I Want To Do Well

A literature review of existing research on children and young people's experiences of COVID-19

Stefan Burkey
Achievement for All (3As) Ltd

ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL

"I want to do well"

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Achievement for All is a leading not-for-profit organisation that works in partnership with early years settings, schools and colleges to improve outcomes for all children and young people.

Founded in 2011, the mission of Achievement for All is simple: to close the unacceptable gaps at every level of the education system. Empowering young people, as well as their teachers, parents and carers, the charity works to transform lives through personal coaching, professional support, and a leading network of educational experts.

https://afaeducation.org/

Executive Summary

The experience of children and young people during COVID-19 has been very different to that of adults.

Very young children have missed out on early education experiences that are important to development and helping to close the disadvantage gap. Older children have missed schooling and time with friends. There is not yet a clear picture of the experiences of children and young people throughout the lockdown phase of the crisis.

To support councils alongside their own engagement work, the LGA has commissioned this literature review to draw together the existing research, to help ensure that the voices, feeling and wishes of children and young people are considered in recovery planning and decision-making.

Key Findings

The majority of the findings of this review relate to challenges and barriers faced by children and young people in the UK during the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown.

This is to be expected. The children and young people of the UK have been living through a pandemic, the like of which has not been felt by the UK for over a century.

The pandemic and the resultant social mitigations have asked our children and young people to negotiate fundamental changes to their home, school, social, and family lives. Persuasive arguments have been made that children and young people have been required to disproportionately bear the weight of the social impact of the pandemic. Green (2020), quotes an anonymous paediatrician): "*Children are perversely suffering for the benefit of adults*".

However, it is a tribute to children and young people that even within this context, positives can be found.

The title of this report – *I Want To Do Well* – is a quote from a young person captured by Young Minds (2020b). This simple phrase sums up how young people are able to look beyond the immediate context of lockdown, home learning, and social distancing and retain a focus on their ambition to make the most of their lives.

Similarly, whilst much research has focused on the immediate and ongoing risks and challenges faced by children and young people during lockdown, there are small islands of positive outcomes arising from our new social context and norms. To take two examples, research commissioned by the Children's Commissioner for Wales (2020) found that:

> *"Many children and young people have commented on positive aspects of the Coronavirus crisis. For many there has been a pleasure in spending more time with their family, learning new skills and enjoying the outdoors in gardens and during daily exercise. For some, this period has also brought relief from previous social and health pressures such as a mental health difficulties or bullying."*

Gonzales (2020), focusing on out of school learning during lockdown, found that:

> *"One in three young people (35 per cent) managed to sustain or improve their learning. One in six (16 per cent) reported having learned more since the outbreak of the crisis, while 19 per cent reported no change to their learning."*

It is also appropriate at this point to note the gaps in the literature that became apparent during this review. Whilst we did not expect every aspect of a child or young person's context or lifecourse to be captured in the literature, it was of note that the following two themes were underrepresented in the body of literature:

- The experience of children in the Early Years (0-5). Whilst the impact of reduced health visiting for very young children is considered in the literature, there is a current under-representation of the experiences of children in Early Years settings (for example, nurseries, or childminders) compared to the experience of marginally older children in Primary phase education[1].

- The impact of lockdown and the return to school for children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities in terms of teaching and learning, is underrepresented when compared to the impact of reduced access to physical and mental health services and family support services.

It was also of note that this research initially intended to segment findings by different communities of children and young people. However, with some exceptions (such as young carers and children and young people with mental health challenges), direct evidence of the experience of children and young that could be segmented in this way was scarce.

It seems appropriate to note a minor - but consistent - theme in the literature that identifies the potential arising from the pandemic for putting in place better support for children and young people in the future.

For example, Heymann and Shindo (2020) refer to the multiple contexts that impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, and the Lancet 'My Mind Our Humanity' campaign, to posit that the lessons learnt from the global pandemic could act as a spur to meeting the need for:

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> "*…inclusive tools that allow for genuine and meaningful engagement from children in rural areas, ethnic minorities, gender and sexual minorities, those exposed to poverty and violence, and those who experience health challenges*"

Heymann and Shindo conclude that the pandemic has focused attention on a need to break the pattern of "*young people sidelined while those who have the power to make a change hesitate*" to bring about "*a culture of connectedness and mutual respect*" that will meet the needs of all children and young people.

Introduction and Methodology

On 6 August 2020, the Local Government Association (LGA) commissioned Achievement for All to undertake a literature review of existing research on children and young people's experiences of Covid-19.

Purpose of Research

This project aims to support councils to take a child-focussed approach to their recovery plans from the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, and to ensure that they understand the multiple challenges faced by children and young people.

The Need for Research

The experience of children and young people during COVID-19 has been very different to that of adults, and there have been very varied experiences between children depending on their circumstances and characteristics.

Very young children have missed out on early education experiences that are important to development and helping to close the disadvantage gap. Older children have missed schooling and time with friends.

There is not yet a clear picture of the experiences of children and young people throughout the lockdown phase of the crisis.

Therefore, to support councils alongside their own engagement work, LGA has commissioned this literature review to draw together the existing research.

Methodology

This review has followed a standard literature review process, drawing on the Institute of Education, University College London Systematic Review methodology.

This review was undertaken during a period when the literature was growing exponentially. The response to this was a rolling programme of sampling the online literature on a twice weekly basis during the month of September 2020 and two samples in the first three weeks of October 2020. Online search terms used are set out at Annex One.

A library search focusing on journal articles was carried out in the last week of September 2020.

It is of note that a significant number of peer-reviewed journals have generously removed online paywalls from Covid-19 related research. It is without doubt that this is of benefit for research as a whole on this subject.

It is not surprising that the global impact of Covid-19 has driven a parallel, sizable, and growing body of non-refereed articles and studies relating to Covid-19 and children and young people. These materials include pre-prints of research destined for major peer-refereed journals, but also include a sizable body of what might be described as self-published fringe research. To address this issue, non-refereed articles and studies were subject to an initial sift for relevance and reliability and, if required, a second detailed sift (particularly for pre-print articles and research).

Quality assurance and academic oversight for the identification and sifting of sources was provided by Professor Sonia Blandford (Visiting Professor, Institute of Education, UCL) and Dr Catherine Knowles (Visiting Fellow, Plymouth Marjon University).

This review focuses on capturing the experiences of children and young people in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. A very small number of research studies from outside the UK have been included where the resource is both highly thematically relevant and (a) focuses on a national context that is highly comparable to the UK (for example, the Republic of Ireland) and/or (b) includes relevant and specific data on the UK as part of a multinational study (for example, the International Labour Organization).

This review uses the common definition of a 'child or young person' as an individual between 0 and 18 years of age, unless noted otherwise.

Capturing the voices of children and young people.

This review was designed to capture the voices and direct experiences of Children and Young People. Whilst there exists a core body of high-quality surveys that capture direct evidence from children and young people[2], it became apparent early in the process that a tripartite approach would be required to include all relevant research in the review. This would include collecting the following three categories of literature:

1. The direct voice of young people (for example, surveys and case studies)

2. The mediated experience of children and young people (research that is based on data on, and/or observations of, the experiences of children and young people)

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[2] We note that the number of medium- to large-scale surveys or case studies on the experience of children and young people that have been published in the seven to eight months of pandemic are fewer than we would have predicted in early 2020. Based on our experiences of research into the voice and experience of children and young people, we suggest that a major barrier to research would have been that the traditional research partners (such as schools or universities), were the very organisations that were reinventing practice and process on almost a daily basis to meet the needs of children and young people and as such had limited capacity to assist in research. We also note that a number of community groups and charities have established online child and young person surveys, but very few of these have published findings to date.

3. Inferred experience (comparative studies that attempt to establish how the experience of children and young people differ during the pandemic, compared to pre-2020).

Following the identification and initial scrutiny of the literature under review, four key groupings were identified:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Physical Health and Welfare

- Education

- Social and Economic Wellbeing

This report is structured around these groupings.

Ethical Statement

All research has been completed in line with the British Educational Research Association Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research.

The author confirms that they have no financial or non-financial interest in the subject of this report or any of the resources discussed in this report.

Research Findings

The majority of the findings of this review relate to challenges and barriers faced by children and young people in the UK during the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown.

This is to be expected. The children and young people of the UK have been living through a pandemic, the like of which has not been felt by the UK for over a century.

The pandemic and the resultant social mitigations have asked our children and young people to negotiate fundamental changes to their home, school, social, and family lives. Persuasive arguments have been made that children and young people have been required to disproportionately bear the weight of the social impact of the pandemic. Green (2020), quotes an anonymous paediatrician): "*Children are perversely suffering for the benefit of adults*".

However, it is a tribute to children and young people that even within this context, positives can be found.

The title of this report – *I Want To Do Well* – is a quote from a young person captured by Young Minds (2020b). This simple phrase sums up how young people are able to look beyond the immediate context of lockdown, home learning, and social distancing and retain a focus on their ambition to make the most of their lives.

Similarly, whilst much research has focused on the immediate and ongoing risks and challenges faced by children and young people during lockdown, there are small islands of positive outcomes arising from our new social context and norms. To take two examples, research commissioned by the Children's Commissioner for Wales (2020) found that:

> "*Many children and young people have commented on positive aspects of the Coronavirus crisis. For many there has been a pleasure in spending more time with their family, learning new skills and enjoying the outdoors in gardens and during daily exercise. For some, this period has also brought relief from previous social and health pressures such as a mental health difficulties or bullying.*"

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It is also appropriate at this point to note the gaps in the literature that became apparent during this review. Whilst we did not expect every aspect of a child or young person's context or lifecourse to be captured in the literature, it was of note that the following two themes were underrepresented in the body of literature:

- The experience of children in the Early Years (0-5). Whilst the impact of reduced health visiting for very young children is considered in the literature, there is a current under-representation of the experiences of children in Early Years settings (for example, nurseries, or childminders) compared to the experience of marginally older children in Primary phase education[3].

