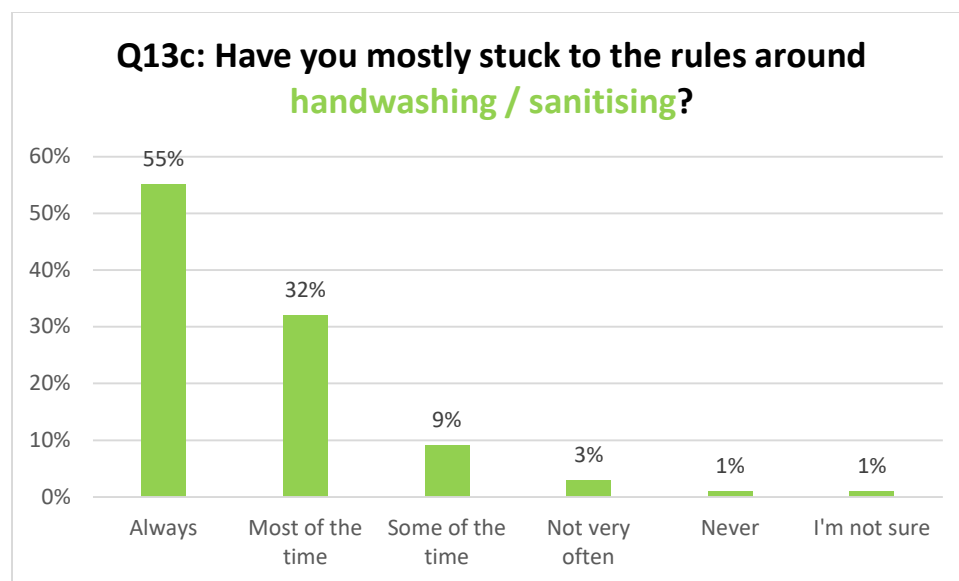
Q13d: Have you mostly stuck to the rules around social distancing (2m rule)?

- 38% of respondents said "Always"
- 39% of respondents said "Most of the time"
- 12% of respondents said "Some of the time"
- 9% of respondents said "Not very often"
- 3% of respondents said "Never"
- 0% of respondents said "I'm not sure"

Q13d: Have you mostly stuck to the rules around social distancing (2m rule)?
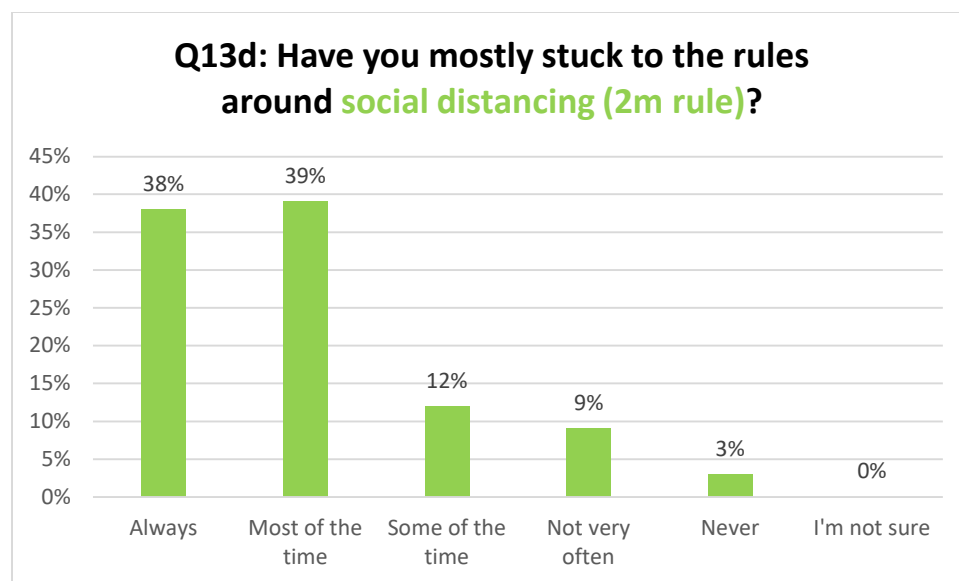
Q13e: Have you mostly stuck to the rules around wearing a face covering?

