YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Healthwatch Hammersmith and Fulham August 2021

CONTENTS

BACKGROUND

What is Healthwatch

Healthwatch Hammersmith & Fulham (HW H&F) is a consumer champion for the local health and social care services. Alongside 151 other Healthwatch organisations across England, it was established after the 2012 health and social care reform with the ambition of putting people at the centre of health and social care.

HW H&F empowers local people to voice their views and opinions about the services they use, to improve them and to help them address service users' needs. It collects the viewpoints of the public, produces reports that highlight good practice and makes recommendations for improvement, and presents these reports to those involved in the commissioning and scrutiny of the health and social care services. Furthermore, HW H&F presents the views of the local people to Healthwatch England to help them carry out their work as the national champion.

Introduction to the Project

The pandemic's effect on mental health is likely to continue longer than its impact on physical health across the population. Although some people also describe better mental wellbeing due to more balanced work/homelife, new hobbies or interests or newly acquired positive thoughts about what really matters, the effects on individual mental wellbeing from physical separation, social isolation, disruption to education, unemployment and economic consequences show some of the difficult mental health challenges the UK population face. Furthermore, the effects of mental health are distributed unequally across society, with some social groups carrying a greater share of the mental health burden. Without a doubt the pandemic has created new worries and anxieties, as well as made any existing mental health conditions worse.

With mental health highlighted as the key concern for young people in Hammersmith & Fulham in the 'Growing Up in H&F'[1] report published by Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation, and mental health being the focus of the Hammersmith & Fulham Youth Council's manifesto, HW H&F identified a need to find out how young people feel the

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[1] https://yhff.org.uk/images/downloads/ypfWebsite/Growing-up-in-HF-Final_2020-11-13-145504.pdf

pandemic has affected their mental health and wellbeing and their access to local mental health and support services.

METHODOLOGY

Online Survey

A set of questions was produced by HW H&F staff and volunteers together with the Hammersmith & Fulham Youth Council Coordinator over a series of Teams meetings. In total, the questionnaire included 32 questions including eight demographic questions, twenty close-ended questions to gather quantitative data, and twelve open-ended questions for qualitative data. During the data analysis process, some of the open-ended questions were transformed to quantitative data by identifying key themes and applying these key themes to the survey responses.

The survey was presented to the Youth Council of Hammersmith & Fulham (YC H&F) during one of their weekly Youth Council meetings to ask any feedback and suggestions the Youth Councillors might have. This was to ensure that the questions were easily understood by all ages of the target group.

Once the questions had been approved by the Hammersmith & Fulham Council Children and Young People's Service Lead, as well as the HW H&F Committee Members and Operations Director for Your Voice in Health and Social Care (YVHSC), the survey was uploaded on to the H&F Council's Consultation Hub on their website hosted by Citizenspace.

The survey was live from the 3rd of June 2021 until the 9th of July 2021 and during that time we received 324 responses in total.

The survey was distributed via a wide range of health and social care providers, schools, and local community organisations (see appendices for a list of some of the organisations).

Some of the Youth Councillors acted as ambassadors for the survey by taking it to their respective schools and sharing it within their social networks.

Focus Groups

Two focus group session were held on the 4th of August 2021 with young people taking part in the summer activities organised by Let Me Play[2]. The aim of these focus groups was to further discuss the survey findings, delving deeper into any issues raised. The data from these focus groups will be released at a later date as an additional chapter to this report.

Sample

Our project focused on reaching young people aged 11 to 18. Our aim was to gather responses from a diverse range of young people representative of the overall population of the H&F borough[3], and based on the responses to the ethnicity question on our survey we managed to achieve this goal (see appendices for the data on ethnicity of the respondents).

LIMITATIONS

Due to the continued social distancing measures and restrictions in place, the survey was published online which meant that it was only accessible for young people who had access to a mobile phone, a tablet, or a computer, and we acknowledge that this has excluded young people who have no means of access to digital platforms.

We also acknowledge that our sample might not be representative of all ages between 11 and 18 as we decided to omit a demographic question regarding the respondents' age due to potential confidentiality issues. We felt that with the knowledge of a respondent's age and their access to mental health services there was a chance that someone could be identified based on this information. Therefore, we wanted to guarantee 100% confidentiality to make sure young people felt comfortable in expressing their feelings around mental health and wellbeing.

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[2] https://www.letmeplay.co.uk/
[3] https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E09000013#section_6_4

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Brenda Whinnett, the Youth Council Co-ordinator and the Hammersmith & Fulham Youth Councillors for their input and support during this project and with helping us to reach over 300 young people.

We would also like to thank all the schools, local community organisations, and health and social care service providers who agreed to share the survey with their networks.

We would also like to thank all the young people who took the time out of their lives to respond to our survey and in doing so provided us with valuable insight to how the pandemic and the social distancing rules have affected them and what can be done to support young people going forward.

DISCLAIMER

In our graphs, where we have analysed key themes emerging from the survey responses, we have included maximum of six key themes per chart to keep the report concise. We have also rounded up the percentages and due to these reasons, the percentages do not always add up to 100%.

KEY FINDINGS

1. **There are three main ways that young people access information on mental health:** through schools or colleges, family and friends, or social platforms. However, around 1 in 10 young people do not access information on mental health.

2. **Around 1 in 3 young people feel comfortable talking about mental health:** because they have no mental health issues; they feel it is better to speak out for their own and other people's benefit; or because they have supportive family and / or friends.

3. **1 in 4 young people feel uncomfortable talking about mental health:** because they feel their mental health is personal to them; they find it uncomfortable talking about their feelings especially with people they do not know; or they are worried about how people might react (i.e. not being taken seriously and being judged).

4. **More than 1 in 3 young people's mental health worsened during the lockdowns:** the main reasons were not being able to see friends and family; being confined indoors or at home; and the negative impact of online learning on education.

5. **Lockdowns also had positive impact on young people's lives:** 1 in 4 enjoyed having more free time to spend on hobbies and entertainment; and around 1 in 4 enjoyed spending more time with family.

6. **Around 1 in 2 young people said they feel they have changed in the last 12 months:** 1 in 2 said they had experienced a positive change: they had become more mature, confident and / or independent. Around 1 in 4 had experienced a negative change: experiencing worsened mental health such as anxiety, stress or worry; feeling socially isolated; or feeling less happy in general.

7. **2 in 3 have experienced a change in their relationships with other people:** 1 in 5 have become distant from friends and / or family; 1 in 6 have become closer with family and / or friends; and 1 in 6 have experienced increase in their social interactions through social media or other forms of remote communication methods.

8. **2 in 5 young people would not feel comfortable contacting services to get help and around 1 in 3 are not sure if they would feel comfortable.**

9. **2 in 5 have found information on how to get support with majority accessing it through school, while 1 in 3 have not found information on how to get help.**

10. **3 in 4 would know how to get support if needed with 1 in 3 going to someone in family or a close friend.**
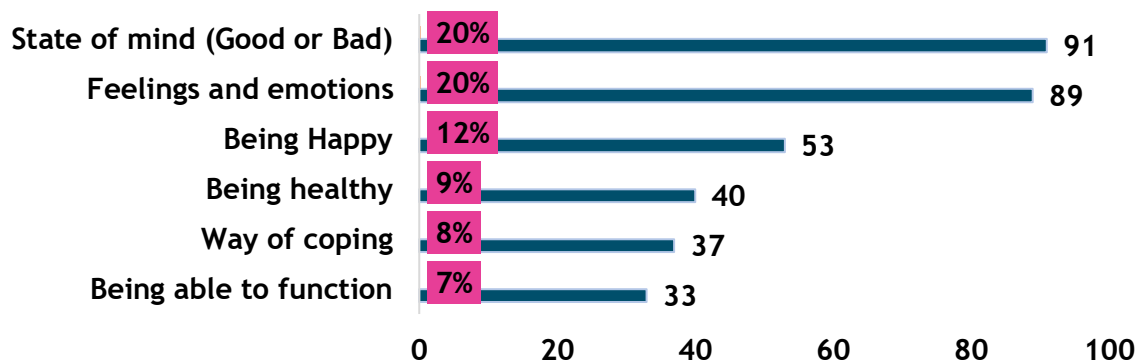
11. **2 in 5 young people said they have had either negative or mixed experiences contacting someone for support:** because they did not get the help they needed; they had difficulty accessing the support; they felt uncomfortable contacting someone; or they had experienced a negative response from those they had contacted for help.

DATA ANALYSIS OF ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES

Maintaining Mental Health

Q1. What does mental health and wellbeing mean to you?

We asked young people to describe in their own words what mental health and wellbeing mean to them. 20% (n.91) described mental health being a state of mind - good or bad, while another 20% (n.89) associated it with feelings and emotions. 12% (n.53) of the responses mentioned feeling happy; 9% (n.40) associated mental health with being healthy and 8% (n.37) said mental health relates to the way a person copes with situations in life. 7% (n.33) associated good mental health with being able to function and live life well.

State of mind (Good or Bad)	**20%** — 91
Feelings and emotions	**20%** — 89
Being Happy	**12%** — 53
Being healthy	**9%** — 40
Way of coping	**8%** — 37
Being able to function	**7%** — 33

(Scale: 0 20 40 60 80 100)

Selected Comments

"The state of being in a good mindset and also having positive thoughts and ideas regularly."

"Mental health - how I'm feeling, it can be good or bad. Mental wellbeing is about my feelings or thoughts."

"I think that mental health is how someone feels in a day-to-day situation and how they can cope with normal everyday stress and problems."

Q2. How do you currently access information on mental health? Please tick the relevant options.