- The impact of lockdown and the return to school for children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities in terms of teaching and learning, is underrepresented when compared to the impact of reduced access to physical and mental health services and family support services.

It was also of note that this research initially intended to segment findings by different communities of children and young people. However, with some exceptions (such as young carers and children and young people with mental health challenges), direct evidence of the experience of children and young that could be segmented in this way was scarce.

It seems appropriate to note a minor - but consistent - theme in the literature that identifies the potential arising from the pandemic for putting in place better support for children and young people in the future.

For example, Heymann and Shindo (2020) refer to the multiple contexts that impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, and the Lancet 'My Mind Our Humanity' campaign, to posit that the lessons learnt from the global pandemic could act as a spur to meeting the need for:

> "…*inclusive tools that allow for genuine and meaningful engagement from children in rural areas, ethnic minorities, gender and sexual minorities, those exposed to poverty and violence, and those who experience health challenges*"

Heymann and Shindo conclude that the pandemic has focused attention on a need to break the pattern of "*young people sidelined while those who have the power to make a change hesitate*" to bring about "*a culture of connectedness and mutual respect*" that will meet the needs of all children and young people.

Summary of Findings – Mental Health and Wellbeing

- The pandemic has had a significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, with one survey finding that 83% of young people report that their mental health had worsened during the pandemic.

- The impact of the pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing is felt across all age groups, with some evidence that children as young as four have experienced a negative impact.

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[3] We suggest that the full results of the study carried out by Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University (2020) when available will be a rich source of information and data.

- The severity of the pandemic's impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people is a broad spectrum. However, at the extreme end of this spectrum, one survey of children and young people found an increase in suicidal thoughts compared to the pre-pandemic period.

- Whilst all children and young people have experienced an increased risk of negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing due to the pandemic, children and young people with pre-existent mental health needs have faced particular challenges not least in terms of a loss of access to protective factors such as schools or mental health services.

- Fear of Covid-19 has played a positive role in containing the spread of the virus but has also contributed to increases in anxiety and worry amongst children and young people.

- Mental Health and children's services have closed or reduced services at the time when the need for those services increased.

- Some children and young people have reported an improvement in their mental health as a result of the partial closure of schools and the lockdown. This was mainly due to children and young people spending more time with family and/or being removed from difficult relationships at school.

Summary of findings – Physical Health and Welfare

- The partial closure of schools) and youth, sport, and community clubs and facilities denied children and young people access to key protective factors for, or drivers of, their physical health.

- The amount of physical activity undertaken by children and young people has declined during the pandemic.

- The partial closure of schools has increased the 'food insecurity' of vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

- The pandemic has impacted negatively on children and young people's access to, and engagement with, health care professionals and third and voluntary sector service providers.

- Denial of access to and engagement with child and young person workforce professionals means that routine opportunities to spot signs or narratives of safeguarding concern are lost.

Summary of findings – Education

- The partial closure of schools in the UK was one of the main impacts on the lives and experiences of children and young people during the pandemic

- The experiences of children and young people with home-schooling were extremely variable and highly dependent upon the individual context of the child or young person. It is however of note that one survey found that 1 in 6 children reported that they felt that they had learnt more during their time being home-schooled.

- Socio-economic context and parental academic achievement were the key drivers of the quality of home learning and the experience of children and young people during the partial closure of schools

- It is possible that the pandemic reversed the progress made in the last decade to close the attainment gap between affluent and less affluent children and young people. Notably, there is some evidence that the gap may in fact be widening as a result of the pandemic.

- The pandemic has highlighted the wider role of schools in providing children and young people with a venue for emotional and social development and in supporting good physical and mental health. However, a number of children and young people found time away from school beneficial, in particular in terms of being away from negative aspects of their school life such as bullying.

- Children and young people understood the need for changes to examinations in 2020 but expressed dissatisfaction how the changes were enacted.

- Many children and young people who did not attend school or college during the pandemic were anxious about returning and were highly likely to have experienced learning loss or learning stagnation during time away from school.

- During the pandemic many children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities have faced significant systemic challenges in accessing the provision that they require and are entitled to as part of their Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan.

Summary of findings – Social and Economic Welfare

- Surveys of children and young people have found that the pandemic has had both positive and negative impacts on their relationships with parents, carers, and families.

- A number of children and young people report stronger family relationships whilst others report strained family dynamics.

- The experiences of children and young people during the pandemic in terms of their relationships with friends are both positive and negative.

- Children and young people in full time or part time employment during the pandemic experienced disproportionate negative impacts on their jobs compared to older workers

- Young workers were predominantly employed in the sectors and trades that would be the most impacted by the pandemic.

- It is possible that there will be an ongoing impact from the pandemic on the career prospects of children and young people.

- Young carers, Children Looked After, and vulnerable children and young people have experienced significant negative impacts from the pandemic and the mitigation strategies put in place to control the spread of the virus (such as reductions in services).

Key Context

The restrictions placed because of social distancing on children and young people in the UK from 29 March 2020

Crawley (2020) summarises the restrictions placed on children and young people in the UK from 29 March 2020 (to the start of the 2020 / 2021 academic year) as:

- Children and young people are not allowed to attend school, college, nurseries unless they are a vulnerable child or the child of a critical worker

- Children and young people are allowed 'one form of exercise a day, for example, a run, walk, or cycle—alone or with members of your household'.

- Where parents do not live in the same household, children under 18 can be moved between their parents' homes.

- All public gatherings are of more than two people are stopped (including weddings, baptisms and other religious ceremonies).

The Definition of Vulnerable Children and Young People During the Covid-19 pandemic

The UK government definition of vulnerable children and young people during the COVID-19 pandemic (for the purpose of attendance at an educational setting) was children and young people across all year groups who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child

- have an education, health and care (EHC) plan and it is determined, following risk assessment (risk assessment guidance), that their needs can be as safely or more safely met in the educational environment

- have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services), and who could therefore benefit from continued attendance. This might include children and young people on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services, adopted children, those at risk of becoming NEET ('not in employment, education or training'), those living in temporary accommodation, those who are young carers and others at the provider and local authority's discretion

Excerpted from Department of Education (2020a)

Section One: Mental Health and Wellbeing

Key Findings

- The pandemic has had a significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, with one survey finding that 83% of young people report that their mental health had worsened during the pandemic.

- The impact of the pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing is felt across all age groups, with some evidence that children as young as four have experienced a negative impact.

- The severity of the pandemic's impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people is a broad spectrum. However, at the extreme end of this spectrum, one survey of children and young people found an increase in suicidal thoughts compared to the pre-pandemic period.

- Whilst all children and young people have experienced an increased risk of negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing due to the pandemic, children and young people with pre-existent mental health needs have faced particular challenges not least in terms of a loss of access to protective factors such as schools or mental health services.

- Fear of Covid-19 has played a positive role in containing the spread of the virus but has also contributed to increases in anxiety and worry amongst children and young people.

- Mental Health and children's services have closed or reduced services at the time when the need for those services increased.

- Some children and young people have reported an improvement in their mental health as a result of the partial closure of schools and the lockdown. This was mainly due to children and young people spending more time with family and/or being removed from difficult relationships at school.

"In times of crisis, people have historically had to band together to overcome. What happens when they cannot? [What happens when people are] …forced to isolate from one another during one of the most turbulent events of their lives: the COVID-19 pandemic[?]" Hisham et al., (2020)

There is universal agreement in the literature that the pandemic and the associated lockdown and social mitigations (such as social distancing and evolving limits on the mixing of households and families) are - and continue to be - major risk factors for good mental health and wellbeing in all age groups, specifically including children and young people.

The extent of the impact of the pandemic on mental health is illustrated by the fact that mental health is referenced in the literature in a wider range of contexts than any other theme. For example, the impact of the pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of young people is even to be found within research into economic recovery in the post-pandemic period (see Crisp et al (2020)).

This underlines the agreement within the literature of the scale of the impact of the pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. For example, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2020) cite evidence that *"83% of young people said that their mental health had worsened during COVID-19"*.

Evidence[4] suggests that the pandemic and the resultant mitigation strategies (such as lockdown and the partial school closure) brought about for children and young people:

Increases in:

- 'clinginess' and separation problems

- disturbed sleep

- nightmares

- poor appetite

- inattentiveness

- loneliness and isolation

- anxiety

- challenging family relationships

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[4] The following bullet points are collated from survey-based evidence presented by Colao (2020); Defeyter et al (2020); Office for National Statistics (2020); the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2020); Singh et al (2020) (this study surveys international research, but has been included in this review as it includes UK studies); UK Youth (2020); Young Minds (2020a and 2020b)

- social media or online pressure

Decreases in:

- Self-reported scores in three of the measures of personal wellbeing (life satisfaction, feelings that things done in life are worthwhile, and happiness), to an average "*much lower*" than the average scores of those aged 60 years.

Greater risk of:

- sexual exploitation or grooming

- engaging in gangs

- substance misuse

- carrying weapons

Reduced access to:

- Safe spaces (such as not being able to access their youth club/service and a lack of safe spaces at home)

- Trusted face-to-face relationships or support

- Social and emotional learning experiences

However, it is also important to balance these finding with the outcomes of a key survey commissioned by the Children's Commissioner for Wales, which found that:

> "*The majority (58%) of children and young people report that they have felt happy most of the time during the crisis and a large majority (84%) report feeling safe most of the time. Young people of secondary age reported more negative feelings than younger children, with 16% feeling sad 'most of the time'. 2% overall report that they have 'not very often' felt safe*"

The literature agrees that children and young people who have a pre-existing mental health condition are at a greater risk of encountering further or exacerbated mental health and wellbeing challenges (see Section 1.1, below). However, the literature is also in agreement that negative impacts on mental health and wellbeing caused by the pandemic are widespread and can manifest in children as young as four (The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2020)).