- 72% of respondents said "Always"

- 14% of respondents said "Most of the time"

- 8% of respondents said "Some of the time"

- 2% of respondents said "Not very often"

- 3% of respondents said "Never"

- 1% of respondents said "I'm not sure"

Q13e: Have you mostly stuck to the rules around wearing a face covering?

Category	Percentage
Always	72%
Most of the time	14%
Some of the time	8%
Not very often	2%
Never	3%
I'm not sure	1%

Q13f: Have you mostly stuck to the rules around gathering in groups?

- 56% of respondents said "Always"
- 25% of respondents said "Most of the time"
- 7% of respondents said "Some of the time"
- 6% of respondents said "Not very often"
- 5% of respondents said "Never"
- 1% of respondents said "I'm not sure"

Q13f: Have you mostly stuck to the rules around gathering in groups?

Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Not very often	Never	I'm not sure
56%	25%	7%	6%	5%	1%
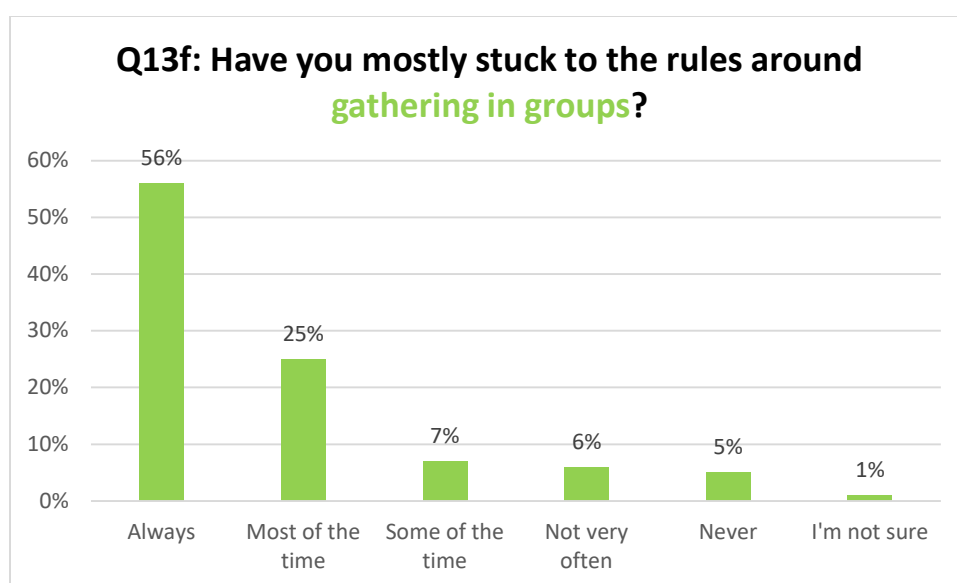
Q14: If you or your friends haven't always stuck to the rules, please tell us why not.

Respondents who had not always stuck to the rules gave a variety of reasons for why not.

i.   Needing to see / help family members

Many respondents made it clear that they needed to see others for practical reasons such as delivering shopping or providing care for elderly relatives.

- *"Gone in my grandparents' home whilst dropping off shopping."*

- *"Support bubble were needed very early on but were only "allowed" later on. I have spent time with grandparents who give my parents respite and cared for me once a week since I was three years old due to my autism."*
- *"I have technically stuck to the rules, because on the rare occasion I haven't, it has been in the capacity of providing care for someone vulnerable i.e. going to my father-in-laws to provide vital care, when no one else could."*
- *"I haven't met friends but I have needed to care for other family members which is sometimes a job for multiple family members at a time."*
- *"I have visited my parents to do their shopping for them as they are on the vulnerable list and can't get out to do this themselves."*
- *"It's not my friends I have gathered with, it was a family member who was very ill and is dying we broke the rules to see."*

ii.   Mixed messages / confusion about the rules

There was a strong sense among the majority of responses grouped under this heading that, especially for young people attending school, the rules were contradictory, confusing and didn't make sense. This is probably summed up best in the following response (but we have included a few others below too): *"If we have been in the same lessons and sat right next to each other and then been standing next to each other in the playground at lunch etc. then it seems silly that we then couldn't all meet up later that same day given we've all been with each all day anyway."*