32% (n.176) said they receive their information on mental health from schools or colleges, 28% (n.154) from family and friends, and 24% (n.133) from social platforms. 9% (n.51) said

that they do not access information on mental health, while other ways mentioned included online (2%, n.11) and NHS (2%, n.10) either through directly accessing mental health services or on NHS website.
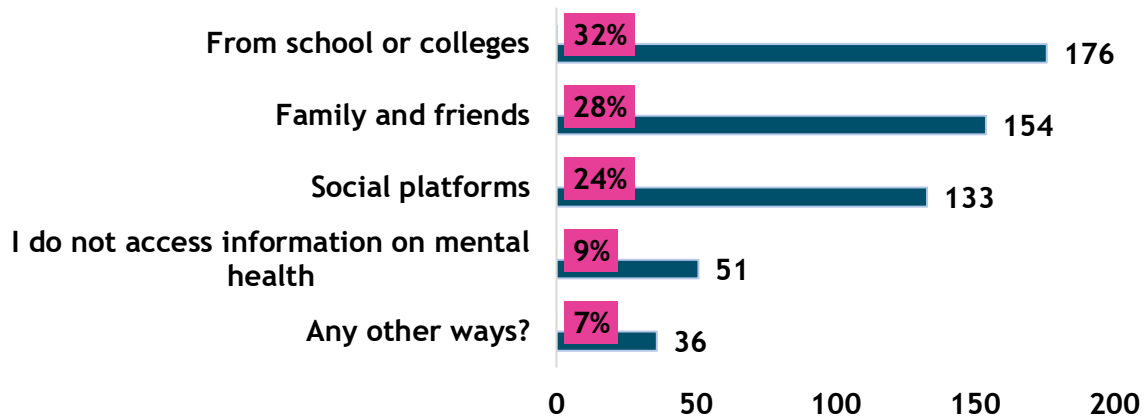
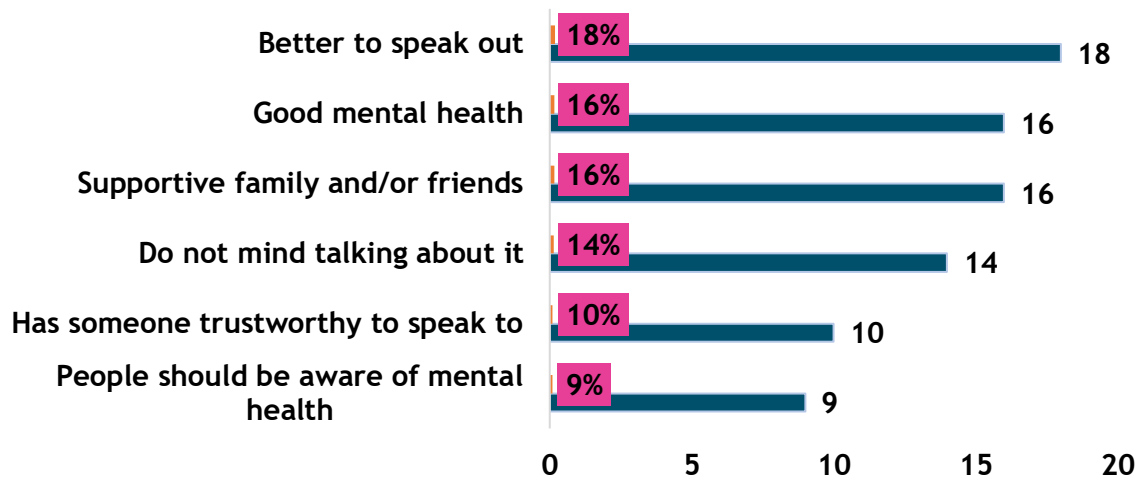## Q3. How comfortable do you feel talking about your mental health?

33% (n.108) said they feel neither comfortable or uncomfortable talking about mental health while 26% (n.83) feel comfortable and 13% (n.43) very comfortable. However, 15% (n. 49) of the respondents said they feel uncomfortable and further 10% (n.33) very uncomfortable.
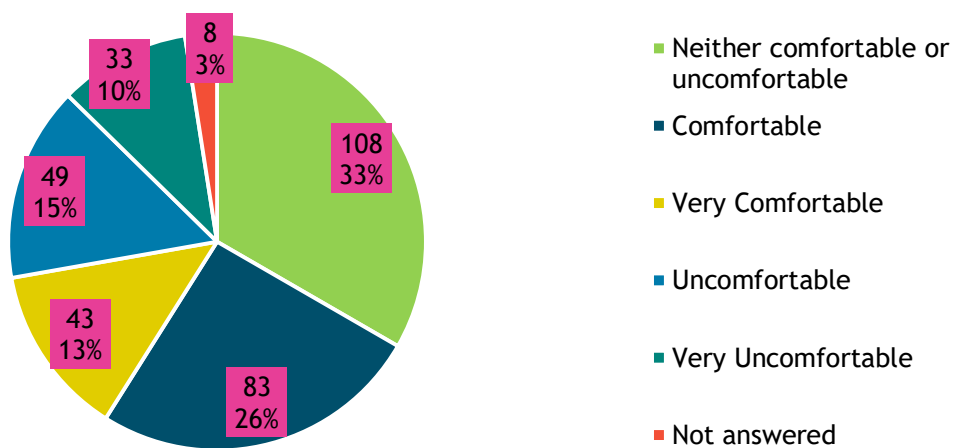
Q4. How comfortable do you feel talking about your mental health? - Can you tell us a bit about why you feel like this?

Out of those who said that they feel comfortable or very comfortable talking about mental health, 18% (n.18) said that it is better to speak out rather than keep things to yourself, and 16% (n.16) feel comfortable because they had supportive family and friends. 16% (n.16) mentioned that they are comfortable talking about mental health because they

have no issues with their mental health. Other reasons mentioned, included wanting to spread awareness about mental health issues to make others feel comfortable or to let them know that they are not alone (9%, n.9), and some said that it is easier to talk about mental health if you have someone trustworthy to speak to (10%, n.10).
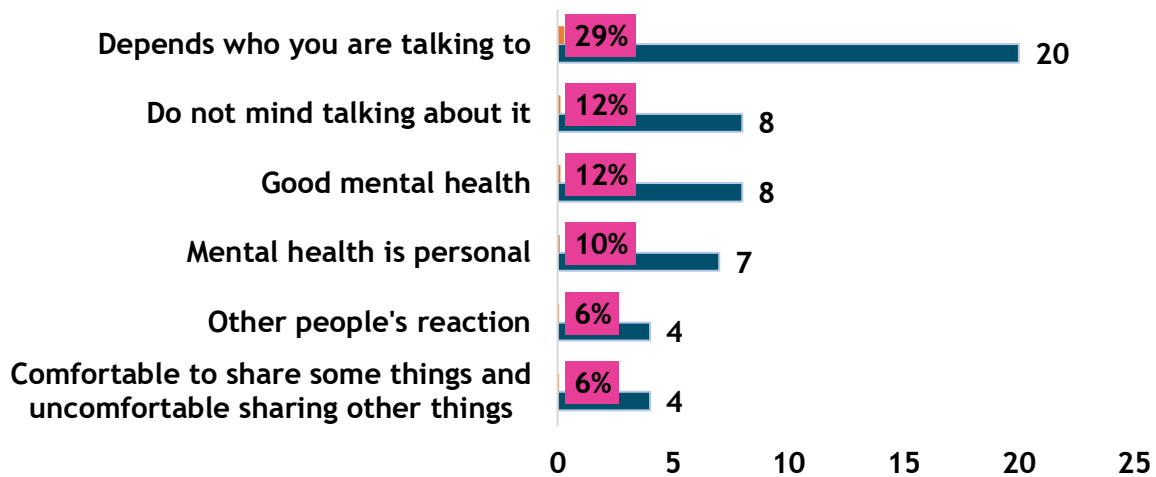
Category	Percentage	Value
Better to speak out	18%	18
Good mental health	16%	16
Supportive family and/or friends	16%	16
Do not mind talking about it	14%	14
Has someone trustworthy to speak to	10%	10
People should be aware of mental health	9%	9

Selected Comments

"Because I've given up on the logic that keeping all your problems to yourself is a sign of superiority. Also that if you are open and honest it might inspire people to be open and honest as well, and will help them feel less alone"

"I have a good support group around me that includes friends and family that I can trust with personal information as such."

"Because I feel my mental health is in a good place and I haven't any issues with it that's why I'm comfortable with it"

Majority (29%, n.20) of those who answered that they feel neither comfortable nor uncomfortable talking about mental health mentioned that it depends on who they are talking to; they feel comfortable talking to those they are close to, but uncomfortable talking with strangers or people they do not have a close relationship with.
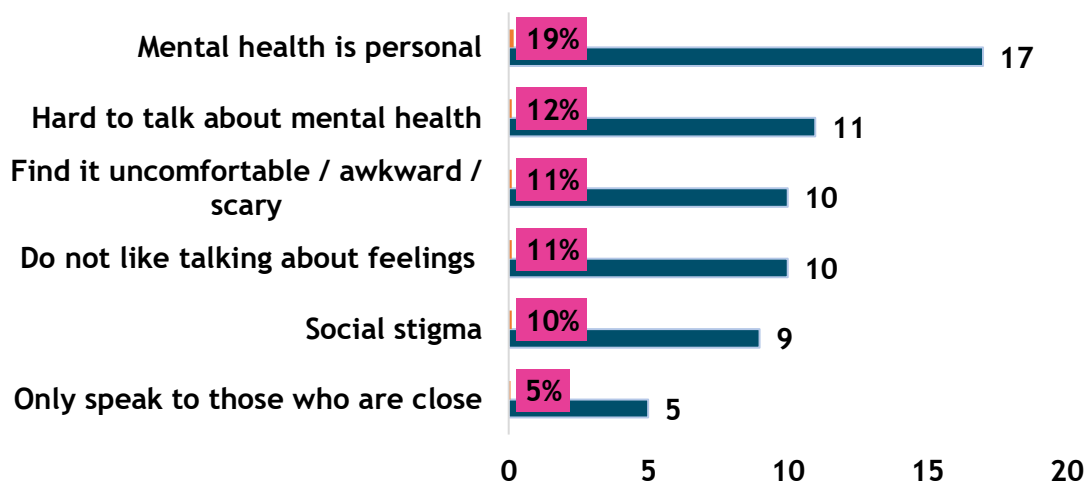
Depends who you are talking to	29% 20
Do not mind talking about it	12% 8
Good mental health	12% 8
Mental health is personal	10% 7
Other people's reaction	6% 4
Comfortable to share some things and uncomfortable sharing other things	6% 4

0 5 10 15 20 25

Selected Comments

"It's very personal and I don't find it something I can easily discuss with people who aren't close to me."

"I don't really know how to word stuff I say and I feel really awkward when talking to people I don't feel comfortable with."

"I like talking when I am feeling good but not so much when I feel upset."

Out of those who said that they feel uncomfortable or very uncomfortable talking about mental health, the majority (19%, n.17) said that mental health is personal, and they do not like to speak about it to other people. Others said that it is hard to talk about mental health (12%, n.11), while some find it uncomfortable or awkward or scary to talk about (11%, n.10), and some do not like to talk about their feelings (11%, n.10).