A key and common theme in the literature is that the impacts of the pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people are highly specific to the context(s) of each child or young person.

Defeyter (2020), Hisham (2020), Barrett (2020), Crawley (2020), Lee (2020), and Singh (2020) (amongst others) remind us that good mental health and wellbeing is vital to a settled and

secure child or young person and is impacted upon (positively or negatively) by every context in the life of that child or young person.

The literature is also in universal agreement that the pandemic and our national response has disrupted these contexts. For example, losing the sense of connection provided by social contexts such as spending time with friends or community groups, or being denied the support provided by organisational contexts such schools or local mental health services, or destabilising changes to routine and environment: producing what Hisham et al. (2020) (drawing on the work of Rutter (1985)) - describe as the removal or dilution of 'protective factors'.

Unpacking this issue, Gonzales (2020) provides a useful summary and description of the various factors and themes that the literature identifies as particularly impacting on children and young people and the heightened risks that they face:

> *"Family stress, social isolation, risk of domestic abuse, disrupted education and uncertainty about the future are some of the channels through which COVID-19 has impacted the emotional development of children and youth. Half of all mental health conditions start by the age of 14, meaning children and young people are at particular risk in the present crisis…"*.

It is also clear from the literature that the contexts that make up a child or young person's life are interdependent and overlap, potentially magnifying the negative impact of the pandemic on mental health and wellbeing. For example, a child in lockdown struggling with the sudden removal of access to friendship groups may be at the same time experiencing anxiety about the employment status of their parents[5].

Whilst it is clear that the multiple contexts that support or challenge the mental health and wellbeing of a child or young person are interconnected, the following section attempts to collect summaries of the literature grouped around key themes.

Section 1.1. Children and Young People with Pre-Existing Mental Health Needs

> *"It's made my OCD so much worse, washing my hands every 5 minutes or using hand sanitizer" Young* person's statement (Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, 2020)

The literature identifies children with mental health needs as being at particular risk during the pandemic. The reasons for this heightened risk - as identified by the Royal College of

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[5] In addition, the crucial role of context is reflected in research findings that quantitative analyses of surveys of children and young peoples' views are often in agreement on key issues but can vary greatly in the identified level of impact. For example, The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2020) note that: "*Sixty five percent of young people surveyed in one report said that they were worried about their mental health, whereas the government had reported only 20% of young people being worried*".

Paediatrics and Child Health (2020), Singh et al (2020), Hisham et al (2020) amongst others - include:

- The consequences of responses to the pandemic such as lockdown and self-isolation (for example increased loneliness and/or anxiety)

- Loss of protective factors (such as therapy, mental health services and schools)

- Increased exposure to risk factors (for example, abuse, online grooming and radicalization, and negative social media use).

The research literature reports that too often these factors can overlap and occur simultaneously, exponentially increasing what Singh (2020) describes as a "...*debilitating effects on educational, psychological, and developmental attainment*" and increasing the risk of developing mental health-related challenges.

The two surveys (March 2020 and June/July 2020) of children and young people with a history of mental health challenges carried out by Young Minds (2020a and 2020b) represent a direct insight into the lived experience of a defined group of children and young people.

These reports have become key texts and are cited widely in national and international research. For this reason, the results of these surveys merit separate consideration, and are set out below.

Comparison of March 2020 survey and June/July 2020 survey of Children and Young People with a history of mental health challenges.

Statement about the pandemic and the public health measures designed to prevent its spread	% of children and young people agreeing with the statement in March 2020	% of children and young people agreeing with the statement in June/July 2020	Percentage point change between March and June/July 2020
It had made their mental health much worse	32%	41%	+9%
It had made their mental health a bit worse	51%	40%	-11%
It had made no difference to their mental health	9%	5%	-4%
Their mental health had become a bit better	6%	8%	+2%
Their mental health had become much better	1%	3%	+2

The polarization of this result – a significant increase in the children and young people that reported that the pandemic and lockdown had made their mental health much worse and minor increases in the children and young people who had experienced an improvement in their mental health are notable.

The small number of children and young people who reported that their mental health had improved during the crisis expressed that this was often related to:

- "*Having a difficult relationship with school – for example, being bullied – and relief that they would no longer have to attend*"

- "*Feeling positive about the response – for example, friends proactively contacting them and reminding them that they are valued*"

- "*Finding that their own anxiety has a clear focus, and is now shared by other people*"

Other findings

- Whilst children and young people overwhelmingly accepted the Government response to the pandemic, this did not lessen the impact of the crisis on them.

- It was noted that the outcomes of the research contradicted a *"media narrative"* of children and young people who are *"unwilling to comply with restrictive measures or insufficiently invested in the health of older generation"*, with many respondents noting" concerns *about being responsible for cross-infection…[and] …the health of their family"*.

- Many children and young reported increased anxiety, problems with sleep, panic attacks or more frequent urges to self-harm among those who already self-harmed.

- A small number of children and young people, usually *"with underlying health conditions"*, expressed concern about their own health.

- Loss of routine was cited as a cause of anxiety about *"not being able to take part in day-to-day activities that they regarded as important coping mechanisms – for example, dance or exercise classes"* (specific findings relating to the partial closure of schools and colleges can be found in Section 1.2., below).

- Some young people were concerned that *"having far more time at home would mean that they overthought things and were more likely to use negative coping strategies, like self-harm"*.

- Many young people were concerned about losing connection with friends, non-immediate family and other trusted adults, with one respondent stating:

  > *"Most of my healthy coping skills revolve around social contact, seeing my friends, going out etc. Social distancing is causing me to isolate myself which is bringing back old emotions but there's no way around it as I'm no longer choosing to isolate myself, I have to."*

Themes cited frequently by respondents:

- Concern about *"dangerous or crowded home environment"*

- Concern about *"family's finances or about losing their own job"*

- Anxiety about *"not being able to buy food, or about no longer getting meals at school"*

- Young people, including those with eating disorders, *"expressing anxiety about food, amidst food shortages and potential restrictions on exercise"*

- Children and young people with ADHD *"concerned about not being able to go outside as much as they wished to"*

- *Experiencing racism as a result of the pandemic*

The top three concerns expressed by children and young people were:

- Isolation / loneliness

- Not having enough food / supplies

- Managing their mental health / their mental health deteriorating

Conclusions from the Young Minds Surveys

- There is likely to be an increased level of need among young people who were already accessing mental health services*.*

- There will be many young people who are struggling with their mental health, but *"have not yet managed to access support, and others who are experiencing anxiety for the first time as a result of the pandemic".*

- The pressures on children and young people with mental health problems *"remain significant". "Given the vast economic and social repercussions of the pandemic, the impact of COVID-19 is likely to be felt for years to come".*

Section 1.2. The Partial School Closure

There is agreement in the literature that the partial school closure (see Section 3.2, below) in reaction to the pandemic has impacted on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

1. **Loss of support and support structures**

Lee (2020), Barrett (2020), Young Minds (2000b) articulate a common theme in the literature that the routines of school are "*important coping mechanisms for young people with mental health issues*".

The literature agrees that the partial school closure has denied these children "*an anchor in life*" (Lee, 2020) and "*structure*" (Young Minds, 2020b), which may "*exacerbate distress*" (Barrett, 2020).

Young Minds (2020b) further observe that young people have reported concerns regarding the partial school closure:

- Removing "*a safe and stable environment".* This is particularly concerning for children and young people who live in "*difficult or dangerous home environments".*

- Creating *"uncertainty both in the short term and in relation to educational and employment outcomes in the future"*

Young Minds (2020a and 2020b) and Barrett (2020) note that children and young people have lost two key columns of support during the pandemic and partial school closure:

- Academic, mental health and paediatric support that had been accessed from "*within the school system*" (Barrett, 2020).

- "*…formal or informal pastoral support*" (Young Minds, 2020b)

"I will feel lonely due to the abrupt end at a school I've grown up at. I will be unable to access support." Young person's statement (Young Minds, 2020b)

Young Minds (2020b) notes that children and young people expressed concerns about *"…the impact on their university or career prospects"* and about *"…home learning, both for practical reasons and because of stress related to the pandemic".*

> *"GCSEs were cancelled and I feel hopeless and like everything I have done was for nothing."* Young person's statement (Young Minds 2020b)

2. Loss of protective support and structures

The literature is in agreement that the partial school closure and confinement of children to home will have increased the number of children exposed to domestic violence and abuse as the "*stress and anxiety caused by forced isolation, economic uncertainty, home schooling and potentially difficult living conditions drive the increase in abusive and controlling behaviour*" (Crawley, 2020).

Crawley (2020) also notes that this would have happened at the same time that children's services and other agencies "*scramble(d) to change their working practices to remote support*" and the subsequent "*uncertainty about the effectiveness of emergency methods of working in this field*".

3. Loss of access to peers and friends

The outcomes of an Office for National Statistics (2020) survey show that more than 10% of young people reported that "they had no one to talk to". Young Minds (2020b) report children and young people expressing concern about the impact of "*Potential loss of contact with friends*". Crawley (2020) captures the predominant view in the literature, that:

> "*Social isolation, the withdrawal of peer support, the lack of structure and support from school and the increased anxiety over COVID-19 infection and risk to parents are all likely to have a negative impact on mental health in children and young people.*"

Section 1.3. Fear of the Pandemic

Hisham et al (2020) note that fear:

> "*…can be beneficial to a point during an outbreak, leading to behaviours which reduce the spread of the disease. Excessive fear, however, can lead to*

> *irrational beliefs that impede infection control measures and can probably precipitate maladaptive coping techniques, albeit unintentionally*"

The Young Minds survey (2020a) of the experiences of children and young people found that 66% of young adults in the UK avoided news on COVID-19 as it was unhelpful for their mental health.