- *"Seeing other people break the rules (in public, on social media etc) makes it really difficult to not do the same because it feels like I'm missing out and that there's no point in me following the rules if none of my friends are. But when there's a spike in cases or tighter restrictions I always follow the rules."*
- *"It's so extremely difficult for us young adults to deal with something like this without face-to-face contact. I know that some people need it more than others, but this alongside the confusing and unhelpful words of the Prime Minister in this time of need makes it difficult for all of us."*
- *"[I've] been caught out by changes in the rules."*

- *"We want to be able to hug or celebrate if we score a goal and the Premiership footballers do so why can't we?"*

iii. Hard / impossible to socially distance all the time

A lot of these responses refer to being unable to socially distance when attending school, which forms a slight overlap with those above who didn't understand why they were allowed to be in large groups at school but not outside.

- *"At school you can't always be 2 metres apart."*
- *"It's almost impossible to have any social interaction and consciously socially distance at all times."*
- *"School. 30 people are all in one room shoulder-to-shoulder and the first return to school didn't allow face masks in classrooms."*
- *"College bubbles – going into the town centre it's hard to distance on small pavements."*
- *"It is hard not to go near my friends when you don't see them for a long time."*
- *"The two meters rule was hard because even if I try and stick to it others don't. I went shopping with my dad and people were acting as if there's nothing serious going on. It was hard telling others to keep their distance. Some were so rude and never follow the rules outside."*
- *"Not always possible to stay 2 metres in shops and public transport."*

iv. Forgetting to follow the rules

A handful of young people admitted to memory lapses when they were trying to follow the rules.

- *"It's just too hard to remember to social distance when I'm with my friend."*
- *"You sometimes forget when you're talking to someone you may have got a bit close."*
- *"Because we not used to it and feels strange and keep forgetting to follow rules."*
- *"I haven't kept 2 metres away from my friends when outdoors as we always forget or find it difficult when we are playing together."*

- *"Once or twice we've simply forgotten (early on.)"*
- *"I don't like wearing a mask so I often forget to put it on."*

v. Impact on mental health and wellbeing

Young people were very honest about not always following the rules for reasons relating to mental health. These included the need to provide and receive emotional support and generally a desire to not feel alone during the pandemic. A couple of others mentioned being bored and wanting to feel happier as reasons for meeting friends.

- *"I've provided support for a friend suffering a mental health crisis."*
- *"Because mental health matters. If I couldn't see my friend, I don't think I would be here now."*
- *"Finding wearing a face covering has made me really anxious."*
- *"Needed the social contact to get through it and not to be lonely."*
- *"Our mental well-being, as young people we are constantly told that the age that we are at is the best time to be with friends and make memories but Covid had stopped this."*
- *"We're depressed kids that need time away from all the dreary news, it's too much to handle alone."*
- *"Because my mental health is so bad, I just need an escape for my own sanity. If I don't do some of these things I dread to think where I'll end up."*
- *"I needed to see someone other than my parents to talk about my mental well-being."*
- *"Mental health has a bigger impact that Covid on our physical health."*
- *"I needed to get out of the house. I felt like I was climbing the walls."*

vi. Deliberate defiance of the rules

There are a mix of reasons given below by young people who have either deliberately defied the rules themselves or know of those that have.