Mental health is personal	19% 17
Hard to talk about mental health	12% 11
Find it uncomfortable / awkward / scary	11% 10
Do not like talking about feelings	11% 10
Social stigma	10% 9
Only speak to those who are close	5% 5

0 5 10 15 20

Selected Comments

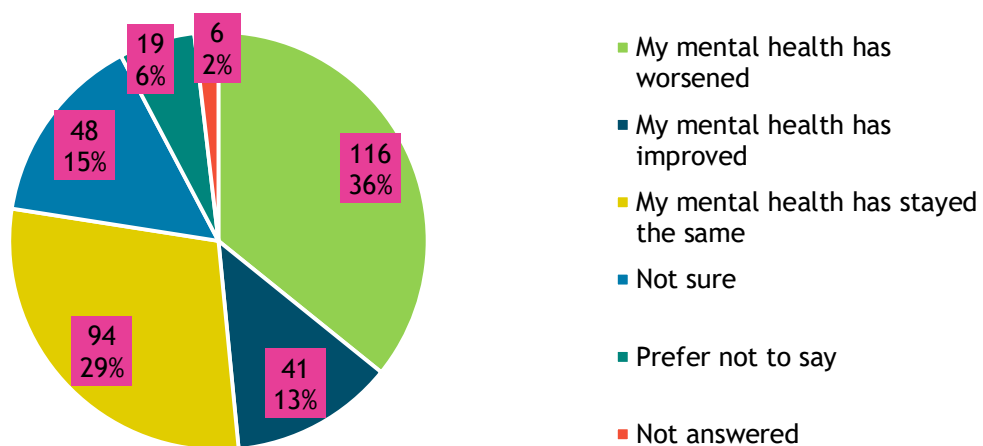*"I feel like this because I don't like to talk about my feeling and the people I tell won't believe me."*

"I feel like it makes me a burden and people see me differently and treat me differently. It makes me feel like less of a man because I feel weak when I open up and that my problems are less than others."

"I don't like talking about my feelings because I'll feel like a burden to others and whenever I do I instantly regret doing it or it doesn't do anything helpful."

Mental Health During Lockdown

Q5. How do you feel the lockdown has impacted your mental health?

Majority (36%, n.116) of the young people felt that their mental health had worsened during the lockdown. 29% (n.94) said their mental health had remained the same, and 13% (n.41) of the respondents said that their mental health had improved.

Legend:
- My mental health has worsened
- My mental health has improved
- My mental health has stayed the same
- Not sure
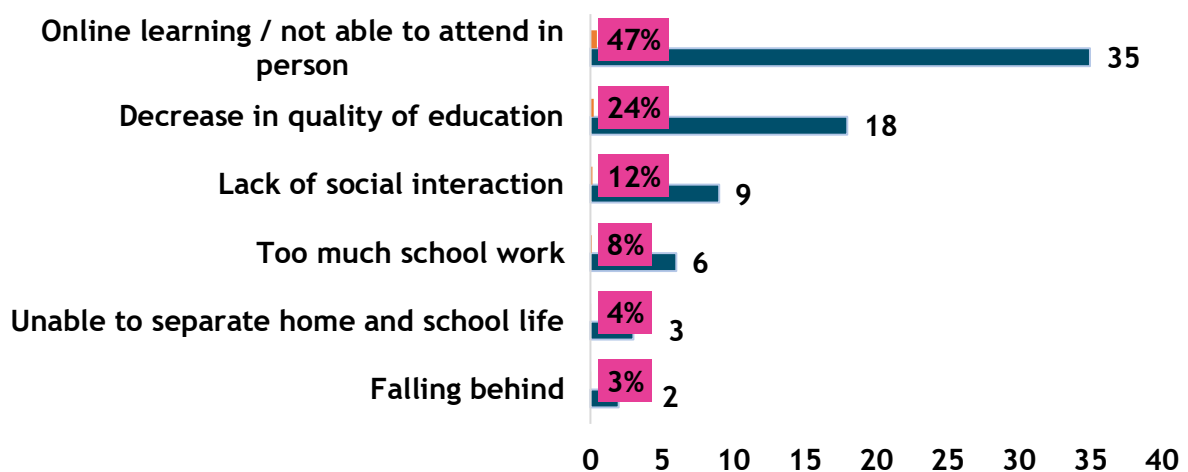- Prefer not to say
- Not answered

Q6. What were the worst things?

We asked the young people an open-ended question regarding the worst things about lockdown. Nearly half (48%, n.147) of the responses mentioned not being able to see friends and family in person and nearly a third (31%, 94) of the responses said that the worst thing was having to stay at home or indoors. Several of the responses (18%, n.55) also mentioned the negative impact on education.

Not being able to see friends/family in person: 48% — 147
Confined to home/indoors: 31% — 94
Negative impact on education: 18% — 55
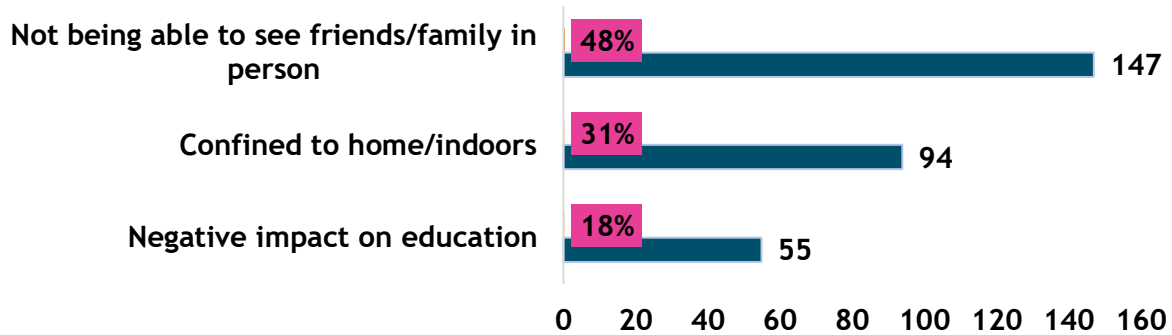
We explored the key themes emerging from the responses that mentioned lockdown having a negative impact on education. Almost a half (47%, n.35) of the responses said that online lessons and not being able to attend school in person had affected their learning: the reasons included not being able to get help and support from teachers as efficiently as you would in person; teachers lacking knowledge of online learning; and not being able to focus and lacking motivation. Nearly a quarter (24%, n.18) of the responses directly mentioned the decrease in quality of education.

Online learning / not able to attend in person: 47% — 35
Decrease in quality of education: 24% — 18
Lack of social interaction: 12% — 9
Too much school work: 8% — 6
Unable to separate home and school life: 4% — 3
Falling behind: 3% — 2

Selected Comments

"My dad died on March 28th 2020 and we couldn't say goodbye to him. Even though we were very sad and needed help, we couldn't see anybody like friends or family afterwards because of quarantine. I missed being able to go to college and all of the activities and therapies that I used to do to calm my mind. I really hate Zoom meetings."
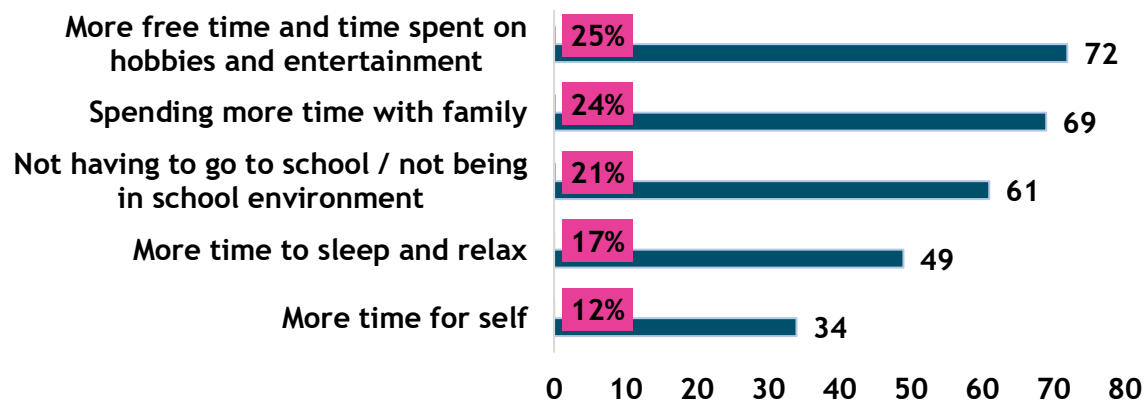
"Online school meant our educational standards had dropped. It was harder to understand certain topics, it was stressful and very hard to focus and find motivation to do things when staying in the house all day."

"Online school because I learnt nothing. Whole year group chats because nobody ever answers my messages so I couldn't get information."

Q7. What were the best things?

As with the previous question, we asked the young people an open-ended question about the best things in lockdown. A quarter (25%, n.72) of the answers said the best thing about lockdown was the increased free time to spend on hobbies and on entertainment, and around a quarter of the responses (24%, n.69) mentioned spending more time with their family. Many (21%, n.61) of the respondents said that they enjoyed not having to go to school and being able to do schoolwork in a home environment. This enabled longer sleeping time, and less stress in daily life.

Many (12%, n.34) responses also mentioned that lockdown was a chance to learn things about self.

Category	Percentage	Count
More free time and time spent on hobbies and entertainment	25%	72
Spending more time with family	24%	69
Not having to go to school / not being in school environment	21%	61
More time to sleep and relax	17%	49
More time for self	12%	34

Selected Comments

"Being able to stop and take a pause and break in life for the first and probably last time. Spending more time with my family and trying new activities."

"More time spent with family and pets.
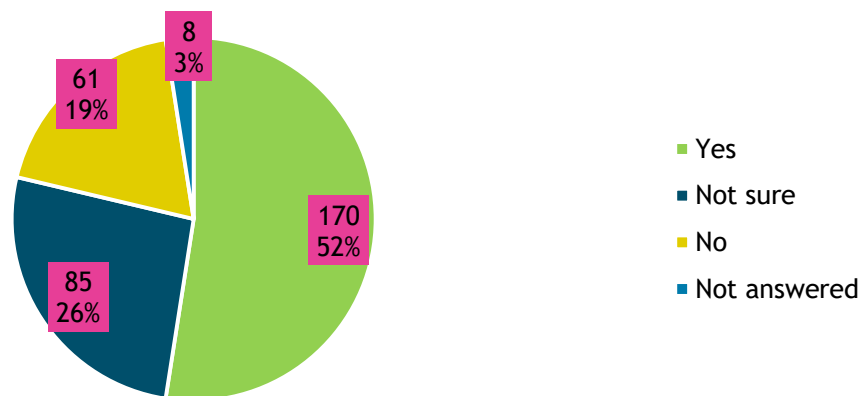
No longer needed to travel.