Early in the pandemic (April 2020) the National Union of Students surveyed members and found that (NUS, 2020):

- 62% of students are somewhat or very scared of contracting Covid19

- Only 23% of students feel prepared for how they would manage their health if they did contract Covid-19

The Office for National Statistics (2020) noted that 17% of young people[6] self-stated that they were 'very worried' about the pandemic, compared to 27% of those aged 30 to 59 years or 24% of those aged 60 years and over. The Office for National Statistics found that the worries that young people had in relation to the pandemic included the impact on:

- Schools and universities (24%)

- Their well-being (22%)

- Their work (16%)

- Their finances (16%)

This study also found that "*Those aged 16 to 29 years were more likely than those aged 60 years and over to report that other household members, learning, TV and film, working and the internet were helping them to cope and less likely to report reading […]*"

Whilst fear of the pandemic in itself can have a negative impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young (Mental Health Foundation, 2020a), there is a growing body of evidence (Hisham et al (2020), Young Minds (2020a) and (2020b)) that social and traditional media has further exacerbated fear, in a process where "*effects compound one another*" (Hisham et al., 2020) in challenging the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

Section 1.4. Disruption of Mental Health Services

There is agreement in the literature that during the pandemic and the mitigation measures (such as the partial school closure and lockdown) "…*social isolation and loneliness in children, job loss, furlough and increased parental distress may lead to subsequent mental health problems… [and] … a substantial increase in need for Child and Adolescent Mental Health*

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[6] The Office for National Statistics definition of a 'young person' in the study are persons aged 16 – 29 years.

Services (CAMHS)" (Crawley, 2020) at a time when CAMHS and other support mechanisms were closed or "*drastically reduce(d)*" due to the redeployment of staff to Covid-related roles and measures to contain the spread of the virus (such as cancelling face-to-face services) (Defeyter et al., 2020).

In addition, a survey carried out by UK Youth (2020) found that 88% of the youth sector (who provide many forms of non-statutory support to children and young people) "*indicated they are likely or very likely to reduce service provision to young people*" and that 64% of respondents "*said that they were likely to lose sources of funding*".

It is perhaps too early for a notable body of research into the impacts of the closures and reductions in mental health services during the Summer of 2020.

However, Crawley (2020) warns that children and young people who were experiencing mild to moderate mental health issues in the pre-pandemic period and "*who were ineligible for treatment from mental health services, and without access to support from schools*" are likely to require increased support, especially among "*the most vulnerable who could tip into crisis for example through suicide, self-harm and neglect*"[7].

Section 1.5. Positive impacts on Mental Health

The Young Minds (2020a and 2020b) surveys discussed in Section 1.1 (above) demonstrated that a small number of children and young people reported that their mental health had improved during the pandemic.

Other positive outcomes identified by children and young people include:

- That the pandemic has "*helped their mental health by being at home more, especially if they have a learning disability*" (Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, 2020).

- Pleasure in "*…spending more time with their family, learning new skills and enjoying the outdoors in gardens and during daily exercise*" (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020).

  "*Not going to school has helped me in many ways: it gave me time to recover from being in poor mental health and gave me a break from all the hassle of school days.*" Young person's statement (Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, 2020)

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[7] The authors believe that future research into the ongoing needs of this group of children and young people would be of benefit.

Section Two: Physical Health and Welfare

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Key Findings

- The partial closure of schools and youth, sport, and community clubs and facilities denied children and young people access to key protective factors for, or drivers of, their physical health.

- The amount of physical activity undertaken by children and young people has declined during the pandemic.

- The partial closure of schools has increased the 'food insecurity' of vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

- The pandemic has impacted negatively on children and young people's access to, and engagement with, health care professionals and third and voluntary sector service providers.

- Denial of access to and engagement with child and young person workforce professionals means that routine opportunities to spot signs or narratives of safeguarding concern are lost.

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The literature concludes that pandemic and the measures put in place to combat the pandemic have impacted on the physical health, safety, and welfare of children and young people, both in 2020 and potentially continuing[8].

Bibby (2020) for the Health Foundation (2020) provides a useful summary of the body of the literature: Children and young people need to accumulate a number of 'assets' to achieve a smooth transition to adulthood and lay the foundation for good health in their future lives. The assets[9] include:

- appropriate skills and education

- emotional support

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[8] This report does not consider the impact of Covid-19 infections amongst children and young people. Data presented by Swann et al (2020) and Choi (2020) demonstrates that "*Children and young people comprise only 1-2% of cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (covid-19) worldwide… […] …the vast majority of reported infections in children are mild or asymptomatic*". The literature relating to the experiences of children and young people with a Covid-19 infection is very limited and largely anecdotal.

[9] Which have been summarised as *"a home, a job, and a friend"* (Bibby, 2020)

- social connections,

- a financial and practical safety net.

However, the literature agrees that the pandemic, chiefly through lockdown and the closure of facilities, services, and venues have put in place challenges and barriers to children and young people securing these vital assets:

> *"...their schooling, ability to work and to socialise – have all been compromised during the pandemic. With the UK now officially in recession, and with the prospect of further local lockdowns, they face a precarious future"* (Bibby, 2020).

It is of note that a number of studies are underway to understand the experiences of children with specific health conditions during the pandemic[10], but very few results from these surveys have yet been published.

The following sections explore some of the key findings of the literature, grouped thematically.

Section 2.1 Closure of Schools and Youth, Sport, and Community Clubs

A key theme in the literature is that the partial closure of schools (See Section 3.2., below) and youth, sport, and community clubs and facilities denied children and young people access to key protective factors for, or drivers of, their physical health.

The literature also highlights (for example, Colao (2020)) that this denial of opportunities and support caused the pandemic to disproportionately impact upon: "*children and young people who rely on school for their "nutritional, and health needs due to their socioeconomic disadvantages or disabilities" (Calao, 2020).*

The factors and drivers identified within the literature include:

1. **Access to opportunities for physical activity**

   In evidence to the Education Select Committee, Defeyter et al (2020) echoed the findings of much of the literature (See also Harrington and O'Reilly (2020) and Sport England (2020) in the following statement:

   > "*Healthy children attend school more regularly. Furthermore, physically-active children do better in school … physical activity (PA) during the*

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[10] For example, the SHARE study from University of Southampton / University Hospital Southampton. This study is "*…using online surveys to ask 'How are you coping and what do you need?' to better understand the needs of children with a serious condition and their parents during the COVID-19 pandemic.*" See: https://www.uhs.nhs.uk/ClinicalResearchinSouthampton/Research/News-and-updates/Articles/Online-survey-to-better-support-children-with-serious-conditions-during-COVID-19-pandemic.aspx

school day benefits cognition and academic performance. The COVID lockdown… […] …has significantly reduced the amount and variety of PA in which children can engage. Given the need for repeated acute exposure to PA, we should anticipate that many children will be experiencing levels of deconditioning in their skill- and health-related fitness never seen in our postwar schools."

Whilst the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health is in agreement that it is critical for children and young people being able to access physical activity during the pandemic generally and the lockdown specifically, they conclude that: 76% of 8-11 year olds and 67% of 12-14 year olds self-report that they are engaging in "enough exercise".

Research by Sport England (2020) highlights the complex picture of physical activity by children and young people during the pandemic and lockdown, in finding that:

- *93% children are doing something to stay active…*

- *But activity levels have fallen with just 19% of under 16's doing at least an hour of physical activity each day, compared to 46.8% prior to Covid…*

- *43%* [of under 16's] *are doing less than 30 minutes a day compared to 29% before coronavirus hit…*

- *Three in ten young people reported being less physically active than usual…*

- *Just one in eight stated they are more active….*

- *However, 21% say they are more active with their family than usual.*

The literature is however unambiguous in finding that children have lost opportunities for physical activity with the impact falling disproportionately on children already facing disadvantage or other challenges (see Sport England, 2020), exacerbated by the closure of outdoor play areas and most outdoor sports areas (see Hardy, 2020).

> *"I usually ride my bike around and if it's not raining I ride my bike to school, now I have nowhere to ride my bike, I used to play football with my friends in school now I can't even see my friends"* Boy, Year 5-6 Sport England (2020)

> *"I do not have the same equipment they have at school for PE or sports so I cannot do what I usually do at school"* Girl, school year 5 – 6 Sport England (2020)

A further theme present in the literature is the increased use of digital technology by children and young people during the pandemic and lockdown.

The national debate continues about whether increased 'screen time' during the pandemic is in itself an inherently positive or negative factor for children and young peoples' health and wellbeing (For example, see Ives (2020), and France (2020))

In parallel to this debate, an increasing number of studies suggest that good-quality online content and the opportunity to further develop digital skills had a positive impact on children and young people during the pandemic (see World Economic Forum (2020) and Purtill (2020b)).

The research also notes that aside from the benefits to children and young people from good content and skills development, digital technology use has also been linked to a "*significant drift in bedtime schedules*" during the pandemic and lockdown, with "*as many as 70% of children under 16… […] … going to bed later – but are also waking later (57%)*" with knock-on effects for wellbeing and physical development and health. (The Sleep Council, (2020)).