- *"Because Covid kills literally 0.001% of the population. It's ridiculous we are living like this. There's always a risk of death it doesn't stop us all living."*

- *"The government is incompetent so why should we comply when they are corrupt criminals that do as they please?"*
- *"Young people have sacrificed enough when we are at no risk. Let us live."*
- *"They don't think it's important. It might not affect them but they don't know it will affect other people and families. We need to understand selfishness."*
- *"Some friends at school think they won't get Covid and if they do, they won't get it bad."*
- *"Outside there is very little risk of transmission. Transmission has been shown to be very little affected by hand washing."*
- *"We were fed up of being stuck indoors and met up on the football pitch. We thought we would all be OK. There isn't much virus round here and we are young and fit anyway."*
- *"Too much effort."*
- *"We are a small community so we can manage the risks."*
- *"We've already had Covid and have no vulnerable family members anymore."*

vii.   Young people who have met up with others

Finally, here is a selection of responses from young people telling us about how, when and who they met up during lockdown.

- *"I've arranged to meet up with one friend outdoors for a walk or just to hang out, but if we have bumped into other friends then we have hung round with them as well."*
- *"Lots of friends my age haven't followed the stay home rule and have met up and some had sleepovers."*
- *"I have only been out of the house for hospital appointments or to get essentials with my mum as I'm too young to stay on my own."*
- *"Some of the time I spend time with my friends after school and they have money and I don't. They go into shops and I go with them even if I don't have a mask."*
- *"Met in larger groups than allowed."*
- *"Walking to school in a bigger group because it's safer and we won't get targeted."*

43

- *"Me and my friends go to school together and so we hang out in a group larger than six outside of school."*

And we've included this comment because, while it doesn't sit with any of the above themes, we think it is especially poignant and perhaps encapsulates the hardship endured by Sheffield's young people during the pandemic:

- *"I do not have friends anymore because of this stupid Covid."*

Q15: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience of lockdown and Covid-19?

There were a third of total responses to this (104) final open text question. We've included here a selection of comments that haven't cropped up in previous questions and themes.

i.   Thoughts on the national response to Covid-19 and lockdown etc.

A number of young people wanted to share their thoughts on the government's handling of the pandemic. There was a real sense of anger and frustration in what they told us.

- *"I think the government could've handled the situation a bit better – clearer rules, more locking down when necessary, less locking down when not needed."*
- *"The messages should have been the same for all nations [sic] in the UK. We should have closed our borders sooner."*
- *"We keep coming out of lockdown too early. People are desperate to get out so when the cases dip slightly everyone goes out and causes it to spike so we have to go back into lockdown in an endless cycle."*
- *"Boris Johnson is very bad at running a county and telling us what to do clearly and helping the NHS."*
- *"England was so incredibly unprepared and should've taken more extreme measures sooner – things like ending lockdown for Christmas was unfair for a*

lot of other religious communities such as Hindus or Muslims and was poor judgment."

- *"Not really apart from the government were really annoying because they weren't clear AT ALL."*
- *"It could have been handled better. Rules changed very quickly and didn't always make sense. Some rules contradicted others. It made life more stressful."*

ii. The negative effects of the pandemic on young people

Broadly speaking, the majority of the remaining comments are on the negative, harmful and upsetting effects of everything relating to Covid-19. Some of these responses make for hard reading.

- *"Drank, did drugs for the first time."*
- *"It's been very difficult to understand and believe this is going away."*
- *"It is the worst experience of my life and if it doesn't end soon, I am not making it out the other side."*
- *"No positive news on TV. Always talking about numbers of deaths."*
- *"I have put weight on and struggled emotionally."*
- *"Social isolation for teenagers is the opposite of what we should be. Y11s basically left school in March 2020 and left to fester."*
- *"More mental health support needed in schools. A psychologist / counsellor should be employed by every primary school."*
- *"It was the most difficult and stressful experience of my life."*
- *"I've lost things I can't get back or do again and I'm sad all the time about it."*
- *"It has been a bit surreal and I'd quite like it to end now."*
- *"Life-changing."*
- *"We need an end date; we can't live like this!"*
- *"Never again. Please."*

iii. The positive effects of lockdown on young people

The counterpoint to the comments above is that some young people found aspects of lockdown positive or pleasant.