Saved money.

Slept for longer."

*"Being able to take a break from the stress of school (during the 1st lockdown)."*

Q8. Do you feel you have changed in the last 12 months?

Over half (52%, n.170) of the respondents said that they feel they have changed in the last 12 months, while 19% (n.61) said they had not and 26% (n.85) were not sure.
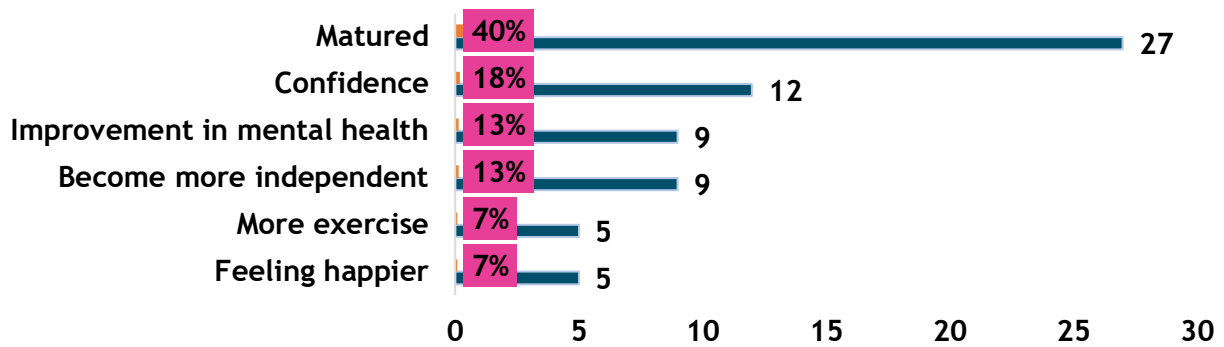

Q9. If you answered yes to the above, if you can, please tell us how you feel you have changed?

Out of the 136 answers we received to this question, 55% (n.75) said they had experienced a positive change during the last 12 months. 24% (n.32) said they had experienced a negative change, and 11% (n.15) had experienced both positive and negative changes.
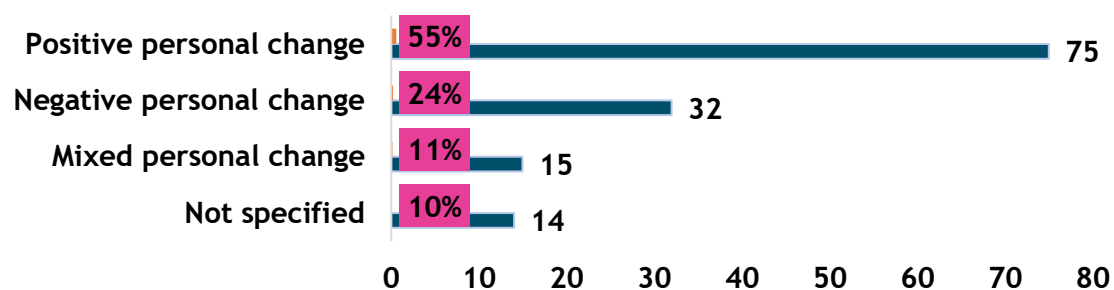
The most common themes to emerge from the positive personal changes included becoming more mature (40%, n.27), confident (18%, n.12) and independent (13%, n.9).
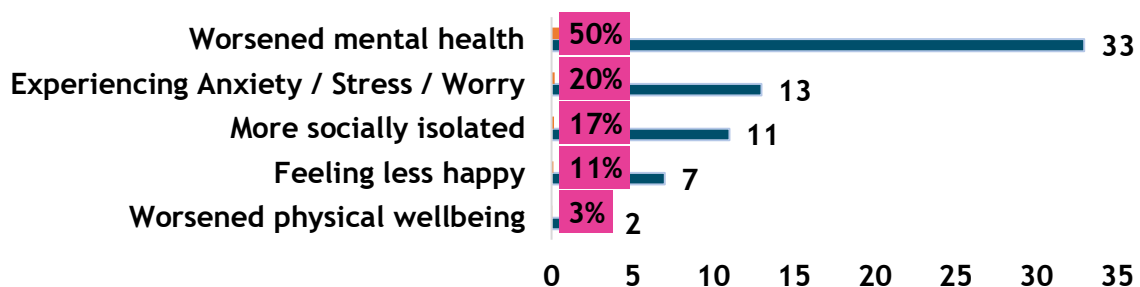
Matured	**40%** 27
Confidence	**18%** 12
Improvement in mental health	**13%** 9
Become more independent	**13%** 9
More exercise	**7%** 5
Feeling happier	**7%** 5

0 5 10 15 20 25 30

Selected Comments

"I feel like I've matured a lot and become a lot more comfortable with who I am and who I want to be."

"I have become more confident in myself, not caring what people think of me, learning to walk away from negativity, being myself."

"I am more conservative than before I won't just pounce into a situation and I'm also more independent compared to before."

Half (50%, n.33) of those who said that they had experienced a negative change during the last 12 months mentioned worsening mental health. 20% (n.13) mentioned experiencing anxiety, stress or worry either for the first time or it had become worse during lockdown. The causes behind these feelings were uncertainty of future, school or exams, health of family members, or social isolation.

Worsened mental health	**50%** 33
Experiencing Anxiety / Stress / Worry	**20%** 13
More socially isolated	**17%** 11
Feeling less happy	**11%** 7
Worsened physical wellbeing	**3%** 2

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35

Selected Comments

"I am more careful now because my mom and grandma had virus and l took care of them and it was not best experience and l was worried when l saw them struggling l was always following them so nothing's going to happen."

Q10. Over the past year, do you think you have seen a change in your relationships with other people?

We asked young people an open-ended question regarding whether they felt they had experienced a change in their relationships with other people and the majority (67%, n.191) of the respondents said yes while just under a third (30%, n.85) of the respondents said they had not.
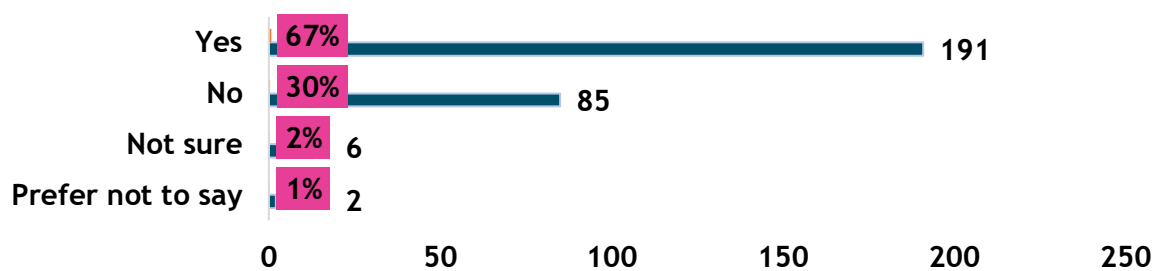
A third (33%, n.65) of the respondents said that they had experienced a positive change in their relationship with other people, while 17% (n.33) said the change had been negative. 41% (n.81) did not specify the sentiment of the change.
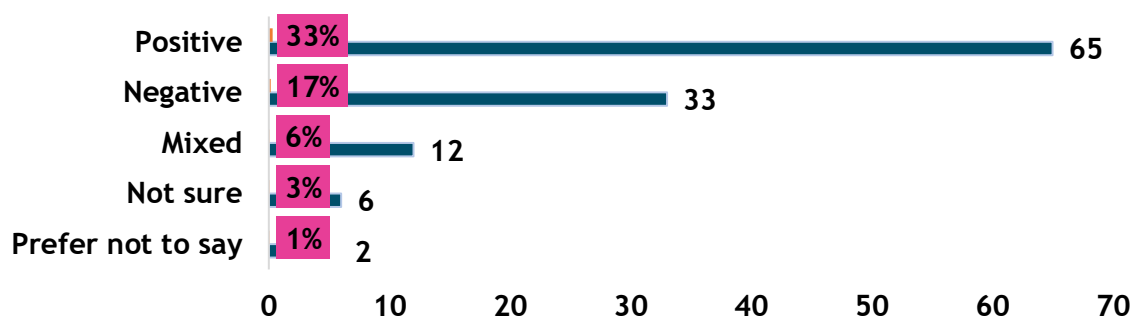
16% (n.25) of the responses mentioned that they had become closer to their family and friends due to spending more time together. Another 16% (n.25) noted their social interaction had increased during lockdown: this was through social media or having more
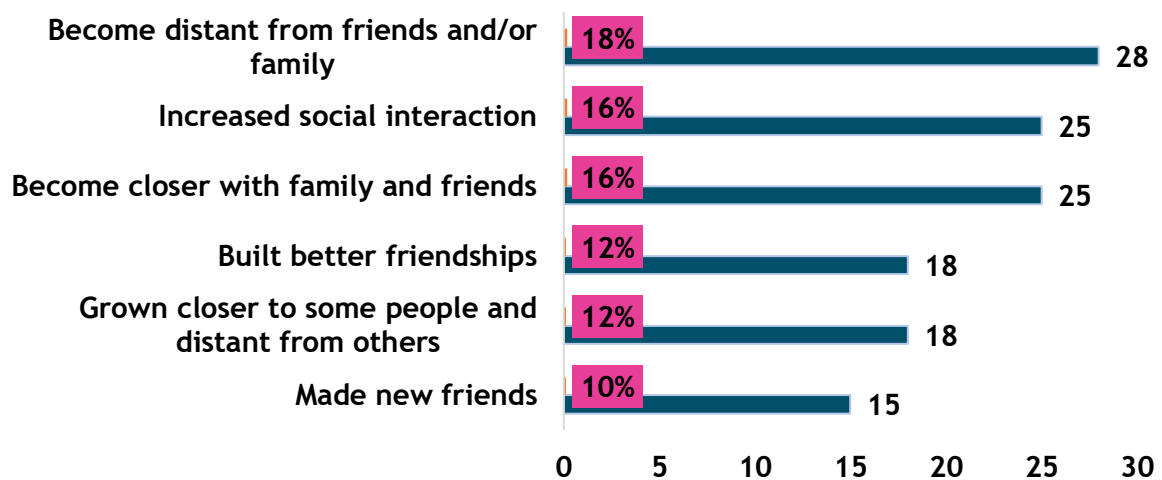
time to spend talking or messaging to friends. 10% (n.15) mentioned having made new friends during lockdown, usually through social media.

12% (n.18) felt that they had built better friendships through having time for self-improvement: by becoming better listeners; more sociable; more talkative; and more appreciative of friendships which subsequently strengthened their friendships.

