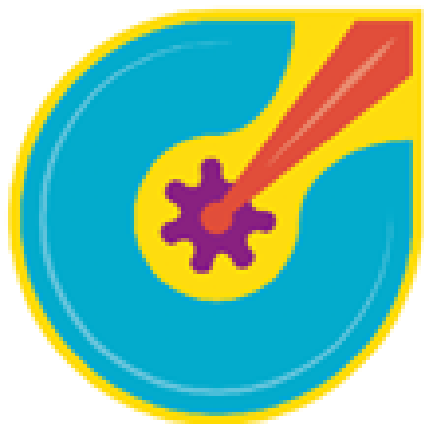


What does research tell us about the mental health and wellbeing of young people during the COVID-19 pandemic?



DR REBECCA WATSON
& ELISE SELLARS



CoRAY

Covid-19 response: Mental Health
Resources for and by Young People

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD & EMERGING MINDS



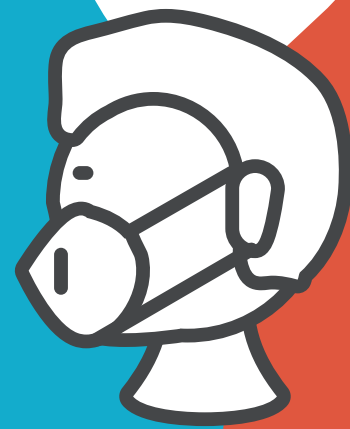
Medical
Research
Council



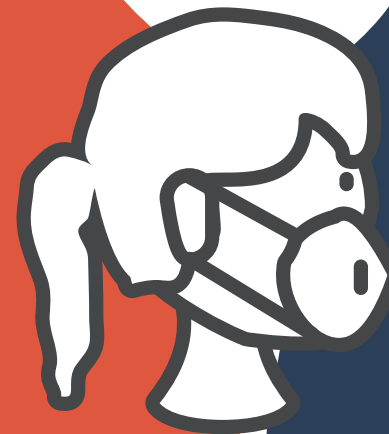
Mental Health & Wellbeing

Young people's mental health and wellbeing has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in different ways

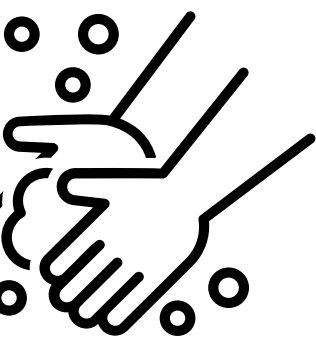
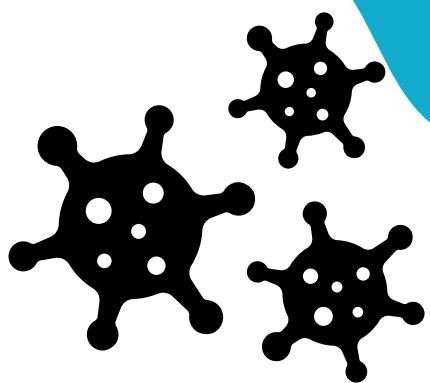
1 in 6 children & young people in the UK were experiencing a probable mental health disorder in July 2020



Many young people have said their mental health has got worse during the pandemic, but some young people said their mental health has improved



1.5 million young people are predicted to need mental health support over the coming months due to the pandemic



Overview

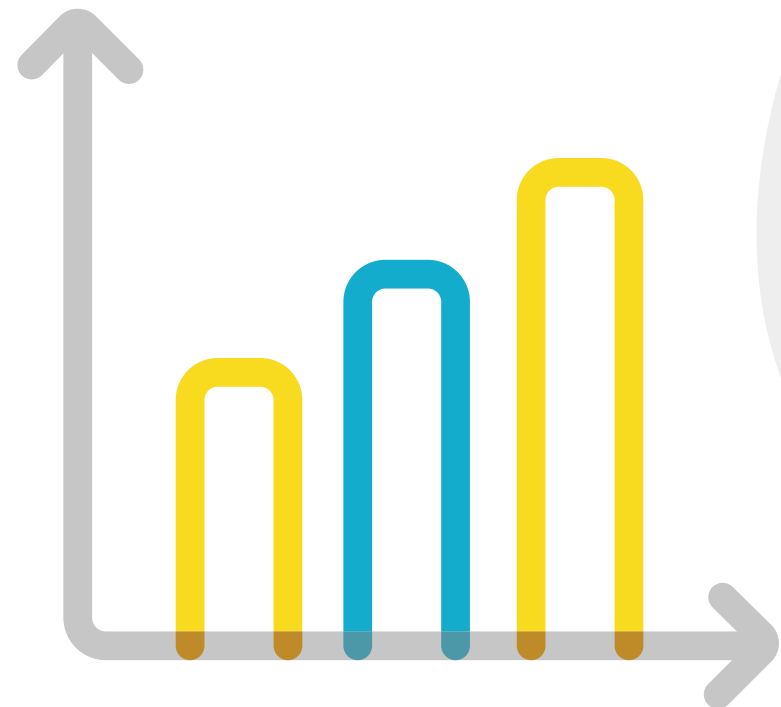
This is a summary of what the research evidence tells us about the impact of the pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of young people **aged 11 – 16** across the **UK**.