- *"I think the feeling of everyone going through it together has been really reassuring."*
- *"It's been hard I guess but I've been reading a lot and I've started to watch Marvel and that's kind of distracted me from the pandemic."*
- *"I had great support from my school with regards to my learning and haven't fallen behind (I'm in Y9)."*
- *"Not much different from 'normal' life."*
- *"It has made me appreciate family / friends more."*
- *"I didn't miss school and I got better sleep and could do other things in the day.*
- *"I feel I have had more fresh air than usual as when I get back from school I like to walk in the park with a friend, now I am allowed, and as the weather is nice, I stay out longer. I used to just sit in my bedroom."*
- *"I was very lucky with my learning; we also have enough space in our house and all have IT equipment and a lovely garden. We live close to parks and the Botanical Gardens and parks. Also we can walk to town and the country. My grandparents live close by so when we could see each other outdoors we did. Our neighbourhood is very supportive of each other."*

Finally, we'll close the open text responses with this measured, considered reply:

- *"In the beginning of the pandemic, we witnessed humanity at its best – kindness, thoughtfulness, cooperation, and now [spring 2021) I have noticed more selfishness, people disheartened, loss of faith in the government, people not listening."*

v. About You

The survey concluded with optional questions about the respondents' personal circumstances: gender, age, ethnicity and whether or not they had a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND).

Q16: Are you…

- 48% of respondents said "Male"
- 49% of respondents said "Female"
- 3% of respondents said "Other (I prefer to self-describe)"
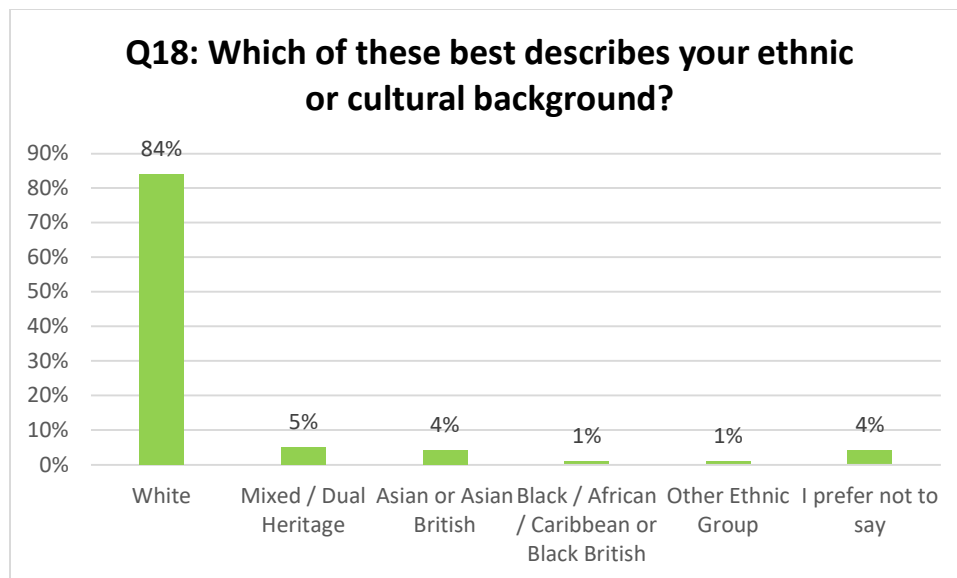
Q16: Are you...?
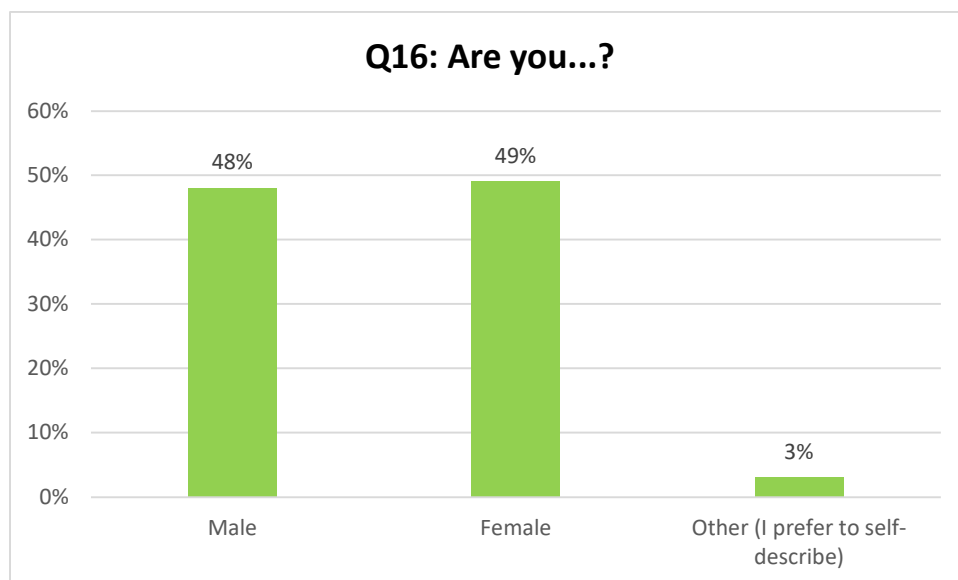
Q17: How old are you?