A minor but strongly argued theme in the literature is that lessons learned from the pandemic could provide the UK Government, schools, and other organisations "*a real chance to tackle health inequality* "(Harrington and O'Reilly, 2020) and a refreshed focus on combatting the childhood 'health disadvantage gap' (Defeyter et al, 2020) through improved funding of local authorities and schools (Harrington and O'Reilly, 2020).

In the words of Tim Elwell-Sutton of the Health Foundation: "*It does feel like we have reached a turning point*" (Waters, 2020).

2. Nutrition

The literature agrees that the partial closure of schools has increased the 'food insecurity' of vulnerable and disadvantaged children. Key points in the literature (compiled from Defeyter et al (2020) and Power et al (2020)) include:

- Children and young people whose families or carers are already food insecure have seen their situation become worse due to the pandemic, increasing adverse health outcomes.

- Many children and young people, families and carers who were food secure have "*been economically impacted by the pandemic*" (Defeyter et al., 2020) and are now food insecure.

- The children and young people most likely to be negatively impacted by poor diets are the same children and young people who were receiving dietary support at school.

Section 2.2. Access to and Engagement with Health Professionals

There is a strong theme in the literature that the pandemic has impacted negatively on children and young people's access to, and engagement with, health care professionals.

There is a common finding in the literature that the reduced access and engagement is causing "*collateral damage*" (Barrett, 2020) to children and young people.

There has been widespread redeployment of health visiting staff and in some local areas teams have suffered notable reductions in size. In many cases the "*number of children a health visitor was responsible for increased*" (Conti, 2020).

Parental concerns about being exposed to infection have led to "…*a drop in vaccination rates… [and] …the late presentation of serious illness in children*" (Crawley, 2020), and a significant drop in attendance at paediatric appointments (up to 33.8% in some cases reported by Isba (2020)).

Isba (2020) further notes that: "*the current social distancing measures mean that children living in difficult circumstances have reduced access to the safety net of regular contact with education, health and social care professionals*".

Crawley (2020) concludes that the decrease in access to, and engagement with, health professionals "…*is likely to cause avoidable deaths and illness in the short and long term.*"

Section 2.3. Access and Engagement with Other Support

Mahase (2020) and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2020) take up a common theme in the literature that in addition to children and young people being unable to engage with NHS professionals during the pandemic, they are also unable to access services provided by the third and voluntary sectors.

The literature identifies a number of causes for this, including:

- A significant reduction in fundraising from the public (Mahase, 2020)

- Reorientating or expanding the organisation's activity to include "pandemic services", for example, providing PPE to medical professionals or delivering prescriptions to the elderly (See Mahase, (2020))

- Decreased staff availability and capacity at the same time as an increase in demand from service users (See Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, 2020))

The literature also notes that many third sector and voluntary service providers will struggle to stabilize their fundraising and financial position after the pandemic (for example, Mahase (2020)).

Section 2.4. Safeguarding

Adams (2020), Gaunt (2020), and Green (2020) note that the mitigation measures taken to control the spread of Covid-19 are causing a "*secondary pandemic*" of *"child neglect and abuse*" (Adams, 2020).

Green (2020) notes that the denial of access to and engagement with child and young person workforce professionals means that "*routine opportunities to spot signs or narratives of safeguarding concern are lost*".

Evidence that these concerns are not misplaced include:

- increased calls to child support lines (Green, 2020)

- increased police attendance at domestic abuse incidents (Green, 2020)

- An increase in serious incident notifications about harm to babies under the age of one. Between "*April and October [2020] Ofsted saw over 300 serious incident notifications. A significant proportion of these - almost 40 percent - were about babies, over a fifth more than in the same period as last year*" (Gaunt, 2020)

Section Three: Education

Key Findings

- The partial closure of schools in the UK was one of the main impacts on the lives and experiences of children and young people during the pandemic.

- The experiences of children and young people with home-schooling were extremely variable and highly dependent upon the individual context of the child or young person. It is however of note that one survey found that 1 in 6 children reported that they felt that they had learnt more during their time being home-schooled.

- Socio-economic context and parental academic achievement were the key drivers of the quality of home learning and the experience of children and young people during the partial closure of schools.

- It is possible that the pandemic reversed the progress made in the last decade to close the attainment gap between affluent and less affluent children and young people. Notably, there is some evidence that the gap may in fact be widening as a result of the pandemic.

- The pandemic has highlighted the wider role of schools in providing children and young people with a venue for emotional and social development and in supporting good physical and mental health. However, a number of children and young people found time away from school beneficial, in particular in terms of being away from negative aspects of their school life such as bullying.

- Children and young people understood the need for changes to examinations in 2020 but expressed dissatisfaction how the changes were enacted.

- Many children and young people who did not attend school or college during the pandemic were anxious about returning and were highly likely to have experienced learning loss or learning stagnation during time away from school.

- During the pandemic many children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities have faced significant systemic challenges in accessing the provision that they require and are entitled to as part of their Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan.

Section 3.1. Setting the Scene

The table below sets out a brief timeline of significant events relating to the formal education of children and young people in the UK during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is drawn from Defeyter et al. (2020), the Prime Minister's office, (2020); and Weale, (2020).

March 12 2020	The WHO declare the Covid-19 outbreak to be a pandemic.
March 18 2020	UNESCO establish that 107 countries had implemented national school closures affecting 862 million children and adolescents.
March 20 2020	Schools across the UK closed their doors to all but the most vulnerable pupils and children of key workers, with no planned date for re-opening and speculation that schools may be closed for up to six months.
May 10 2020	Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP - UK Prime Minister - announces that "*at the earliest by June 1 – after half term – we believe we may be in a position to begin the phased reopening of shops and to get primary pupils back into schools, in stages, beginning with reception, Year 1 and Year 6. Our ambition is that secondary pupils facing exams next year will get at least some time with their teachers before the holidays.*" (Prime Minister's office et al, 2020)
June 1 2020	UK Government acknowledges that it will not be possible to achieve their aim to fully reopen a significant number of schools before the end of the 2019/2020. Weale (2020) describes this event as "…*a serious blow for the government's strategy to bring the country out of lockdown, but an even greater blow for children – particularly disadvantaged pupils – who are losing out on months of their education because of Covid-19 restrictions*".
September 2020	The majority of UK primary and secondary schools fully reopen.

The literature is universal in concluding that the pandemic has had a significant impact on the educational experiences of children and young people. The following section explores the key themes in the literature.

Section 3.2. The Partial Closure of Schools and Colleges

> "…*of the concerns that young people (aged 16 to 29 years) had in relation to the impact on schools and universities, by far the most commonly reported was not being able to attend their places of education, with almost 8 in 10 reporting this… […] concerns over the quality of education being affected (46%) were also common concerns. A sizeable percentage (18%) were also worried about the move to home-schooling.*" Office for National Statistics (2020b)

There is very consistent theme in the literature that the partial closure of schools in the UK has been one of the key drivers of, and impacts on, the experience of children and young people during the pandemic. We consider the phrase '*partial closure*' to be important.

In our view, it is often overlooked in media coverage (and in some research) that schools were open during the pandemic, and providing education and support for, by some analysis, around 2% to 5% of children and young people (See Section 3.3., below). It is of note that this proportion included some of the children and young people in need of the highest levels of support.

For example, Whittaker (2020) notes that the children and young people that attended school during the partial school closure included 5% of all children and young people "*considered "in need" or with an education, health and care plan*".

Whittaker also notes that the human and physical resource (teachers and teaching resources and time) available to these children and young people was vastly reduced during this period[11].

The main immediate outcome of the partial school closure was the wholly unprecedented nationwide move of 99% of children and young people to home-schooling and remote learning[12].

Section 3.3. Key Data on Home-schooling

The below list excerpts and collates key data on home-schooling collected during the partial school closure by Penington (2020), the Office for National Statistics (2020a), the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2020) and the Educational Institute of Scotland (2020).

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[11] The authors believe that further research into the experience of children and young people who attended school during lockdown would be of great value.

[12] Best estimates of the number of home-schooled children and young people put the pre-pandemic percentage at around or less than 1% (Foster and Danech, 2019). It should be noted that home-schooled year 11 pupils were also affected by the cancellation of GCSE examinations in 2020 but unable to rely on teacher assessment (see BBC West Midlands, 2020)

An overarching analysis of these data suggests that the experiences of children and young people with home-schooling are extremely variable and highly dependent on the individual context of the child or young person.

1. **General**

   - 5.1% of children aged 12 or below and 2.2% of children aged 13 or above attended school during the partial closure of schools. Of the children that attended school:

     o 1.2% attended because they are considered vulnerable or that they require specialist support

     o 0.4% of children aged 12 or below and 0.5% of children aged 13 or above attended residential special school or boarding school.

     o 3.6% of children aged 12 or below and 0.5% of children aged 13 or above attended because their parents are key workers

   - Between 7 May and 7 June 2020, 87% of parents said a child in their household had been home-schooled during the partial school closure, with the percentage decreasing as the age of the only or eldest child increased. There is a clear gap between the number of children and young people attending school and the number that had experienced home-schooling.

   - The Royal College for Paediatrics and Child Health notes that the support from schools to children and young people has been inconsistent, leading to some children and young people feeling "*unhappy about the support they have received*".

   - One survey found that 60% of teachers felt that the biggest barrier to successful home-schooling was "*low pupil participation*".

   - Over half (52%) of parents with school-aged children said a child in their household was struggling to continue their education while at home, with just over three in four of these parents (77%) giving lack of motivation as one of the reasons.

   - While the fact of being home from school was almost universal, the experience of it differed dramatically from child to child. Of those who were not at school, the majority were provided schoolwork. However, a large number of teenagers (nearly 1 in 5 or 18.5%) were not provided with any work.