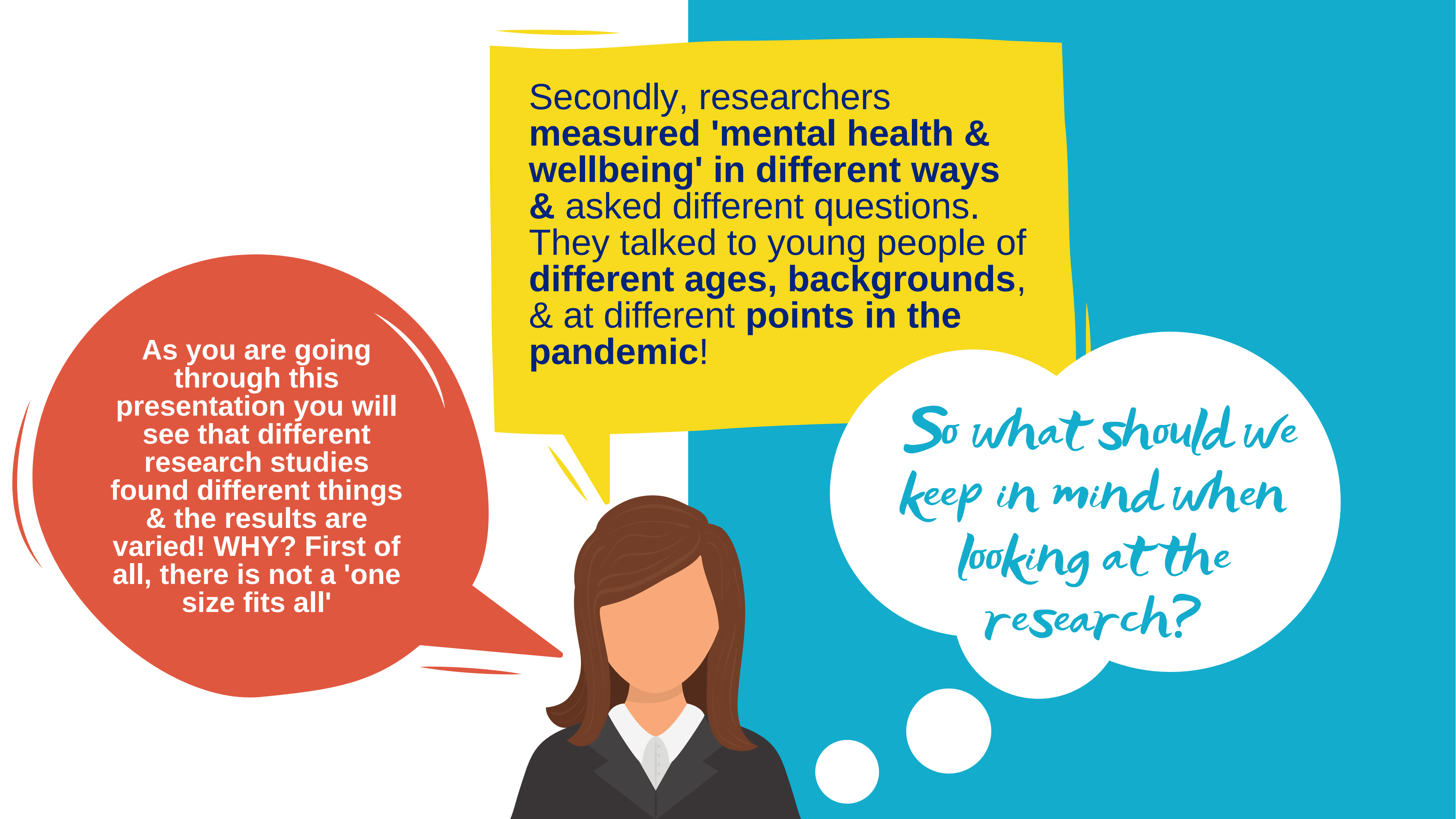
It focuses on:

1) **key mental health and wellbeing outcomes**

2) **changes to daily life** that may affect mental health

3) **groups of young people** that may have been **affected differently** by the pandemic



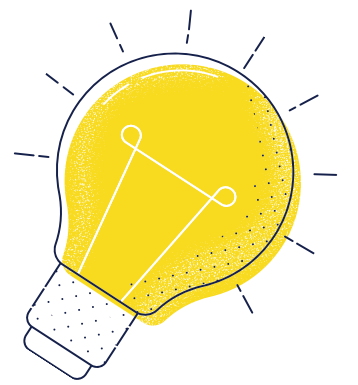


As you are going through this presentation you will see that different research studies found different things & the results are varied! WHY? First of all, there is not a 'one size fits all'

Secondly, researchers **measured 'mental health & wellbeing' in different ways** & asked different questions. They talked to young people of **different ages, backgrounds,** & at different **points in the pandemic!**

So what should we keep in mind when looking at the research?

What do we need to think about?



TYPES OF INFORMATION

SURVEY



Most studies use surveys or questionnaires which lots of people complete - these studies can tell us if large groups of people are having similar experiences

INTERVIEW



Some studies use interviews which a smaller number of people complete - these studies give us a more detailed look at what certain people are experiencing

TYPES OF STUDY

CROSS-SECTIONAL



Most studies are cross sectional, which means they only look at people's responses at one point in time. These answers may be compared to other people's answers at a different point in time.

LONGITUDINAL



Some studies are longitudinal, which means they ask the same people to take part more than once over a period of time.

TYPES OF SAMPLE

CONVENIENCE



Most studies have a sample that is **not representative of the general public** - this means that certain groups of people are not properly represented (i.e. females/Asian background/low income)

REPRESENTATIVE



But some studies do have **a sample that is representative of the whole population** - this means it is more likely that the views of lots of different people are represented

Look out
for these
badges in
this report

*They will give you more information about
the studies & help you evaluate the evidence*

AGE GROUP

11-
16

NUMBER OF PEOPLE

2176

PERSON WHO REPORTED



YOUNG
PERSON



PARENT



PROFESS-
IONAL

(i.e.
teacher,
social worker)

STAGE OF THE PANDEMIC

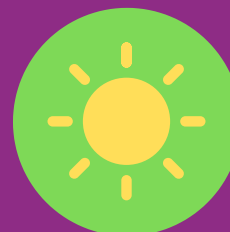
PRE-
LOCKDOWN



LOCKDOWN
(end March -
end June)



SUMMER
(end June -
end Aug)

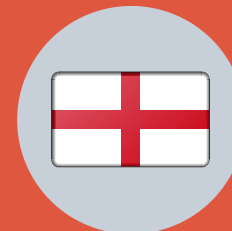


AUTUMN
(Sept - Oct)



PART OF THE UK

ENGLAND



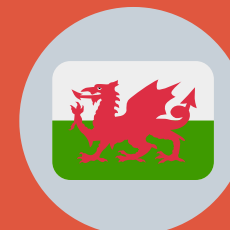
SCOTLAND



N. IRELAND



WALES



UK

TYPE OF ORGANISATION



ACADEMICS



CHARITIES



PUBLIC
BODIES (i.e.
Children's
Commission-
er, NHS
Digital)

PART 1: The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on key mental health & wellbeing outcomes

anxiety
stress
depression
boredom
loneliness

restlessness
anger
happiness



Feeling anxious, worried or stressed

Lots of studies have asked young people to say how worried, anxious or stressed they have felt during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Feeling anxious was quite common for a lot of young people.