5% (n.7) of the respondents said that they had been able to break relationships with those who had a negative influence on them.

In terms of negative impact on relationships, 18% (n.28) mentioned becoming distant from friends or family. 8% (n.12) said that it was difficult to maintain close relationships remotely, and 3% (n.5) said that lockdown had made it difficult for them to make new friends when they had moved schools.

12% (n.18) mentioned that while they had become distant from some friends, they had become closer with others. The strengthened relationship was often with people they already had a close relationship with before the pandemic, while they had become distant from people with who they previously did not feel close to or from those who they only saw in school environment.

Category	Percentage	Value
Become distant from friends and/or family	18%	28
Increased social interaction	16%	25
Become closer with family and friends	16%	25
Built better friendships	12%	18
Grown closer to some people and distant from others	12%	18
Made new friends	10%	15

Selected Comments

"I guess because I had to be stuck with my family for the past lockdown so my [relation] with them has become stronger."

"I've definitely gained a lot of new friendships through social media and become closer with my family but at the same time I have also become less close with certain people that I have not been able to see in over a year."

"Yes. it is harder to keep up with people and keep in contact, so I have lost many people I used to be friends with."

"Yes, I feel that not talking to some people who I was not originally the closest of friends with has now meant that I am almost completely distant to them. It was mainly the people who I commonly was in contact with that I maintained a strong relationship."

## Q11. During lockdown have you felt any of the following?

For this question, we gave young people the option of choosing as many responses as was relevant to them from a pre-determined list of answers. Majority (11%, n.191) said they had been missing friends and family, followed by 10% (n.178) saying they had been getting easily annoyed. Sleeping too much (6%, n.99), unable to sleep (6%, n.98), and trouble relaxing (6%, n.106) received the least number of responses.
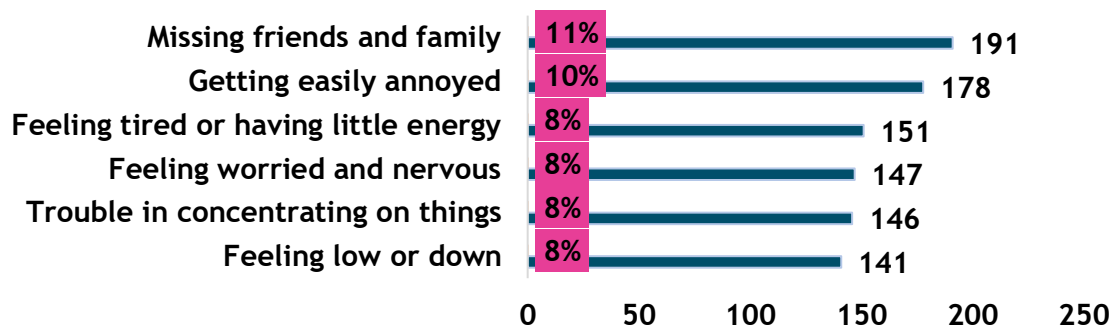
We also gave the option to add anything else to our list of options with stress (23%, n.6) anxiety (19%, n.5) and feelings of isolation (19%, n.5) being added the most.

Q12. How do you feel technology has impacted your mental health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic?

41% (n.133) said they had been neither positively nor negatively affected by technology during the pandemic, with 26% (n.83) saying they had been positively affected and further 16% (n.52) had been very positively affected by technology. 11% (n.36) said they had been negatively impacted while 2% (n.8) had been very negatively impacted.
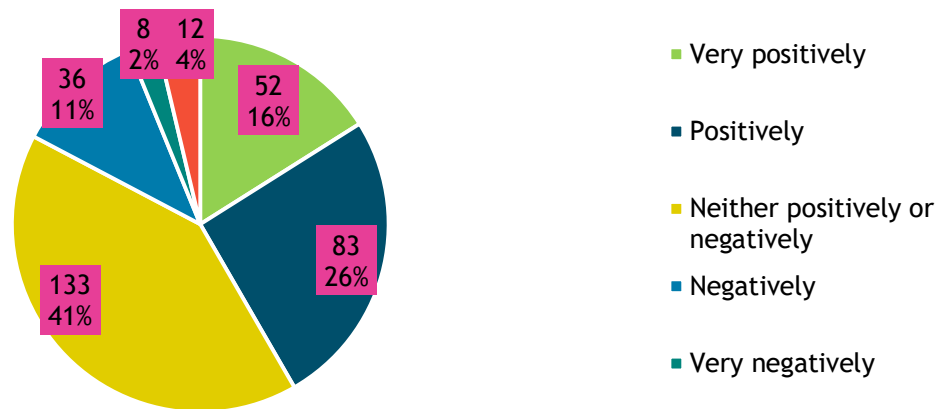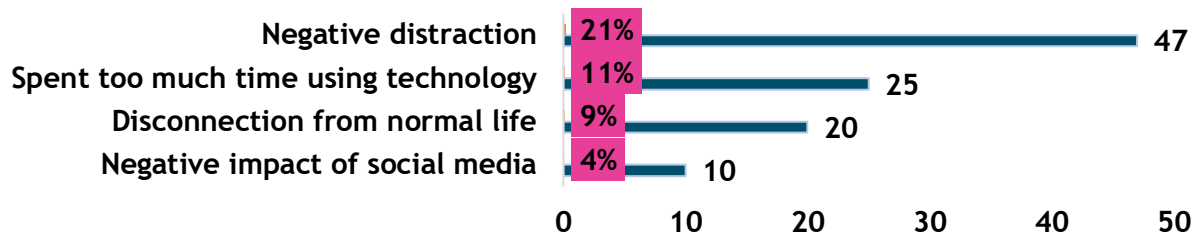

Q13. How do you feel technology has impacted your mental health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic? - Can you explain why?

We asked the young people to explain in their own words how they had been impacted by technology with 37% (n.84) saying it had helped them to stay connected with friends, family, and school while observing the government's advice on social distancing. 17% (n.39) said technology had provided entertainment during the lockdown such as video games and streaming services which had prevented boredom and therefore making lockdown easier.
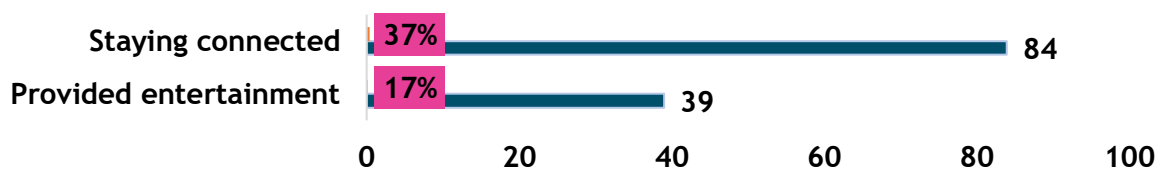
21% (n.47) said it had been a negative distraction during the pandemic: for example, social media distracting from schoolwork; the negative content of the news media causing worry; and the negative influences such as unrealistic body images available online impacting self-confidence.11% (n.25) said they had spent too much time using technology due to online entertainment as well as online lessons and for some this had caused headaches and problems with their eyes. 9% (n.20) mentioned that technology had disconnected them from normal life, such as spending time with family or doing other activities like reading or going outside for example.

Negative distraction	21%	47
Spent too much time using technology	11%	25
Disconnection from normal life	9%	20
Negative impact of social media	4%	10

0 10 20 30 40 50

Selected Comments

"Technology has improved my mental health because I got to interact with my friends safely without getting any other people sick."

"Since meeting up with mates in person became something of the past, we found that through online games we could still enjoy each other's company and have fun at the same time. Also, without technology it would've been impossible to reliably communicate with any of my friends which would've made me feel a bit lonely."

"Just some of the things that's been portrayed on social media like 'all lives matter'. And also seeing black people getting killed or missing in the USA and UK. It upsets me."

"The screen meetings (like Zoom or Teams) were terrible but there was no choice. Those meetings always put me in a bad mood. Also when my devices were broken or internet not working, then I was really stuck. That was very frustrating and stressful. I didn't like having to ask my mum to keep helping me, especially when she couldn't make it work either. I don't want to add to her stress and sadness."

"Because looking at the screen too much is not good for my eyes and it gave me lots of headaches. Also I couldn't focus on learning at home."

Support Services and the Access To Them

Q14. Would you be comfortable contacting services to get help?

43% (n.140) said they would not feel comfortable contacting services to get help while 31% (n.101) were not sure if they would be, and 23% (n.75) said they would feel comfortable.

Yes · No · Not sure · Not Answered
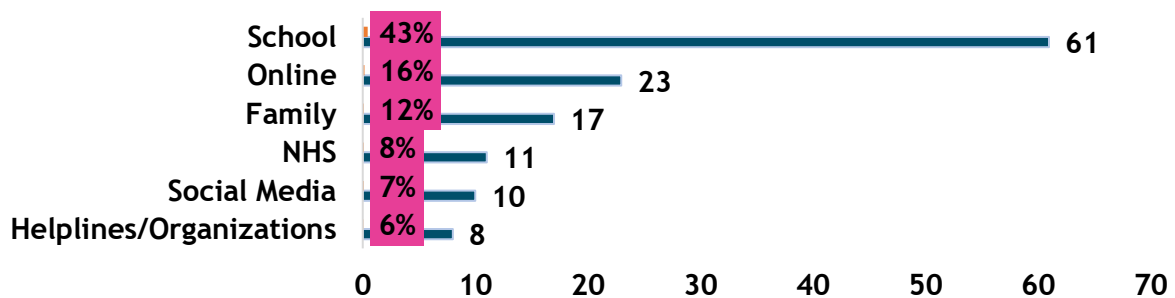
8 — 3%
75 — 23%
101 — 31%
140 — 43%
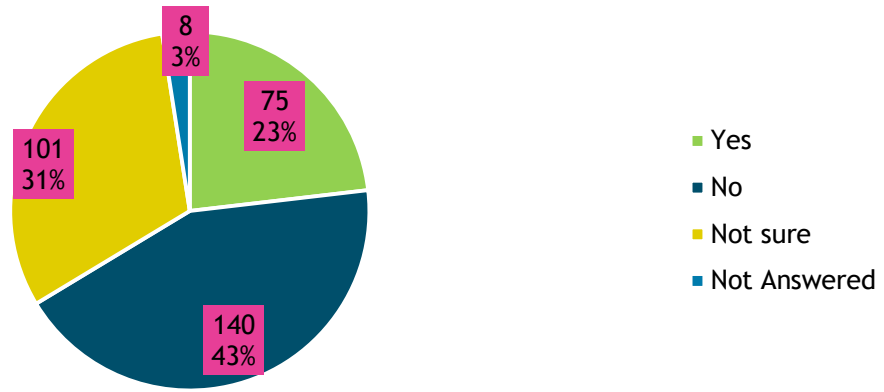
Q15. Have you found information on how to get support?