- 12% of respondents were 11 years old
- 13% of respondents were 12 years old
- 13% of respondents were 13 years old
- 16% of respondents were 14 years old
- 12% of respondents were 15 years old
- 14% of respondents were 16 years old
- 12% of respondents were 17 years old
- 9% of respondents were 18 years old

Q17: How old are you?

Age	Percentage
11	12%
12	13%
13	13%
14	16%
15	12%
16	14%
17	12%
18	9%
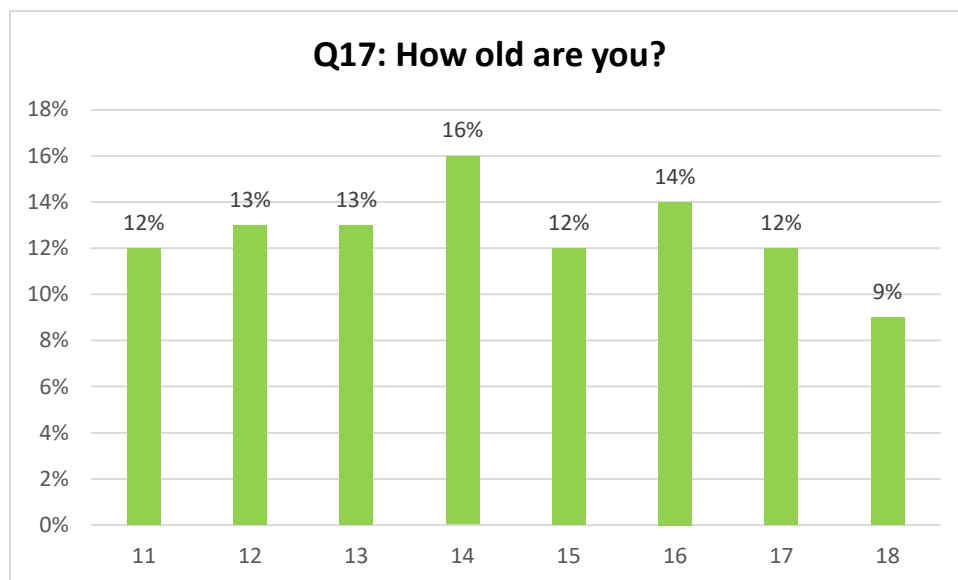
Q18: Which of these best describes your ethnic or cultural background?