Around half of young people have been feeling worried at least *some* of the time during the pandemic

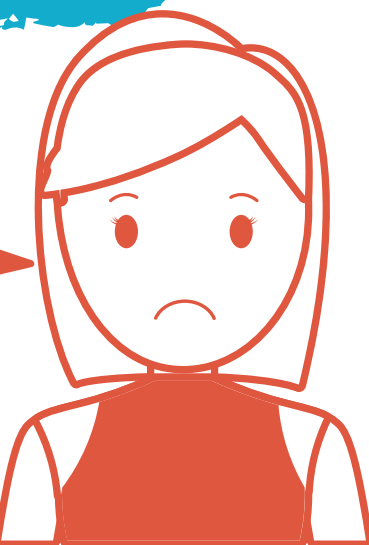
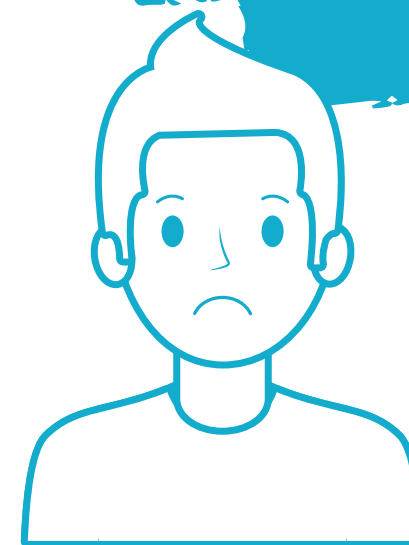
12 - 18



13 - 17

Feeling anxious was one of the **top 3 emotions** experienced by young people in lockdown

Too much time to think & worry



Feeling anxious, worried or stressed

Although lots of young people say they are worrying, it is unclear whether young people are feeling more stressed or anxious than they were before the pandemic.

Anxiety levels were lower...

when young people's answers were compared to their own self-reported anxiety before the pandemic



13-14

No change in stress/anxiety levels...

when young people's answers were compared a similar group before the pandemic



12-17



Anxiety levels were higher...

when young people's answers were compared to answers from similar young people before the pandemic. When asked during lockdown young people/parents also reported they were more stressed, anxious or fearful than before



8-24



Feeling anxious, worried or stressed

Young people have said they have been worrying about a range of different things.

Worries about daily life...

Young people have said they have been worried about **school, exams, education, the future, work, relationships** with family and friends, and their **hobbies**, as well as the **economy, money**, having **food** and **essential items**.



Worries about the virus...

Young people described worrying about **catching the virus**, or their **friends/family catching it**.



Feeling anxious, worried or stressed



The types of things young people have been worrying, stressed or concerned about may have changed over time

Experienced a diverse range of stressors such as school, big crowds, appearance, bullying, gaming, allergies, negative interactions with friends



8-17

Most worries related to coronavirus in some way i.e. the ways it affected daily life



Worries about catching coronavirus, their health/health of their family and friends; as well as food shortages/money worries



11-24



PRE-LOCKDOWN

LOCKDOWN

Feeling anxious, worried or stressed



The types of things young people have been worrying, stressed or concerned about may have changed over time

Worries around education... e.g. school closures, school work, learning from home, exams, academic pressures & educational opportunities

8-25



Stress around not seeing friends

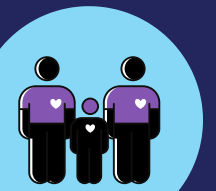
The longer term impact - economy, jobs, social life

Worries about job prospects, the economy, personal futures



Most young people were **comfortable** or looking forward to going back to school... but some were concerned about going back to school

School work/pressure, uncertainty, transitions, changes to friendships



LOCKDOWN

LOCKDOWN EASED

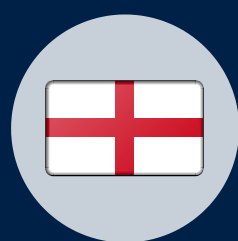
Feeling anxious, worried or stressed



Overall, it is still unclear whether young people are feeling more or less stressed or anxious as the pandemic continues. A few studies are tracking changes in feelings over time...

Stress levels may have gone down over lockdown...

a survey of found that a third of young people felt stressed most/every day in March, but this reduced to a quarter of young people in June.



12-17

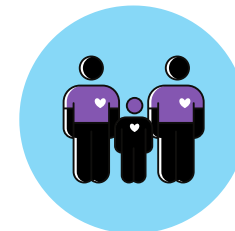
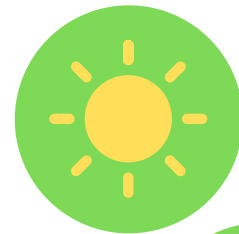


Emotional difficulties (which includes worries)

went down slightly / or stayed the same at the beginning of lockdown.

Overall, girls had higher levels of **emotional difficulties** than boys, & this **increased** slightly at the **end of the summer** before schools reopened.

11-16



Proportion of **young people** with **probable emotional difficulty** did not change



Feeling sad, depressed or bored

Over half of young people have reported **feeling sad** at least **some of the time**, but the **other half** reported **not feeling sad** very often.