2. **Time Spent Engaged In / Amount of Home Learning**

   - The average number of hours spent doing schoolwork per week significantly increased as the age of the child increased from 5 to 10 years (10 hours) to 11 to 15 years (16 hours), with the hours spent learning by those aged 5 to 10 years being significantly lower when there was a child aged 0 to 4 years in the household. The most common amount of time spent on schoolwork per day was 1 to 2 hours for young children and 2 to 3 hours for teenagers, a substantial reduction from the 5+ hours children would be spending at school per day. However, the distribution of time was quite widely

spread. At least 1 in 10 teenagers were spending more than 5 hours per day on schoolwork while just under 1 in 10 were spending less than an hour a day.

- 6.9% of children aged 12 or below and 9.4% of children aged 13 or above received no offline lessons. 21% of children aged 12 or below and 23.6% of children aged 13 or above received 4 or more offline lessons a day.

- 58.1% of children aged 12 or below and 49.8% of children aged 13 or above received no online lessons. 6.2% of children aged 12 or below and 8.5% of children aged 13 or above received 4 or more online lessons a day.

3. Teacher Feedback

- 22.3% of children aged 12 or below and 8.1% of children aged 13 or above had no homework marked by their teacher(s). 33.7% of children aged 12 or below and 43.3% of children aged 13 or above had all of their homework marked by their teacher(s).

4. Support from Parents

- 2.8% of children aged 12 or below and 28.6% of children aged 13 or above received no help from their parent(s). 1.9% of children aged 12 or below and 0.3% of children aged 13 or above received 5 or more hours of help per day.

5. Resources and Technology

- 8.6% of children aged 12 or below and 0.4% of children aged 13 or above reported that none of their schoolwork required a computer. 36% of children aged 12 or below and 68.6% of children aged 13 reported that all of their schoolwork required a computer.

- 95.4% of children aged 12 or below and 96.9% of children aged 13 or above reported that they either owned or shared access to a computer. The literature concludes that the quality of the equipment and internet access used by the child or young person is highly variable.

- The percentage of parents who said their children had used real-time interactive online learning resources provided by schools (for example, live lessons) significantly increased as the age of the child increased, with 44% of parents saying their children aged 16 to 18 years had used this compared with 13% for children aged 5 to 10 years.

- While under 1 in 10 (9%) parents with a child who was struggling gave a lack of devices as a reason for struggling, this was significantly higher for households with one adult (21%) than households with two or more adults (7%).

6. Ongoing Home-schooling

- 64% of young people aged 16 to 18 years in full-time education thought that continuing their education at home would negatively affect their future life plans.

Section 3.4. Inequality in Home-schooling

The Sutton Trust report '*COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact Brief# 1: School Shutdown*' (Cullinane and Montacute (2020)) is a key work within the literature relating to home learning during the partial closure of schools. This report (informed by a Teacher Tapp survey) found that "*23% of pupils were reported to have taken part in live and recorded lessons online every day*". However, this figure is underpinned by some key differential findings:

- Pupils from middle class homes are much more likely to do so (30%), compared to working class pupils (16%).

- At private schools, 51% of primary and 57% of secondary students have accessed online lessons every day, more than twice as likely as their counterparts in state schools.

This report also describes differential experiences in terms of access to online learning platforms and communication with teachers between private and non-private schools:

- 60% of private schools and 37% of state schools in the most affluent areas already had an online platform in place to receive work, compared to 23% of the most deprived schools.

- 45% of students overall had communicated with their teachers in the last week. At independent schools, the figure is 62% for primaries and 81% for secondaries.

Whilst it would be overly simplistic to take attendance at private school as an automatic proxy for socio-economic status, the literature is consistent in finding that socio economic disadvantage has played a role in the educational experience of children and young people during the pandemic.

Stopforth (2020) notes that the pandemic may have "*exposed existing socio-economic inequalities in the education system*" and that "*alarmingly, many pupils in less advantaged social classes also fell short of the national policy benchmark of five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C*".

This theme of class distinctions impacting on children and young people during the pandemic is also to be found in the research of Cullinane and Montacute (2020) who noted that:

> "*…parents are in general positive about schools. 61% of children learning at home had parents who were satisfied, as were 65% of those who are still in school as the children of keyworkers. Middle class parents were more likely to be satisfied than working class parents (66% of ABC1 children v 56% of C2DE children)*".

Looking deeper into socioeconomic context or 'starting points' of children and young people during the pandemic, the literature is very consistent in identifying a positive correlation between the quality of the home learning environment and the academic background and

economic health of parents and carers. The findings set out below are collated from the research of Cullinane and Montacute (2020), the Children's Commissioner for England (2020), the Children's Commissioner for Wales (2020) and Defeyter et al (2020):

- More than three quarters of parents with a postgraduate degree, and just over 60% of those with an undergraduate degree reported feeling confident in directing their child's learning, compared to less than half of parents with A level or GCSE level qualifications.

- Most parents spent less than £50 on their children's learning in the first stage of lockdown. However, 14% spent more than £100 in the first week of the school shutdown alone. 19% of children from middle class homes had £100 or more spent on them, compared to 8% in working class homes. For households earning over £100,000 per year, a third of children had more than £100 spent on their learning.

- Teachers in the most deprived schools were more than twice as likely as those in advantaged schools to say that work their students are submitting is of a much lower quality than normal (15% vs 6%).

- 34% of teachers reported contacting specific parents to offer advice about supervised learning. 21% reported their school is providing pupils with laptops or other devices, with significant differences between secondary (31%) and primary (11%) schools. However, concerningly, 28% of the most advantaged state schools had offered devices to pupils in need, compared to just 15% in the most deprived schools where need is highest.

- Inequalities in support are reflected in the amount and quality of work received by teachers during lockdown. 50% of teachers in private schools reported that they received more than three quarters of work back, compared with 27% in the most advantaged state schools, and just 8% in the least advantaged state schools. 24% said that fewer than 1 in 4 children in their class are returning work they have been set.

- The educational inequality gap between children and young people in the UK who live in persistent poverty and children and young people from more affluent families is expressed by children and young people from low-income families being nearly two years behind their peers from higher income families at the age of 16. At pre-pandemic levels of public expenditure *"it would take an estimated 500 years to narrow"* this gap (Defeyter et al 2020[13]). The Educational Endowment Foundation (2020) concludes that all of the progress made in the last ten years in narrowing the educational inequality gap may be undone as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The EEF suggests that the gap may even now be **widening** as a result of socio-economic inequality leading to variations in the quality of home learning environments.

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[13] Quoting Hutchinson, Bonette, Crenna-Jennings, et al., (2019)

Section 3.5. Positive Aspects of Home-schooling and the Partial School Closure

There is some evidence that the partial school closure may have had some positive impacts for some children and young people. Gonzales (2020), (focusing on out of school learning), found that whilst "*one in three young people (35 per cent) managed to sustain or improve their learning*", "**one in six (16 per cent) reported having learned more since the outbreak of the crisis**… *19 per cent reported no change to their learning*" (Author emphasis).

There is also a theme in the literature of a number of children and young people finding positive impacts from the partial school closure. Research by the Children's Commissioner for Wales (2020) and the Royal College for Paediatrics and Child Health (2020) found (in the words of the latter) that "*some children and young people… [were] … happy not to be in school as they get to spend more time with their family and not have to deal with being bullied*".

Section 3.6. Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs

There is universal agreement in the literature that teachers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) have risen to the challenge of the "*significant and unprecedented demands*" (Whole School SEND / NASEN, 2020b) placed on them during the pandemic.

However, there is also significant alignment in the literature that children and young people with SEND have faced significant systemic challenges in accessing the provision that they require and are entitled to as part of their Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan during the pandemic and the partial school closure.

The EHC Plan is defined by the UK government[14] as:

> '…for children and young people aged up to 25 who need more support than is available through special educational needs support.
>
> EHC plans identify educational, health and social needs and set out the additional support to meet those needs."

During the partial school closure and until 25 September 2020, councils and health commissioning bodies were given flexibility in assessing and providing support for EHC plans. However, Crawley (2020) summarises a common finding in the literature that Education Health and Care Plans were:

> "*not necessarily… […] …adapted for home learning and many EHCPs specify provision that cannot be delivered outside of specialist settings. Similarly, much of the wider support normally available to disabled children and other vulnerable*

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[14] See: https://www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs/extra-SEN-help#:~:text=An%20education%2C%20health%20and%20care,support%20to%20meet%20those%20needs

learners is provided through facilities that are now closed and unlikely to be effectively replaced by efforts of volunteers."

This finding is underlined by research (see Lee (2020), Defeyter (2020), Colao (2020) and Crawley (2020)) that notes that "*School routines are important coping mechanisms*" (Lee 2020) for Children and Young People that have been removed during the partial school closure.

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2020) summarises a further common conclusion in the literature by highlighting that a number of children and young people with SEND "*feel that they are now further behind because of their disabilities due to online education, like having dyslexia and not having 1:1 support anymore*".

Research such as Vicary (2020) reminds us that any consideration of SEND should also include parallel consideration of the issues of (1) mental health and wellbeing and (2) physical health and safety. These issues are considered in more detail in Sections One and Two of this report.

Section 3.7. Exam Season 2020

Terminal examinations and the awarding of qualifications were, arguably, the most media-visible aspect of the partial closure of schools in 2020. A simple search of online news articles relating to the pandemic and examinations in the UK between 20 March and 1 August 2020 returns over 600 major local and national news articles.