- 84% of respondents said "White"

- 5% of respondents said "Mixed / Dual Heritage"

- 4% of respondents said "Asian or Asian British"

- 1% of respondents said "Black / African / Caribbean or Black British"

- 1% of respondents said "Other Ethnic Group"

- 4% of respondents said "I prefer not to say"

Q18: Which of these best describes your ethnic or cultural background?

Category	Percentage
White	84%
Mixed / Dual Heritage	5%
Asian or Asian British	4%
Black / African / Caribbean or Black British	1%
Other Ethnic Group	1%
I prefer not to say	4%

Q19: Do you have a learning difficulty or physical disability (sometimes known as a special educational need)?

- 29% of respondents said "Yes"
- 63% of respondents said "No"
- 7% of respondents said "I am not sure"

Q19: Do you have a learning difficulty or physical disability (sometimes known as a special educational need)?

Yes	29%
No	63%
I am not sure	7%
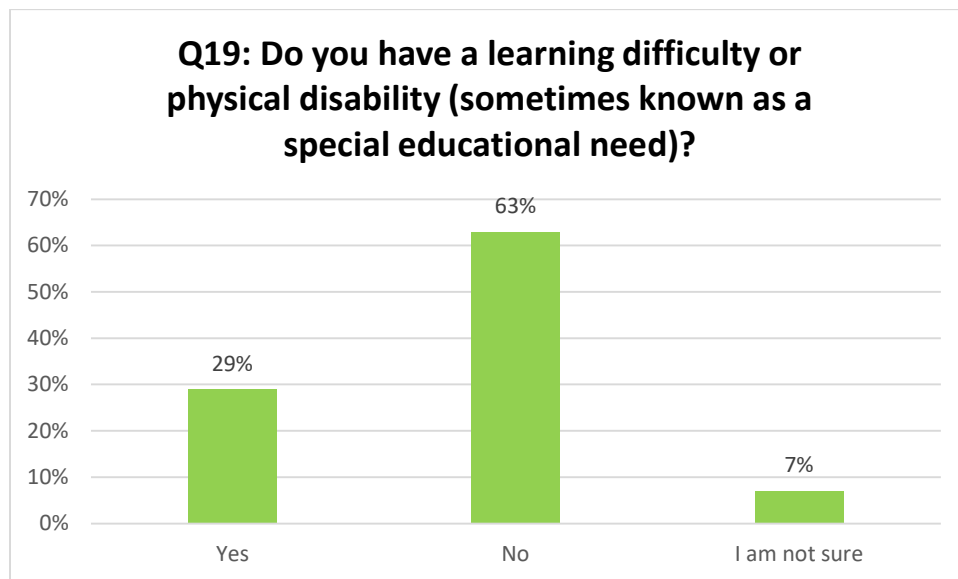
We haven't filtered the responses to the survey by any of these characteristics. If you would like to take a look at how young people in these different categories responded to the survey, however, please email us at: OVM@sheffield.gov.uk and we will be more than happy to provide details.

vi. National Research Studies

Our survey and this report are Sheffield-centric, however, a great deal of research has been done since March 2020 into the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on children and young people. The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) have compiled the details of many of these studies on their website[3]. Over 50 surveys and studies have been completed for which the data and reports are now available. A further 20+ studies are ongoing (plus others which may not have been submitted to the RCPH).

We have included below a selection of the national studies that reflect our local findings:

- To Lockdown and Back (Growing up Under COVID)
- Co-SPACE Covid-19: supporting parents, adolescents and children during epidemics)
- CCopeY: Young people's mental health and coping styles during and after COVID-19 lockdown
- Our views on COVID-19
- Stress among children in England during the Coronavirus lockdown
- Young People's Mental Health during the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Mental health of children and young people in England
- Children's experiences of physical activity in lockdown
- Life on Hold
- Mental health and COVID-19: In our own words
- Impact of lockdown on young people (PDF)
- Coronavirus: Impact on young people with mental health needs

---

[3] COVID-19 - research studies on children and young people's views | RCPCH

52