11002

12-18



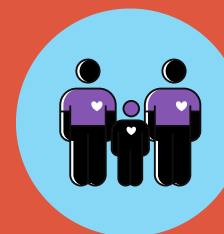
Being bored and unable to do things that are normally enjoyable **was one of the worst things about lockdown** and for many young people this made their **mental health worse**



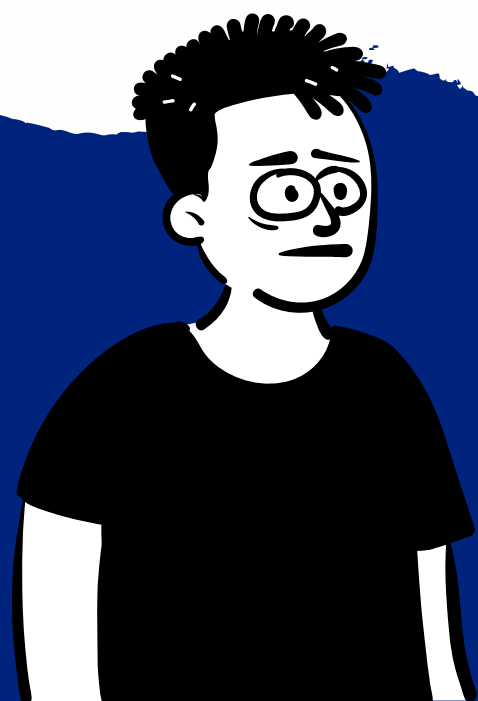
9-25



Studies have asked young people to say whether they have been feeling sad, depressed or bored during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Some felt increased **mood swings, heightened emotions** or an increased sense of loss



Feeling sad, depressed or bored

Although many young people have been feeling sad or bored, it is unclear whether young people are feeling more sad or depressed than they were before the pandemic.

Higher levels of depressive symptoms when

compared to answers from similar young people before the pandemic & when young people compared their feelings to how they felt before lockdown

8-24



more sad, trapped, bored



Lower levels of depressive symptoms with possible differences between genders...

- **Lower for girls** when answers compared to a similar group before the pandemic
- **Lower for boys** when answers were compared to their own self-reported mood before the pandemic



12-17



Feeling sad, bored

Levels of
boredom may have
increased... and
young people have
reported having less
fun things to do



8-
14

10508



Girls reported
having... **less fun,**
feeling **less cheerful**
less happy
feeling **less good**
about themselves

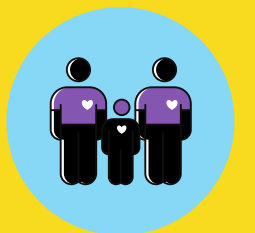
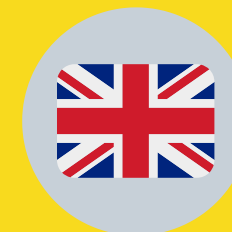
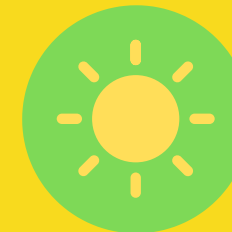
It is also unclear whether
young people are feeling
more or less sad,
depressed or bored as the
pandemic continues.



depressed or

Emotional difficulties
(which include
feeling unhappy) went
down slightly / or stayed
the same at the beginning
of lockdown.

Overall, girls had higher
levels of **emotional**
difficulties than boys, &
this **increased** slightly at
the **end of the summer**
before schools reopened.

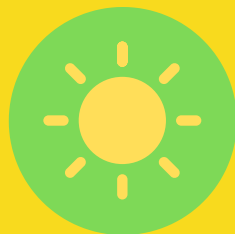


11-
16



Feeling lonely, disconnected or isolated

Feelings of loneliness and isolation have been common for young people during the pandemic... despite staying in touch with friends and socialising online



13 - 25

Around three quarters of young people saying loneliness made their **mental health worse**



Missing seeing/being with friends and feeling socially isolated were top priorities, a main challenge of lockdown, & had a big impact on how young people felt



Feeling lonely, disconnected or isolated

Most studies reported increased levels of loneliness during the pandemic, but this was not the case for everyone, & some studies found no change or less loneliness.

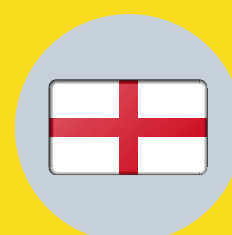
Increased levels of loneliness...

for some when young people were asked to compare how they felt before lockdown.



8-24

11-16



but others **felt the same or less lonely** than before lockdown.

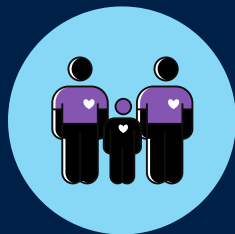
'It's great to have extra family time-even if its forced'



Feeling lonely, disconnected or isolated

Some studies reported that young people feel more isolated, but others suggest that young people feel the same levels of connectedness, or actively reached out to support others

Some young people became more **introverted, isolated** at home, and **more attached to parents**



No change or increased levels of connectedness...
students **school connectedness**

improved overall from before the pandemic, and there was **no change in peer or family connectedness.**



13 - 14



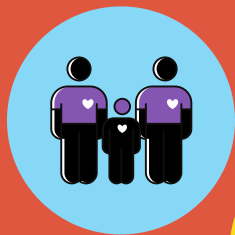
Many young people spent time reaching out **& supporting others by sharing positive wishes** and encouraging messages with friends, family & their community.



friends

Feeling angry, frustrated, restless or hyperactive

Almost a third of children and young people were often **frustrated** and **getting angry more easily**



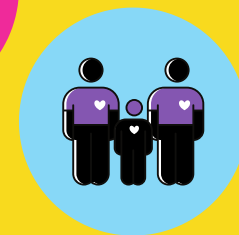
Young people reported **no changes in behavioural issues or hyperactivity** over 1 month during lockdown

12-16



During lockdown there was no change in behavioural difficulties but a **slight increase in hyperactivity, restlessness and inattention**

12-16



Happiness & wellbeing

A number of studies have assessed young people's happiness and wellbeing during the pandemic

Around half of **young people** said they felt **happy *most of the time*** & most reported **at least moderate** levels of **wellbeing**



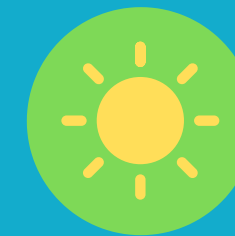
10 - 25



... but **more than a quarter** had **low levels / fifth extremely concerned** about their **wellbeing** & around a **tenth** of young people said they were **not happy very often**

More specifically...

Around a fifth of young people reported **low happiness** regarding **the future**.