39% (n.126) said they had found information on how to get support, with 33% (n.108) not having found information and 25% (n.82) saying they were not sure.

8 — 3%
82 — 25%
126 — 39%
108 — 33%

Yes · No · Not sure · Not Answered
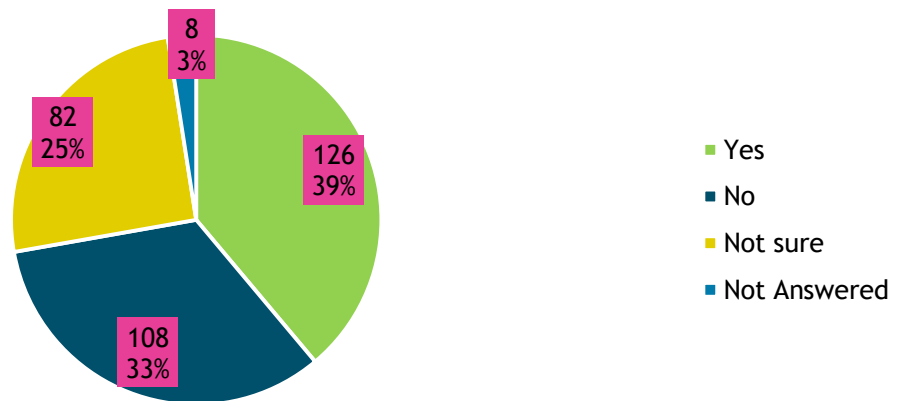
Q16. If yes, can you tell us where you found the information?

Most (43%, n.61) of the responses said they had found the information on how to contact support from school while 16% (n.23) said they had found it online, and 12% (n.17) from family.

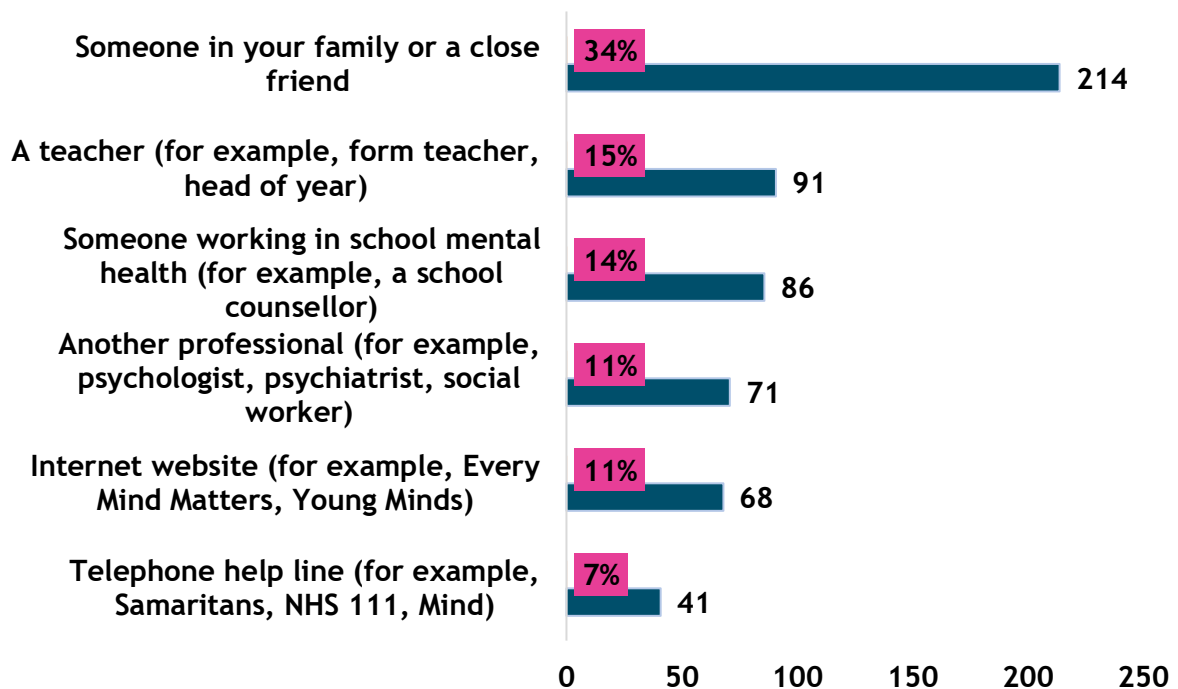| Category	%	Value
School	43%	61
Online	16%	23
Family	12%	17
NHS	8%	11
Social Media	7%	10
Helplines/Organizations	6%	8

Q17. Do you know how to get support if you need it?

77% (n.250) said they would know how to get support if needed with 10% (n.32) saying no and another 10% (n.32) saying they were not sure.

Legend:
- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Not Answered

Pie chart values: 250 / 77%, 32 / 10%, 32 / 10%, 10 / 3%
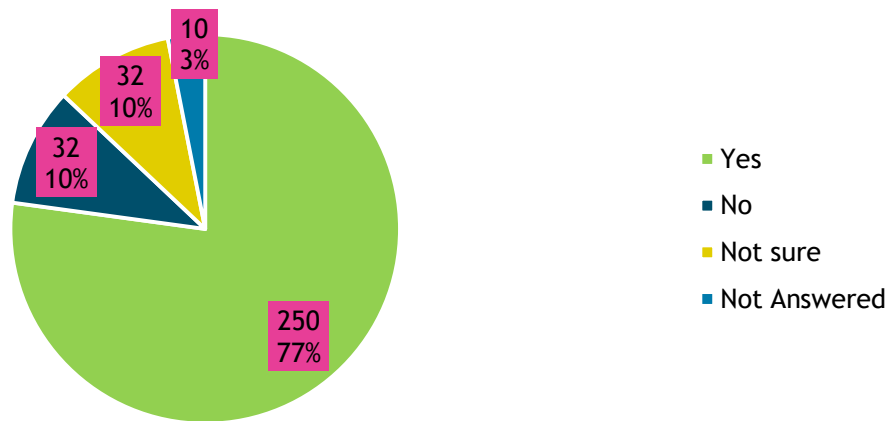
Q18. If yes, where would you go? Please tick any of the following

Most (34%, n.214) of the respondents said they would go to someone in their family or a close friend, followed by 15% (n.91) saying a teacher, and 14% (n.86) saying they would go to someone working in school mental health, such as a school counsellor. Only 7% (n.41) would contact telephone help lines and 6% (n.36) would go to a GP, a school nurse or other primary health care professional.


Bar chart:
- Someone in your family or a close friend: 34% — 214
- A teacher (for example, form teacher, head of year): 15% — 91
- Someone working in school mental health (for example, a school counsellor): 14% — 86
- Another professional (for example, psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker): 11% — 71
- Internet website (for example, Every Mind Matters, Young Minds): 11% — 68
- Telephone help line (for example, Samaritans, NHS 111, Mind): 7% — 41

Q19. If you have contacted anyone for support, can you tell us about your experience?
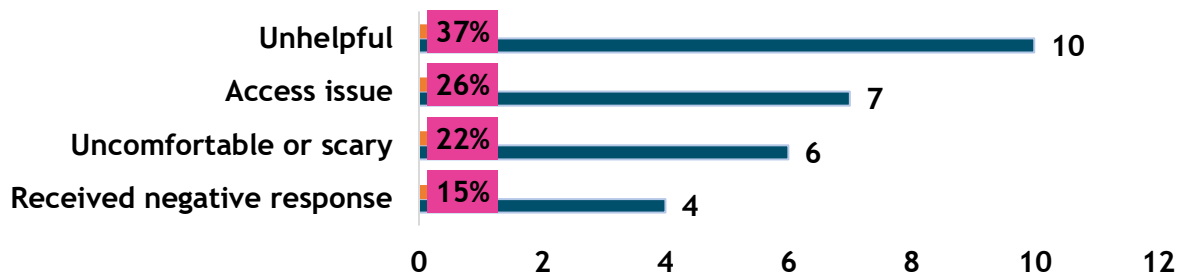
In total, we received 58 responses to this question with 55% (n.32) saying they have had a positive experience when contacting someone for support. 24% (n.14) mentioned they have had a negative experience and a further 17% (n.10) had a mixed experience.
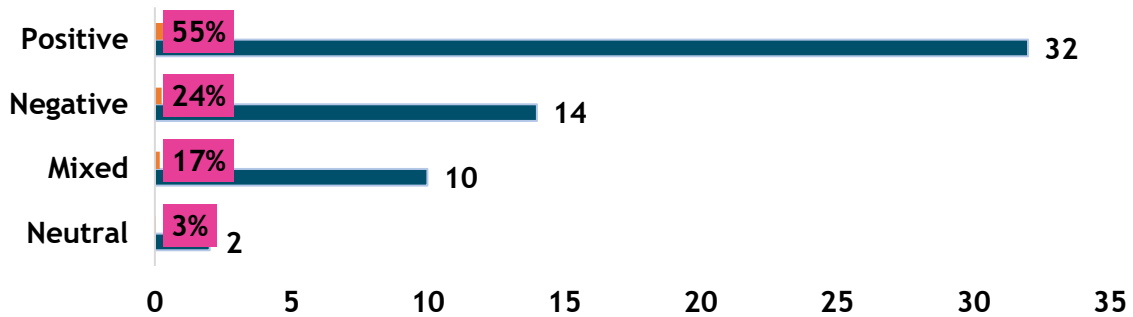
29% (n.17) of those who had contacted someone for support had gone to friends and family, while 28% (n.16) had gone to either a counsellor, a therapist, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), GP or other health care professional, while 12% (n.7) had contacted school or a mental health professional working in schools. 28% (n.16) did not specify who they had contacted for support.
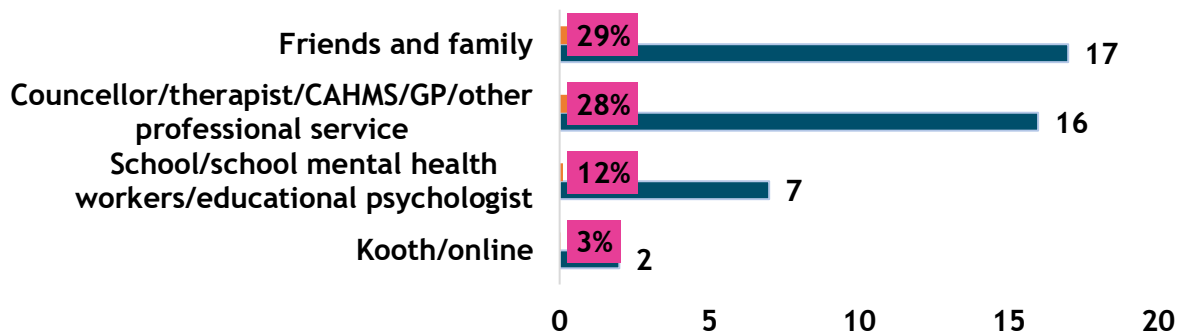
37% (n.10) of those who had contacted someone for support said it had been unhelpful: the service had not benefitted them; it had not addressed their needs; or the person they had contacted had used the information against them. 22% (n.6) of those who had had a negative experience when contacting someone mentioned it had been uncomfortable or scary. 26% (n.7) had experienced access issues such as difficulty booking an appointment or long waiting times, while 15% (n.4) had experienced a negative response from the person or services they had contacted, such as not being taken seriously or being pitied or dismissed.