A key theme in the literature is that the initial uncertainty about examinations and then subsequent debate and changes of national policy on the awarding of grades led to young people:

- Feeling that their plans for the end of their school life had been denied, and even that their secondary school experience "*was now going to waste*" (the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, 2020)

- Experiencing increased 'dissatisfaction' or 'uncertainty' over exams and qualifications (up to 58% of young people in a survey carried out by the Office for National Statistics)

There is also a persuasive argument in the literature (see Stopforth et al (2020)) that the same advantage gap that can be observed in home-schooling capacity and outcomes during the pandemic has long been a feature of GCSE examinations, and may have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

A number of changes have already been announced for GCSEs in 2021 such as assessment processes and content choices in some subjects (see Playfair and Sezen (2020) and Ofqual (2020)) but an argument is present in the literature that the experiences of young people during the pandemic may lead to a fundamental reconceptualization of the GCSE and A-Level models (See Ashford (2020) and Jenkins (2020))

The literature notes that young people working towards BTEC qualifications in Summer 2020 also experienced delays in awarding of the qualification. The literature notes that this delay increased anxiety in young people, which was potentially avoidable as the majority of grading for the award would have been completed before the partial closure of schools and colleges and only a very small number of BTEC qualifications were reviewed (see BBC Northwest (2020) and Parker (2020))

Section 3.8. The Wider Role of Schools

There is notable agreement in the literature that schools have a role aside from academic achievement in providing socialisation and building the whole child, and that the partial school closure has denied children and young people a "*physical space in which to share interests, thoughts, hopes, and emotions among peers… [and]… a structured setting in which children can learn and develop social competencies, such as self-confidence, friendship, empathy, participation, respect, gratitude, compassion, and responsibility*" Colao (2020).

The widely reported July 2020 Lancet Public Health editorial shares this theme, concluding that schools are intrinsically linked to health (both mental and physical) and societal outcomes and that children and young people and families and schools needed support during the partial school closures, and would need ongoing support as schools reopened.

Research commissioned by the Children's Commissioner for Wales found that 72% children and young people identified 'not being able to spend time with friends' as the most impactful consequence of the 'stay at home rules'. The social welfare of children and young people during the pandemic is discussed in more depth in Section Four of this report but it is of note that the literature consistently identifies the negative impact on children and young people of being denied access to their school as a venue for socialisation and emotional growth and wellbeing.

In addition, a minor but persuasive theme in the literature (for example, Harrington (2020)) is that before and during the pandemic schools have been placed "*on the frontline of delivering solutions*" to "*inequalities and vulnerabilities*" such as mental health and wellbeing, obesity, and physical inactivity, (Harrington, 2020). However, survey evidence shows that "*half of teachers do not feel confident that they know which children have experienced bereavement, abuse, parent mental health and new family caring responsibilities during the Covid-19 lockdown*"

The literature concludes that to successfully fulfil their wider role schools:

- Must be supported both financially and practically at national, regional, and local levels (Harrington, (2020)

- Must effectively identify children and young people they believe to be vulnerable (see Quilter-Pinner and Gill, 2020)

- Need to capitalise on the learning they have made during the pandemic to "build back better", particularly in terms of:

o   *"…how our education system can prepare children for life, not just exams…"*

o   *"…where and how learning takes place – as well as who is involved in it…"*

o   *"…the need to tackle inequalities outside, as well as inside, the classroom"* (Quilter-Pinner and Ambrose, (2020)).

Section 3.9. The Reopening of Schools and Colleges

There is not yet – at the time of writing (September / October 2020) –a notable body of literature on the recorded experiences of children in the post-lockdown 2020-21 academic year. However, there are two significant themes relating to the reopening of schools and colleges in the literature published *during* the pandemic.

1. **Anxiety about the return to schools and colleges**

    The prospect of the reopening of schools and colleges was, for some children, a cause of anxiety in terms of "…*whether it is safe, what will happen with exams and if they will have to catch up all the work, as well as not being sure about going up to another year group or changing schools in September*". (Office for National Statistics (2020b), see also Crawley (2020), Defeyter (2020), and Mental Health Foundation (2020b)). Whole School SEND / Nasen (2020b) highlight the voice of a young Child Looked After who expressed his anxiety that relationships with his peers "might have changed" in the period away from school.

    The UK government stated that the safety of children and young returning to schools was an "*absolute top priority*" (Williamson, 2020). However, the literature warned that the ultimate responsibility for finding solutions to making a school safe rested with the school itself, but that teachers were possibly "*at their limit for what they can deliver*" (Harrington and O'Reilly, 2020) in the context of incomplete data on "*virus prevalence and transmission*" (Defeyter, 2020).

2. **The need to mitigate 'learning loss'**

    The literature is strongly aligned in concluding that "*the majority of children will experience learning loss or, at the minimum stagnation*" (Defeyter, 2020) which may negatively impact on "*students' cognitive gains in the long-term*" (Bayrakdar and Guveli, 2020).

    The literature notes that schools and colleges would face significant challenges in mitigating the learning loss caused by the partial closure of schools and colleges, and highlights that it was highly probable that "*disadvantaged children will experience greater learning loss compared to their more affluent peers*" (Defeyter, 2020) (see also Bayrakdar and Guveli, (2020)).

Section 3.10. Early years

Literature on the experiences of children in the Early Years during the pandemic is underrepresented when compared to the body of literature that focuses on children and young people in primary and secondary phases of statutory education.

However, research findings from the Play Safety Forum (2020) and preliminary results from a study undertaken by Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University (2020) are collated and summarised below:

- During the pandemic, parents from disadvantaged backgrounds reported spending less time on activities with their babies and toddlers, compared with parents from more advantaged backgrounds.

- During lockdown, children from disadvantaged backgrounds spent less time on play or activities requiring outdoor space, or access to books.

- Young children in general experienced an increase in TV and touchscreen use for babies and toddlers. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds were particularly likely to have high daily screen use.

- Babies and toddlers from disadvantaged backgrounds have been missing out on activities to support their development, compared to children of highly-educated, well-paid parents.

Section Four: Social and Economic Wellbeing

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Key Findings

- Surveys of children and young people have found that the pandemic has had both positive and negative impacts on their relationships with parents, carers, and families.

- A number of children and young people report stronger family relationships whilst others report strained family dynamics.

- The experiences of children and young people during the pandemic in terms of their relationships with friends are both positive and negative.

- Young people in full time or part time employment during the pandemic experienced disproportionate negative impacts on their jobs compared to older workers.

- Young workers were predominantly employed in the sectors and trades that would be the most impacted by the pandemic.

- It is possible that there will be an ongoing impact from the pandemic on the career prospects of children and young people.

- Young carers, Children Looked After, and vulnerable children and young people have experienced significant negative impacts from the pandemic and the mitigation strategies put in place to control the spread of the virus (such as reductions in services).

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There is unanimous agreement in the literature that the pandemic and the mitigation measures put in place to control the spread of the virus (such as lockdown and the partial school closure) have impacted on the social and economic wellbeing of children and young people. The following sections summarise the key themes from the literature.

Section 4.1. Relationships with Parents, Carers, and Families

Surveys of children and young people have found that the pandemic has had both positive and negative impacts on their relationships with parents, carers, and families.

In their review of the literature, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2020) found that a number of children and young people reported feeling "*closer to their parents*" and enjoying "*stronger family relationships*" having spent more time with their parents or carers

(particularly in the case of those who worked from home) as a result of the lockdown and partial school closure.

In addition, the review notes that one study found that 57% of young people felt they "*were coping fine at home during lockdown*".

However, the same review also noted that other children and young people "*…have seen a huge amount of strain put on their family dynamics*", and estimates that between 20 and 40% of survey responses from children and young people across the multiple studies mentioned:

> "*…families feeling that their relationships were harder or that they were struggling to get along together during lockdown*" and that "*…living in close quarters, with little opportunity to establish their own positive space, is having a damaging effect on some young people*".

It is also of note that there is some strong evidence that LGBTQ+ young people experienced additional family pressure, when "*living their normal lives has become at best a difficulty, and at worst actively dangerous*", with the Albert Kennedy Trust recommending that "*young people to "press pause" on coming out until they had their support networks in place*" (Barnados, 2020).

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health review also notes that:

- One survey of 8-14 year olds showed that "*30% of them thought their parents were worrying about money issues*", leading to increased stress and anxiety

- Breakdowns in family relationships could eventually lead to "*more youth homelessness after the lockdown*".

- Support will be needed for ready for those children going back to school "*who have experienced bereavements or family breakdowns*".

- Children and young people are at risk of negative impacts where "*parents have stopped working due to COVID-19*". As one young person said:

  > *I usually have a weekly therapist, but mum lost her job because of the outbreak, and we can't afford it anymore.*

- For many children and young people there is a tension between the desire to spend time with members of their wider family (research commissioned by the Children's Commissioner for Wales (2020) found that 59% of young people age 12-18 considered not being able to visit family members' the main impact of "*stay at home rule*'") and recognition of the need to control the spread of the virus.

- Many children and young people have "*fears for family members whether that is because they are key workers, that they might contract COVID-19 or because they in difficult family situations or other reasons*". As one young person stated:

"...my grandma has lung problems and she lives with me and I don't want her to die like lots of people have."

Section 4.2. Relationships with Friends

The experiences of children and young people during the pandemic in terms of their relationships with friends are both positive and negative.

Research commissioned by the Children's Commissioner for Wales found that the top three responses from young people (12-18) on *"which stay at home rules have impacted the most on how they feel include 'not being able to spend time with friends' (72%)"*.

Negative impacts highlighted by the literature review carried out by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2020) included:

- More than 50% of children in the 8-14 year age group disclosed *"concern for friends"*.

- One report found that 35% of young people said that they felt *"lonely most or all of the time"*.

- A number of studies found that some children and young people had realised *"the value of their friendships with others"* but that other children had concluded that *"they are very connected through activities but don't have "real" friends"*.