12 - 17



but **less than a tenth** said they had low levels of happiness in their **home life**

Young people reported **lower positive wellbeing** than **parents**



Happiness & wellbeing

For some, the pandemic brought relief from previous school and health pressures, such as acting as a carer, mental health difficulties and bullying.



12-18



But for some, remote schooling took a toll on young people's wellbeing...

[63] with three quarters of young people saying they miss school/college



8-18

Happiness & wellbeing

But it is unclear whether levels of wellbeing have changed throughout the pandemic

**A small increase
in wellbeing
during lockdown...**

when comparing
levels of wellbeing
with levels of
wellbeing before the
pandemic.

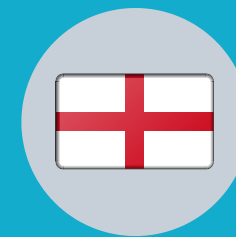


13-
14



But when asked about the effect
of lockdown on general
happiness... (approximately)
third/half - worse
quarter/third - better
quarter - no change

11-
16



PART 2: CHANGES TO DAILY LIFE

Young people have experienced a lot of changes to their daily life which may have had an impact on their mental health and wellbeing



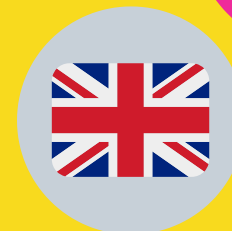
sleep
education
screen
time
physical
activity
home
environment

COPING WITH CHANGE

Most young people said they had **coped well overall with changes** that the government put in place due to the pandemic



10-17

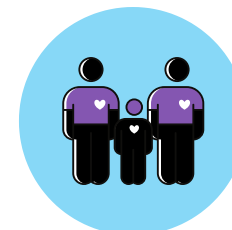


The majority of young people were reportedly **coping fine or quite well** with **loss of their usual routine**

13-25



But lack of structure & routine had a **negative impact for some**



Young people were coping the least well with...

Not seeing friends or family - 1/3

Touching face less often - 1/5

School closing / work at home - 1/5



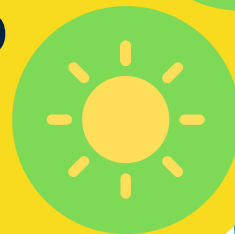
10-17



CHANGES TO SLEEP

Studies have asked young people about changes to their sleep which can have an impact on their mental health & wellbeing

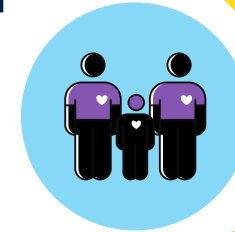
A third of young people said they had more **trouble sleeping during lockdown** ... and a similar amount said they were often **too worried to sleep**



Young people reported that compared to before the pandemic, around a third of young people reported **poorer sleep quality**



A fifth of young people were **sleeping less** since March.



Of those with a probable mental health disorder... around half reported sleep problems

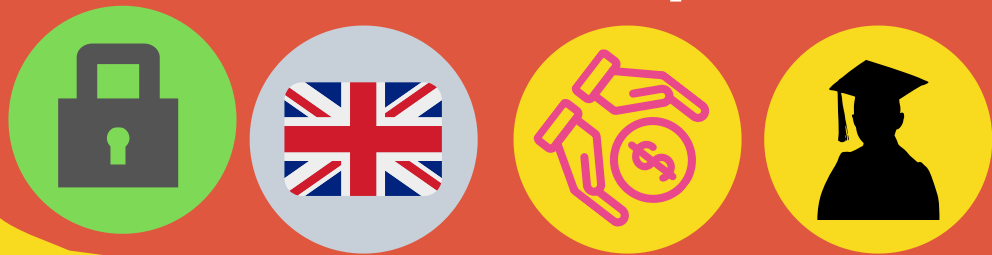


CHANGES IN THE HOME ENVIRONMENT

Young people have had to adjust to spending a lot more time at home during the pandemic, which can have an impact on their mental health and wellbeing

Findings were mixed...

almost a third of parents reported **less conflict** in the home, with nearly a quarter reporting **more conflict** ... with some indications of **strains in family relationships**



Many young people **enjoyed more time with family/caregivers**,



Most young people have **felt safe** during the pandemic, but a minority did not feel safe very often.

Over the course of lockdown, parents reported **less arguments and disagreements**



... but girls with a **probable mental health** disorder were more likely to have heard/seen **arguments** among adults in the home

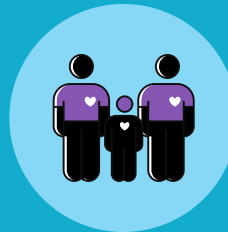


CHANGES IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Studies have asked young people about changes to their physical activity levels, which can have an impact on their mental health & wellbeing

Most young people were able to **spend time outside and/or in the natural environment**, but for some access to outside spaces has been limited

4-16



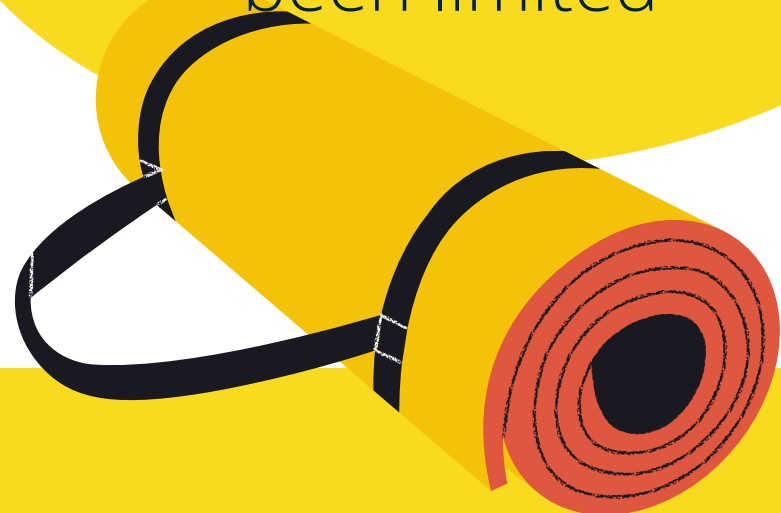
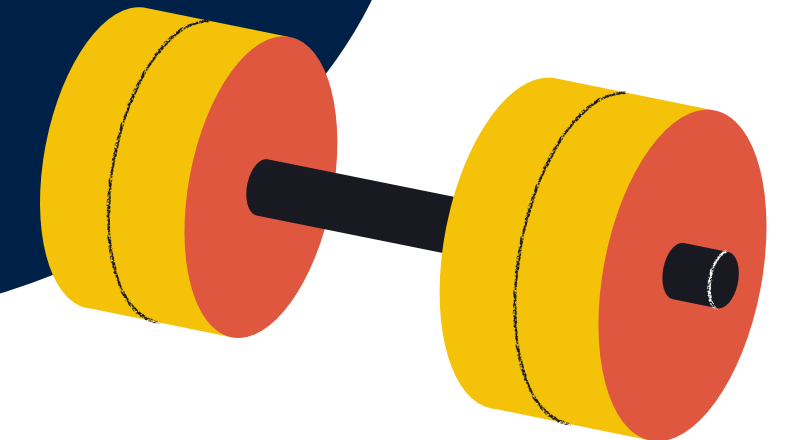
4-16