Unhelpful	37%	10
Access issue	26%	7
Uncomfortable or scary	22%	6
Received negative response	15%	4

0   2   4   6   8   10   12

Q20. How easy is it to access services?

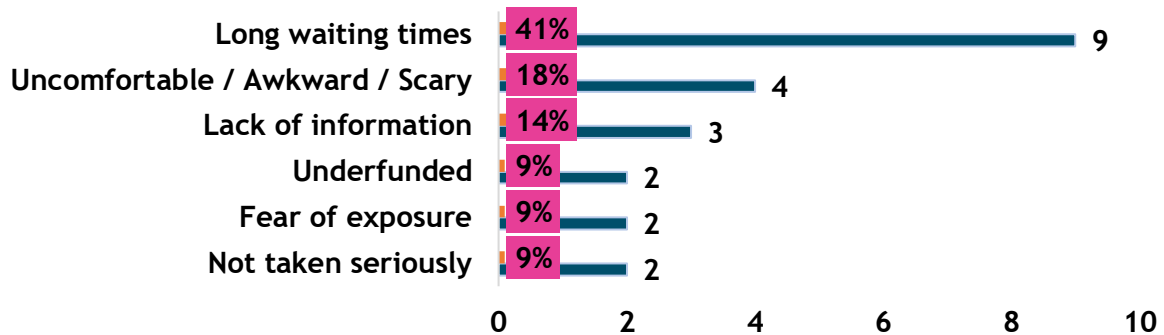46% (n.150) said it was neither difficult nor easy to access support services, with 29% (n.94) saying it was easy and 9% (n.29) very easy. 7% (n.22) said it was difficult to access services and further 2% (n.7) said very difficult.

- Very Easy
- Easy
- Neither difficult nor easy
- Difficult
- Very Difficult
- Not Answered
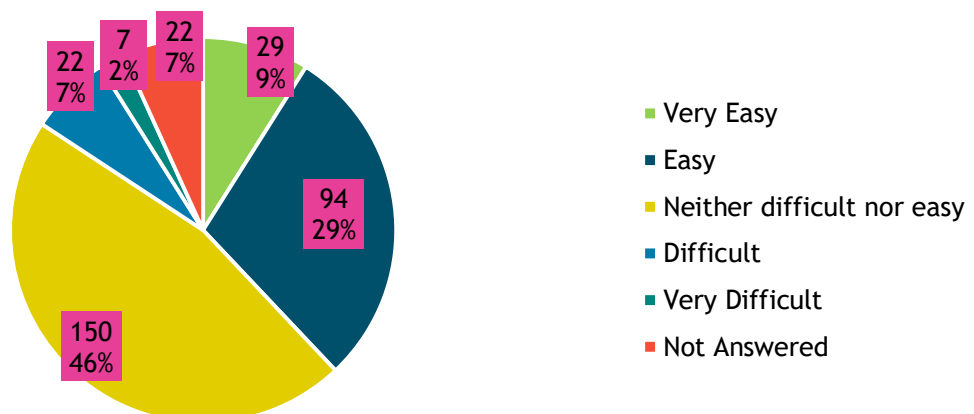
Q21. If you answered 'difficult' or 'very difficult' for access to services, what is the reason for this?

We received a total of 28 responses to this open-ended question. The majority (41%, n.9) of the respondents said the difficulty was due to long waiting times, while 18% (n.4) said they felt uncomfortable or awkward or scary to contact services, and 14% (n.3) said it was due to lack of information available regarding the services.

	Percentage	Count
Long waiting times	41%	9
Uncomfortable / Awkward / Scary	18%	4
Lack of information	14%	3
Underfunded	9%	2
Fear of exposure	9%	2
Not taken seriously	9%	2

Selected Comments

"It isn't very clear on what to do if you are not comfortable speaking to school about it, and maybe school should give clear information on what can be done to reach NHS service or out of school things."

"My family can't know about it so I don't trust services to not tell them."

"Long waiting times for NHS mental health services make it difficult to find appointments. It's not very difficult to get help from the school or family or friends, but this is relatively limited."

"I feel as though there is not enough information on where to get help for specific problems; there is not much info on the standard procedure for if I was to visit a GP etc."
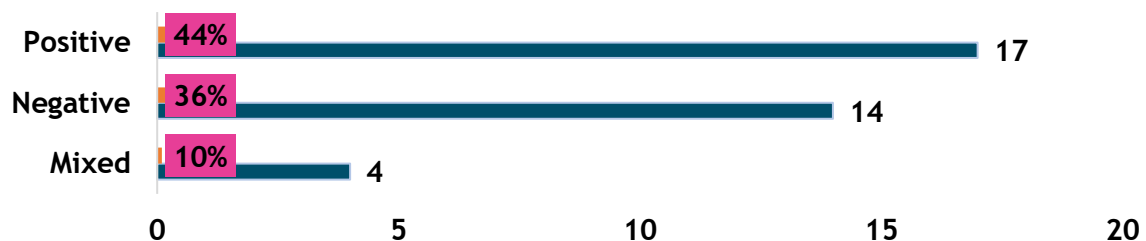
Q22. Have you heard of any of these services? Please tick any that you have heard of.

Majority (32%, n.114) of the respondents had previously heard of the Hammersmith & Fulham Council Children and Young People's Services[4], and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)[5] provided by NHS (31%, n.113). Other services were a little less known with 11% (n.41) having heard of West London Action for Children[6], 9% (n.32) of Kooth[7], followed by 5% (n.17) of Trailblazer, and 3% (n.10) of Stephen Wiltshire Centre[8].
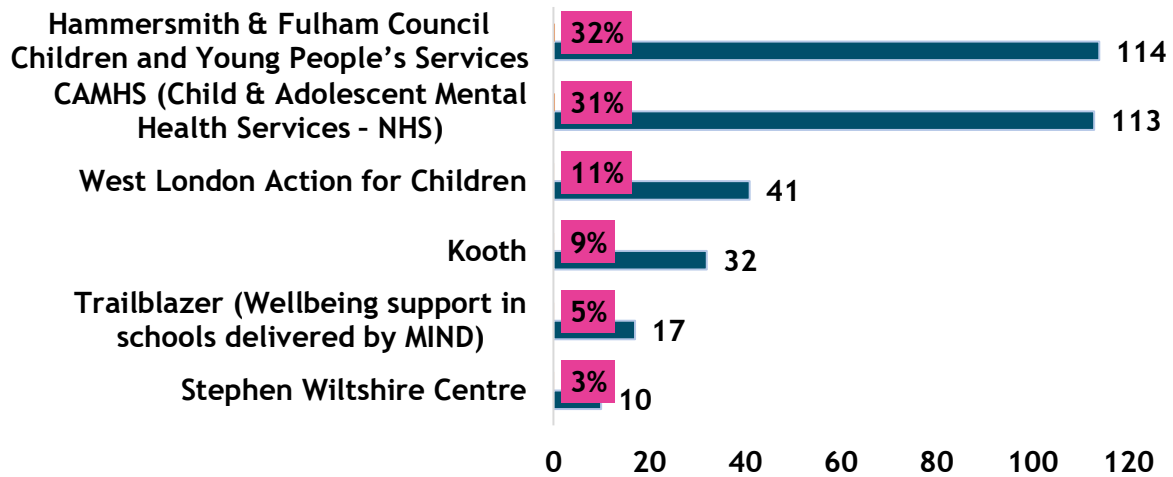
Q23. If you have accessed support for your mental health and well-being, was it helpful? Was there anything else that you think might have been of help to you?

We asked an open-ended question regarding accessing support services and what the young people had found helpful and not so helpful, and what they thought could have helped them. In total, we received 39 responses to these questions with 44% (n.17) responding positively, 36% (n.14) negatively, and 10% (n.4) having a mixed response. 10% (n.4) did not specify whether the support service had been helpful.

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[4] https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/children-and-young-people
[5] https://www.westlondon.nhs.uk/our-services/child-and-adolescent/camhs
[6] https://www.wlac.org.uk/
[7] https://www.kooth.com/
[8] http://search3.openobjects.com/kb5/lbhf/fis/service.page?id=YhvL7YW7bOk

Out of the positive responses, one respondent had previously used the online mental health service Kooth and had found the daily journal entries to track feelings and emotions and the anonymous counselling helpful.

Another positive response received was in relation to the Stephen Wiltshire Centre: the respondent had been going to the centre prior to the lockdown and they were sad that it was not possible to 'drop-in' during and after lockdown.

One of the respondents who said they had found counselling helpful mentioned that this was due to having a counsellor who listened and treated them like a person instead of a patient.

The rest of the respondents who answered positively mentioned that the reasons why they had found the support helpful included being given advice on coping mechanisms; their individual needs being addressed appropriately; finding it helpful to talk to someone who didn't know them and without fear of being judged; and being helped to look at things from different perspectives.

The respondents also provided suggestions on what additional help they would have found useful: longer sessions and more of them, hearing talks from people who had experienced mental health issues, and advice on relaxation techniques.

Out of those who responded negatively, one respondent had attended CAMHS services and found it "*nerve-wracking*". Another two respondents had attended CAMHS services with one saying it had not addressed their individual needs due to a generic care plan, and the other respondent saying the therapist had not been a right fit for them.