  "Not everyone has a family to support them through this. Lots of people's friends are their family and now they can't see them at all, only online. People will be feeling so isolated more than they have ever done before." Statement from a young person (UK Youth, 2020)

Positive impacts from the same review included:

- Many children and young people *"reported in the different studies that they felt closer to their friends through lockdown, or that there had been no significant [negative] impact"*.

- One study found that 43% of children and young people surveyed said *"they had sent an encouraging message to someone and another 23% said they had sent a video to make someone smile"*.

- The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2020) highlight a statement from one young person:

  "I've really seen who my real friends are, who will get in touch in the bad times too."

The literature also notes that positive relationships between children and young people can be an effective tool for ensuring that they and their peers comply with mitigation strategies such as lockdown and social distancing, with one study concluding that:

> *"…adolescents themselves have a great capacity to influence each other to change norms and peer expectations towards public-health goals… […] …Asking adolescents to stay away from their friends at a key developmental period is a considerable challenge, but can be achieved by taking advantage of adolescent social influence"*. (Andrews, et al. 2020)

Section 4.3. Work

There is significant agreement in the literature that young people in full time or part time employment during the pandemic experienced disproportionate negative impacts on their jobs compared to older workers (see Gonzales (2020), Miles et al. (2020), Crisp and Waite (2020), the Office for National Statistics (2020), Gustafsson (2020), and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2020)).

Gonzales (2020) observes that "*a majority of the young people surveyed (54.0 per cent) who had lost their job since the onset of the pandemic gave either the business they worked for closing down or being let go as the reason*".

Crisp and Waite (2020), and Gonzales (2020) conclude that young workers were predominantly employed in the sectors and trades that would be the most impacted by the pandemic[15].

> *"Young people are facing many worries and challenges at this time. Some of us are on zero hours contracts and are losing jobs or their work has closed so they have zero income, and no-one is around to tell you what's happening and help you understand it at all. Many people rely on jobs as an escape from my home life, especially me, and I have been so eager to go to work. Me myself, I have zero knowledge if my work will ever open again, it could be back to square one in the job hunt, which will be soul destroying for me".* Statement from a young person, (UK Youth, 2020)

Unsurprisingly, young people aged 16 to 29 years were significantly more likely that other age groups to report an impact from the pandemic on their household finances (30%) (Office for National Statistics, 2020).

The literature also considers the ongoing impact of the pandemic on the future career prospects of children and young people.

Gonzales (2020) reports that young people's perceptions of their future career prospects are "*bleak, with 40 per cent facing the future with uncertainty and 14 per cent with fear*".

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health literature review found that children and young people are also reporting concern about: "*…cancelled exams and the impact that will have on them in the future when it comes to finding a job*" and a "*lack of opportunities for*

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[15] The sectors identified in these two studies include clerical support, services, sales, crafts and related trades, non-food retail, hospitality, and the arts and entertainment.

young people to find employment ", with *"69% of young people unemployed now feeling even more unsure about their future that they did before lockdown started"*.

The findings of Miles et al (2020) that there is a *"lasting wage penalty from unemployment of 8–10%"* that is *"particularly severe for young people"* serves to compound the negative impact on unemployed young people's career prospects.

> *"I find it hard to study and I am concerned about how this will affect my future career. Additionally, my apprenticeship placement was cancelled which means that I won't have training or experience once I graduate"* —Nadia Minhas, age 20, United Kingdom (Gonzales, 2020)

Section 4.4. Carers Trust Survey Findings

This section summarises the landmark research of the Carers Trust (2020) which provides a vivid picture of the experiences of young people with caring responsibilities during the pandemic:

Headlines

- 58% of young carers and 64% of young adult carers felt that the amount of time they spend caring had increased during the pandemic.

- 11% of young carers and 20% of young adult carers said the amount of time they spend caring per week increased by more than 30 hours.

- 8% of young carers and 15% of young adult carers cared for over 90 hours per week during the pandemic.

- 30% of young carers and 31% young adult carers are now caring for more people.

- Only 3% of young carers and 2% of young adult carers have had a paid care worker or personal assistant (PA) provide support at home for the person they care for.

- 42% of young adult carers were unable to take a break from caring.

- 19% of young carers and 21% of young adult carers told… [the Carers Trust] … that time away from the person they care for was an important coping mechanism during lockdown.

Resources

- 50% of young adult carers are spending more money due to Coronavirus.

> *"Money is always a worry because of the huge delay in any payments and only getting 80% [of their salary due to being furloughed], things were tight before, they are worse now. We use more food and utilities but there is no help for this"* Young adult carer, aged 19

- 11% of young carers and 20% of young adult carers said they found it hard to access food and medicines

    I went to the pharmacy, and they said that they didn't have all of the medicine that my nan needed. [I said] 'I'm worried that she might get more sick without it', the pharmacist [replied] 'We don't have enough, there's not a lot we can do'. I found the experience difficult. Young carer, aged 13

Negative impacts on Young Carers

- 52% of young adult carers are feeling overwhelmed by the pressures they are facing now.

- 40% of young carers and 59% of young adult carers say their mental health is worse.

    "I'm at home 24/7 other than to walk the dog which is the only time I get away from my caring role. I used to be able to do breaks on the weekend and visit friends or places and do exciting, fun things but I cannot do that now. My mental health is suffering. Some days it doesn't seem worth getting up as each day is the same". Young adult carer, aged 21

- 30% of young carers and half of young adult carers want mental health support. Over 1/4 of young carers and 37% of young adult carers are struggling to get emotional support.

- 19% of young adult carers are drinking more alcohol and 4% are using illegal drugs to help them cope.

- One third of young carers and nearly half of young adult carers have struggled to look after themselves (this includes eating well, sleep and exercise)

Education

- 24% of young carers and 23% of young adult carers said studying is a coping mechanism – indicating that this has a dual role in their lives.

- 56% of young carers and 39% of young adult carers said their education is suffering.

- 44% of young carers and 30% of young adult carers would like more support with their education.

- 41% of young carers said they didn't have enough time to spend on schoolwork.

- 15% of young carers said that support from school or an individual teacher has helped them to cope with life since the pandemic.

> *"…I'm struggling to get all the schoolwork done, as there is a lot. I miss going to young carers group; I miss my friends there and speaking to people like the youth workers to get support, advice or help with things."*
> Young carer, aged 15

Positive Impacts on Young Carers

- 42% of young carers and 25% of young adult carers have built a stronger relationship with the person they care for.

- 40% of young carers and 28% of young adult carers have learnt a new skill, such as cooking, during the pandemic.

Section 4.5. Children Looked After and Vulnerable Children and Young People

The follow section summarises the key themes in the literature relating to the experiences of Children Looked After and Vulnerable Children and Young People during the pandemic.

Baginski and Manthorpe (2020), Department for Education (2020b) and Crawley (2020) highlight a common finding within the literature that *"significant areas of social care"* were highly impacted by pandemic-driven factors (including social distancing regulations[16] and possibly redeployment of staff to Covid-19-related roles (See Conti, 2020)). However, these studies also note that delivery continued through alternative channels such as remote delivery.

It is also notable that data collected by Department for Education (2020b) finds that:

- The proportion of social worker not working during the pandemic reduced as lockdown progressed.

- the total number of children who started to be looked after between Waves 1 and 10[17] of the Department for Education survey was 4,320: this is *"…around 30% lower than the same period over the past three years"*.

The literature suggests that whilst some attempts at virtual services and online support for children looked after and vulnerable children and young people have been unsuccessful (Turner, 2020):

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[16] Crawley (2020) and Vicary et al (2020), (amongst others) note that during the pandemic lockdown a number of children looked after and vulnerable children were "at higher risk because of the reduction or suspension of evidenced-based protective support and interventions*… It therefore seems likely that the decisions on social distancing contravene the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)]*" (Crawley, 2020). Article 3 of the UNCRC states that "*In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration*" (The United Nations, 1989).

[17] Roughly, this period covers 20 April 2020 to 20 September 2020

- A number of "*children who have never previously participated in review meetings or child protection conferences but, because of the switch to digital rather than physical formats, have felt confident enough to do so*" (Turner, 2020)

- Children and young people "*reported to have usually been very positive about virtual engagement. Social workers had sometimes been able to build relationships where they had struggled previously*" (Baginski and Manthorpe, 2020).

- Overall, the "*responses to the pandemic by Local Authority Children's Social Care Provision has been positive and appropriate*" (Baginski and Manthorpe, 2020)

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Annex One: Methodology

Research information

Commissioner: Local Government Association
Date of Commission: 11 August 2020
Research Window: 14 August 2020 – 05 November 2020
Principal Researcher: Mr Stefan Burkey, for Achievement for All (3As) Ltd
Quality Assurance: Professor Sonia Blandford (Achievement for All (3As) Ltd)
                     Dr Catherine Knowles (for Achievement for All (3As) Ltd)

Online Search Terms

"Young People" AND COVID OR Coronavirus
"Young People" AND COVID OR Coronavirus AND "Experiences" OR "Experience"
"Young People" AND COVID OR Coronavirus AND "Wellbeing"
"Young People" AND COVID OR Coronavirus AND "Mental Health"
"Young People" AND COVID OR Coronavirus AND "Future"
"Young People" AND COVID OR Coronavirus AND "Disadvantage"
"Young People" AND COVID OR Coronavirus AND "Fears" OR "Fear"
"Young People" AND COVID OR Coronavirus AND "Attainment"
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COVID OR Coronavirus AND "Students"
COVID AND Coronavirus AND "GCSE"
COVID AND Coronavirus AND "A-Level"
COVID AND Coronavirus AND "BTEC"
COVID AND Coronavirus AND "Apprenticeship"
COVID AND Coronavirus AND "Vocational" OR "VET" OR "VTQ"