At the start of lockdown, around two thirds of young people said they took part in **more than 30 minutes** of energetic **physical activity** per day & spent more than 30 minutes **outside a day**

But.. over half of young people said they were exercising less than before... with around a third exercising more

Nearly **two thirds** spent **more time relaxing**



CHANGES IN EDUCATION

Young people have experienced a lot of changes in education which can have an impact on their mental health & wellbeing

Three quarters of young people said they were **worried** about how their **education/future** might be effected because of lockdown



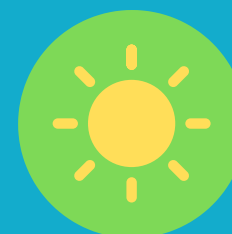
9-25

Almost half of young people found it **harder to manage school work...** in but a quarter/third found it easier



8-18

Three quarters would **feel comfortable going to school** - with less than a tenth not feeling comfortable.

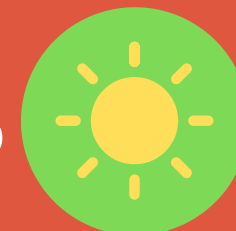


Uncertainty around school & cancellation of exams also caused **anxiety** for many



15-18

... but **young people with a probable mental health disorder** were **less likely** to get regular **support** from school/college



CHANGES IN ONLINE ACTIVITY

Young people have had to adjust to communicating differently and to spending a lot more time online during the pandemic, which may have affected their mental health & wellbeing

Almost all young people **missed being face to face** with people

Most young people regularly communicated with friends and family via video chat.

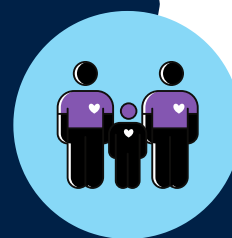
More than half the adolescents were using a range of other means to communicate with friends:

social media
phone

WhatsApp/text
messaging



12-16



More young people than parents are using social media to **keep in touch**.

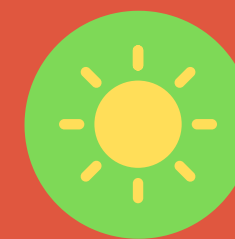
A third said social media had a **positive impact** on their mental health and less than half found the impact **neutral**

14-25



But... three quarters of young people said they were **tired of being online all the time**

11-16



Quarter of girls feeling more **social pressure**, including their **appearance**. Nearly half more worried about **fake news**

HELP SEEKING & ACCESSING SUPPORT

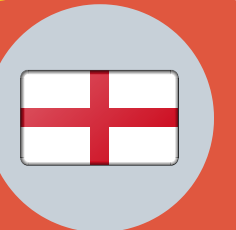
An **increase**
in **demand**
for digital
mental
health
support



Young people may have experienced differences
in trying to access mental health support during
the pandemic

If young people
felt they needed
support...

Over half would speak to a
parent/carer or friend
Less than a quarter would
contact someone at
school, another family
member, **trusted adult**
or look **online**



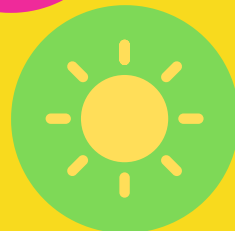
8-
18



Around a **quarter** of parents said
they **would not know** where to
turn for **advice/information** &
nearly **a third said** there was **not**
enough support available

Nearly a **fifth**
of young people
with a **probable**
mental health
disorder said they
did not receive the
mental health
support they
needed

5-
16



Positive outcomes from changes to daily life

There were a range of things young people liked about the lockdown period, including...



Enjoying **being at home**

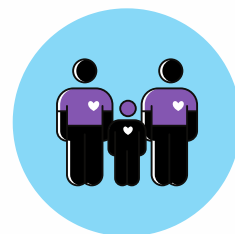
Spending time with **family & pets**

Being in touch with **friends more online**

Having time for **hobbies**/ learning a new one

Doing school work at **own pace**

Being able to **relax, sleep** in
More **free time**



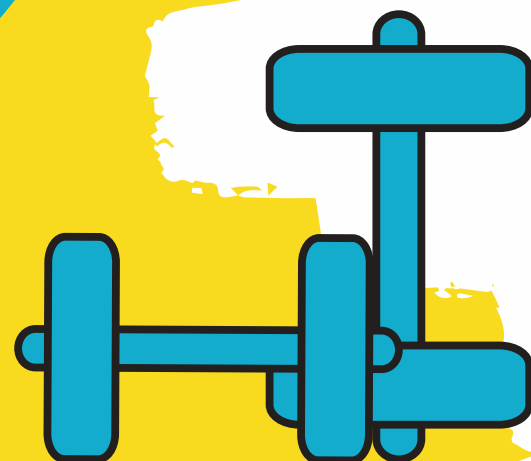
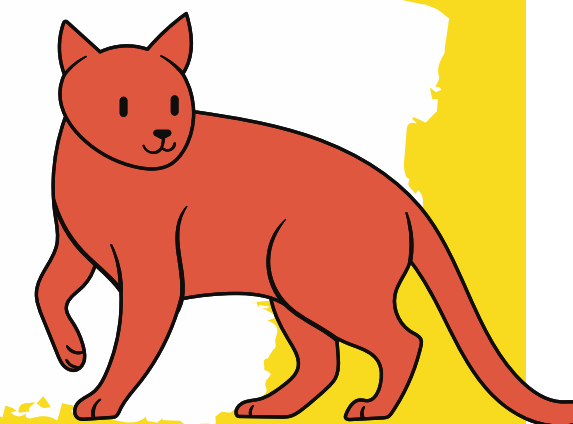
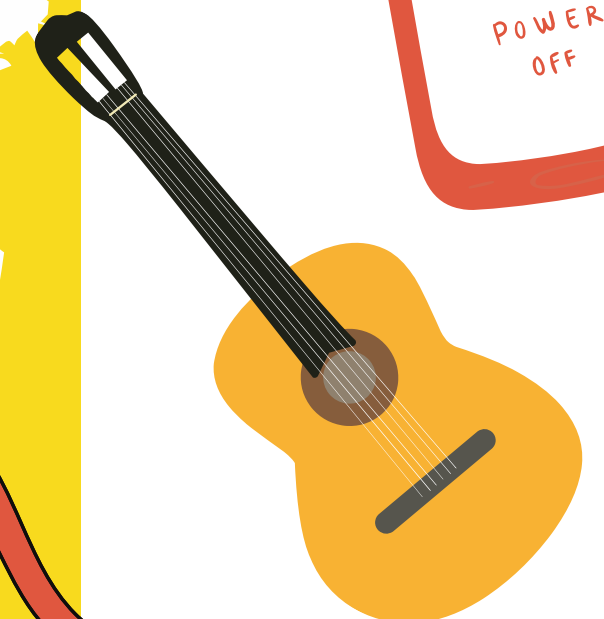
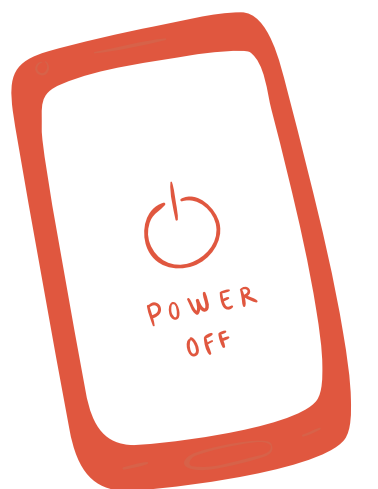
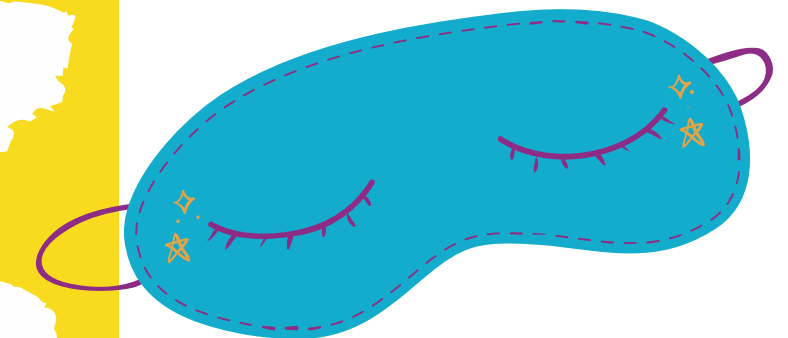
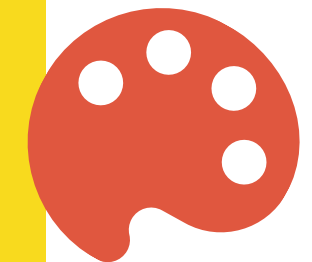
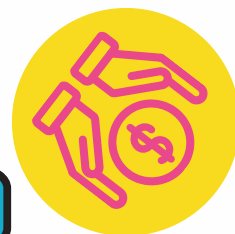
Doing more **exercise**/ being more active

No bullying like at school

No school work or **exams**

Not having a **strict routine**

Appreciating what they have



PART 3: The impact of the pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of specific groups of young people



**young people with
pre-existing mental
health difficulties**

**young people
from BAME
backgrounds**

**young people
in low income
families**

**young people
in the care
system**

**young people with
special educational
needs**

**young people
with physical
disabilities**

**young people
with physical
illnesses**

young carers

**young people
in the LGBTQ
community**

**young people in
contact with the
criminal justice system**

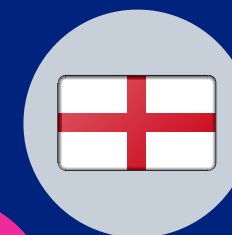
Pre-existing mental health difficulties

For some young people who already had mental health difficulties, the pandemic (and restrictions) has made their mental health worse, but for others their mental health has improved

Young people with experience of mental health problems were more likely to say their **mental health got worse** during lockdown, **compared to those** without a mental health problem



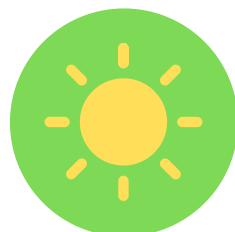
Young people with low wellbeing pre pandemic showed a **meaningful increase in wellbeing** during the pandemic



Pre-existing mental health difficulties



More than three quarters agreed the pandemic had their **mental health worse...**



13-25

... but over a tenth said their mental health had improved
[often because they were away from normal pressures of life]



How returning to school has affected their mental health...

more than half ->
negatively
around a quarter ->
positively



11-18

2011

More young people with previous mental health difficulties described their mental health as poor now they are back at school... this is a rise of over 10% from before returning to school

Young people from BAME backgrounds

Young people from a **BAME background** were more likely to say they had **negative experiences** of the lockdown.



1496



Young people were **more likely to...** know to get help through **doctor/ mental health team**, but **less likely to...** know how to get help through **family & friends**



12-18

Young people were more likely to... want **help with** eating healthily & **staying active**, **worry** about having enough **food**, falling behind with **learning**, **exam results** being affected... and were **less likely to...** feel **safe** exercise **outdoors**



Young people from BAME backgrounds

Young people from BAME communities expressed concerns they were not being listened to, & concerns about being more at risk of catching the virus



Young people from BAME communities had significantly greater increases in suicidal thoughts, anxiety & depression compared to young people from a white background



More young people from a **black background** felt **less anxious** than they did before lockdown compared to young people from a White, Asian and Mixed Race background ...



Young people in low income families

People living in **social housing** were more likely to have **poor mental health** and to have seen it get **worse during the pandemic**.



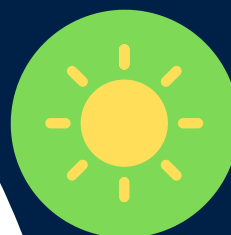
Over half of young people receiving **free school meals** said their mental health was **poor/ very poor...** with nearly three quarters saying that it got **worse during lockdown**



13-17



5-16



Young people with a **probable mental health disorder** were **more likely** to live in a home that had **fallen behind on payments**

Parents on **low income** faced significantly **more stress & worry** around **home learning, & finances..** but **similar views** about young people **returning to school**



Young people in **low income** families were **more likely** to experience **emotional and attention difficulties**

12-16



Children & young people from low income households had **consistently high levels of emotional, behavioural & attentional difficulties over the pandemic**



Young people in the care system

For young people with experience in the care system (mainly adopted)...

Half experienced emotional distress & anxiety
A third had an increase in violent & aggressive behaviour

Over half expected to need extra support transitioning back to school



But...

Over half thought family relationships had improved from time spent together
More than half of secondary aged pupils calmer without school



Young people in care...

230

Half felt lonely more often during lockdown.



Nearly a quarter had less contact (a tenth no contact) from their social worker

5-25



Care leavers...

Most felt more lonely & anxious during lockdown
Nearly half saw their personal advisors less
A fifth did not have the technology they need to stay in touch with friends & family

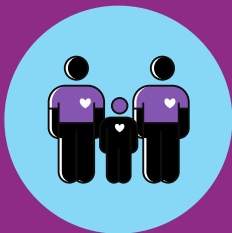
Young people leaving care...

struggled with communicating remotely with therapist, housing & future plans, space & arguments at home



Young people with special educational needs

Children and young people with **ASD** reported **more disease anxiety** but **no differences in anxieties about the consequences of COVID** compared to young people without ASD



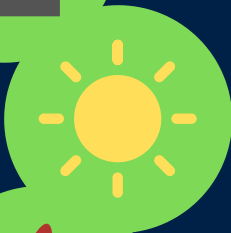
4-16



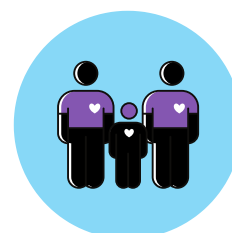
5-18



Children & young people with SEN/ neurodevelopmental differences had **consistently high levels of emotional, behavioural & attentional difficulties over the pandemic**



Young people experienced feelings of **loss, worry, changes in mood & behaviour** at the start of lockdown

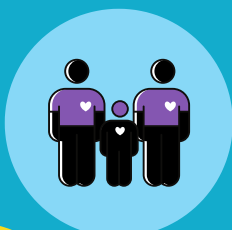


but... a minority felt COVID-19 had **little impact on mental health** or led to **improvements**

Over half of young people concerned about things **being different/uncertain** & being put under **pressure academically**. Just under half worried about...



11-16



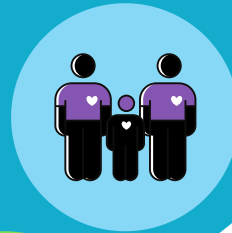
enjoyable parts of school not happening, problems concentrating, transitions



Young people with physical disabilities or illnesses

Young people with disabilities experienced worsening emotional & mental health during lockdown

0-25



Three quarters of siblings of disabled children also said lockdown had made their mental health worse



13-24



Young people with cancer reported having **difficulties accessing emotional & psychological support**. Most were asked to shield & struggled with **isolation from friends, family & school**. Over half of young people with **cancer** felt they were **not coping with the coronavirus situation**



Young carers

More than
a third of young
carers said their
mental health was
worse since COVID-19...



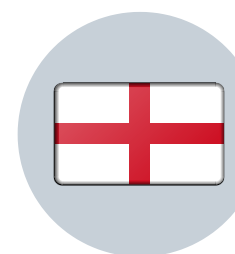
12-
17



Two thirds - more
worried about the
future,
more stressed,
feeling less
connected



12-
22



Young carers
described **not
having space to
manage their
stress, &
anxieties related
to the risks of
COVID-19**



Young people in contact with the justice system, or at risk of violence

84



Biggest issue for young people in contact with the justice system was

isolation & lack of contact

Other impacts of restrictions were
boredom, not attending school, finances, lack of information & uncertainty



Young people at risk of violence ...

Key mental health issues were
loneliness, boredom, lack of support, fear of loss & the future ...

but young people were
enthusiastic about
supporting the
community, & most
felt half felt **no change/**
more safe

14-25



Young people in the LGBTQ+ community

There is not much research on the impact of the pandemic on young people (aged 11-16) in the LGBTQ+ community in the UK ...



Women & non-binary people were more likely to have **poor mental health** & around two thirds of non-binary people said their mental health **got worse** recently

In the USA, nearly **two thirds** of LGBTQ+ youth experienced **psychological distress, anxiety & depression** & some expressed **concerns** about being "**stuck at home with unsupportive parents**" due to the pandemic



Summary

So what does the research evidence tell us about the impact of the pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of young people **aged 11 – 16** across the **UK**?

1) Lots of young people are struggling with their mental health & are feeling a range of different emotions (i.e. feeling worried or lonely), but some young people are feeling okay

2) Some young people feel like changes to their daily life that happened as a result of the pandemic (i.e. not going to school or social distancing) have had a negative impact on their mental health, but for others their mental health & wellbeing improved during lockdown

3) Some groups of young people may have been particularly affected by the pandemic (i.e. young people with previous mental health difficulties, or from low income households), but there is still a lot we don't know