One respondent said they had contacted Childline[9] multiple times and found their chat responses slow with only four responses in one hour. The respondent also mentioned that they did not think the people at the end of the line were able to make them feel better, although, they did mention speaking to one person who was able to calm them down during a crisis.

Other negative responses said that their individual needs were not addressed; waiting times were long; and it was difficult to speak to a stranger about their feelings.

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[9] https://www.childline.org.uk/

One respondent also mentioned that services should be made accessible for those who are digitally excluded.

Q24. Do you have any ideas or suggestions of anything else that can be done to support young people with their mental health and wellbeing?

As the last question in our online survey, we asked young people to provide any ideas or suggestions on what can be done to support their mental health and wellbeing going forward. We produced a set of recommendations based on the young people's responses to this question and these recommendations can be found in the next chapter of this report.

CONCLUSION

Around one in two young people said they feel they have changed in the last 12 months. Around 50% said they had experienced a positive change: they had become more mature, confident and/or independent. Around 1 in 4 had experienced a negative change: experiencing worsened mental health such as anxiety, stress or worry; feeling socially isolated; or feeling less happy in general. The data analysis found that most young people receive their education and information about mental health from school or college, then via family and friends' and lastly social media. 3 in 4 young people felt happy with their access to mental healthcare services and believed they would know how to access it if needed. Over 50% of young people accessed care via their school and 1/3 of those were happy with the ease of access to care. Some young people reported a lack of information and signposting around local mental health services and a lack of education around mental health in general. Some young people found difficulty accessing local healthcare services. With many mentioning long waiting times. This could be addressed if young people were made aware of waiting times upon referral and possibly reduced if young people were aware of other mental health services and help available.

Although most young people were aware of CAHMS, fewer were aware of the Stephen Wiltshire Centre, Trailblazer MH Support Teams, H&F Mind 'Be Kind to your mind' in schools or Kooth, which are good examples of early intervention and prevention. Respondents who had used the online mental health service Kooth found the daily journal entries and the anonymous counselling helpful. Other positive responses received in relation to the Stephen Wiltshire Centre, service users found the counselling service helpful due to having a counsellor who listened and treated them like a person instead of a patient. The rest of the respondents who answered positively mentioned finding these mental health intervention services helpful because of the advice on coping mechanisms; their individual needs being addressed appropriately; finding it helpful to talk to someone who didn't know them and without fear of being judged; and being given the tools to look at things from different perspectives.

Young people expressed a desire for increased mental health discussion in schools. 1/3 young people learn about mental health illnesses and access to mental health services through their school. Some believed there are not enough trained counsellors at school, and some felt that the counsellors in school placed too much emphasis on career advice. Many young people felt uncomfortable or unsure discussing mental health and wellbeing and felt fearful of being a burden on their families. These viewpoints can be considered

with future planning for mental health education and services for young people in the Hammersmith and Fulham borough.

From the responses to our survey, it is evident that young people have been affected by the pandemic. While it has allowed them more leisure time to spend with their families and doing activities they enjoy, many young people believe COVID-19 has negatively impacted their mental health and relationships; with lost friendships or deteriorating relationships a common theme amongst young people. Furthermore, poor mental health is linked to poor physical health. Many young people described a lack of or too much sleep, too much or too little food and increased stress levels. The pandemic's effects on mental health may cause young people's physical health to deteriorate over time, limiting their capacity to live full and satisfying lives.

In the next chapter, we will list our recommendations in two separate sections. The first section of recommendations is based on the young peoples' responses to the 24 questions of our survey. The second set of recommendations is based on the analysis of the remaining survey responses, and it is produced by the patient representation knowledge of the H&F Healthwatch team.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Raising awareness about mental health issues at schools. Schools should deliver more mental health assemblies/mental health PHSE lessons per term. These assemblies should focus on increasing knowledge of mental health issues and create a comfortable environment to discuss them.

2. Schools to invest in mental health training; to assess/improve the quality of school counsellors and therapists, and to provide teachers training and education on mental health services and illnesses.

3. Allow young people to be more open about how they are feeling and teach them how to talk to someone when they are feeling low.

4. Provide young people with safe and confidential environment to talk about their mental health where they feel respected and listened to and where they can get advice when they struggle.

5. Provide young people with self-coping mechanisms using art and music as ways of helping to relax and dealing with stress, anxiety, and other low level mental health issues.

6. Have other young people and people who have experienced mental health issues to lead the mental health support services and enable young people to hear from those who have experienced mental health issues to make them realise they are not alone.

7. Provide both indoor and outdoor activities and exercise opportunities that are accessible for everyone, including those with mental health and physical disabilities, and create youth support or mental health discussion groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY HEALTHWATCH HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

8. Schools and community organisations to raise awareness on young people's mental health issues amongst parents and provide parents with tools to identify and deal with mental health issues.

   (1) Tools such as R;pple are available for schools, colleges and universities in Hammersmith and Fulham, and parents can download it on their home computers

   (2) Recommended reading lists on mental health for parents and children can be sent to parents via school emails and texts, mental health leaflets with local/national services can be sent home with school children. Mental health workshops for parents can be held in school assemblies.

(3) Schools and community organisations to work together to set up Mental health support or educational programmes to help students to deal with the effects of lockdown and the impact on their education

   (1) A buddy system throughout the school. Some young people were happy to discuss mental health with their peers rather than adults. Each classroom could have a student buddy that the other students can speak to about issues such as lack of friendships or exam stress. The student buddy can check in with a teacher giving overall themes of the issues being reported which will help schools tailor their mental health PHSE lessons and assemblies.

   (2) Tutoring programmes in the school delivered by volunteer pupils and teachers as part of covid recovery. Students who missed their last 2 years of school may also wish to volunteer as tutors as a way to reconnect with their old school community.

(4) Promoting lesser-known text and chatroom services for teenagers uncomfortable discussing problems in person – Kooth, MeeToo, Chic, Shout etc.

(5) Work with the Youth Council to ensure that volunteer opportunities for young people are readily available (At HWH&F and other VCS)

(6) Address long waiting times for services or make sure communications around these waiting times are clear

(7) Further explore why only 44% of individuals had a positive experience with support services

(8) Working with the Council, CCG, and any other health partners to bring this report/intelligence into their agenda and discuss how these findings can translate into support for schools and community organisations

APPENDICES

Q25. & Q26. Do you live / go to school / both in Hammersmith & Fulham?

Category	%	Count
Neither	9%	30
Not answered	3%	10
Both	50%	162
Go to School in H&F	35%	112
Live in H&F	3%	10

Q27. Have you had coronavirus (Covid-19)?

Category	%	Count
Not Answered	2%	8
Not sure	12%	38
No	72%	234
Yes	14%	44

Q28. Do you know anyone who has had coronavirus (Covid-19)?

Category	Value	Percentage
Not Answered	7	2%
Not sure	8	3%
No	55	17%
Yes	254	78%

Q29. Did you go to school when they were open during the pandemic?

Category	Value	Percentage
Not Answered	11	3%
Prefer not to say	17	5%
No	110	34%
Yes	186	58%

Q30. How many people are currently living with you at home?

9   2%   6
8   3%   8
7   2%   5
6   10%   30
5   14%   41
4   26%   77
3   27%   78
2   14%   41
1   2%   7

0   20   40   60   80   100

Q31. Do you have access to at least one working mobile phone and one computer?

Not Answered   3%   10
Prefer not to say   4%   13
No   3%   9
Yes   90%   292

0   50   100   150   200   250   300   350

Q32. Which of the following best describes your ethnic group?

Ethnic group	Percentage	Count
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	2%	7
Asian or Asian British - Chinese	0%	1
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2%	7
Asian or Asian British - Other Asian background (please describe below)	5%	16
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	3%	9
Black or Black British - African	11%	35
Black or Black British - Caribbean	3%	9
Black or Black British - Other Black background (please describe below)	1%	2
Mixed – Other Mixed or multiple background (please describe below)	4%	13
Mixed - White and Asian	3%	11
Mixed - White and Black African	2%	6
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	3%	11
Not Answered	6%	19
Other ethnic group - Arab	12%	39
Other ethnic group - Other ethnic background (please describe below)	2%	7
Prefer not to give ethnic origin	10%	31
White - Other White background (please describe below)	8%	25
White English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish or British	22%	71
White Irish	2%	5

Young People's Mental Health During COVID-19 Pandemic Online Survey

Disclaimer: Your health and safety are very important to us. Only answer the questions you feel comfortable with. If you feel you need to speak to someone please speak to trusted adult or contact the following:

CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services – NHS)
MIND
Kooth
Trailblazer (Wellbeing support in schools delivered by MIND)
Hammersmith & Fulham Council Children and Young People's Services
West London Action for Children
Stephen Wiltshire Centre

This project is to investigate how young people feel the COVID-19 pandemic has affected their mental health, and if they are aware of what mental health services are available to them in Hammersmith & Fulham and how to access these services. It also aims to find out their views on the current services, how they support mental health, and how these services could be improved.

We need your help to bring together young people aged 11-18 years, mental health professionals and support organisations to examine -

• Mental Health and Well Being during COVID -19

• Maintaining Mental Health and Wellbeing

• Access to Support Services

Your help will ensure that the services are the best they can be for young people.

Maintaining Mental Health and Wellbeing

1.What does Mental Health and Wellbeing mean to you?

2. How do you currently access information on mental health? Please choose as many answers as you need to:

From school/colleges
Family and friends
Social platforms
I do not access information on mental health
Other, please specify below:

3. How comfortable do you feel talking about your mental health? Please choose the closest option to how you feel:

1 Very Comfortable
2 Comfortable
3 Neither Comfortable nor uncomfortable
4 Uncomfortable
5 Very uncomfortable
6 Not answered

4. Can you tell us a bit about why you feel like this?

Mental Health and Wellbeing During COVID

5. How do you feel lockdown has impacted your mental health?

(By 'lockdown' we mean when the Government has advised us to stay at home, not to go to school or college or to see friends and family while some have been advised to continue to go to school due to our family members being key workers)

Please choose the closest option to how you feel:

1 My mental health has worsened
2 My mental health has improved
3 My mental health has stayed the same
4 Not sure
5 Prefer not to say
6 Not answered

6. What were the worst things about lockdown?

7. What were the best things about lockdown?

[blank box]

8. Do you feel you have changed in the last 12 months?

1 Yes
2 No
3 Not sure

9. If you answered Yes, please can you tell us how you feel you have changed?

[blank box]

10. Over the past year, do you think you have seen a change in your relationships with other people?

[blank box]

11. During lockdown have you felt any of the following? Please circle any of the following:

Feeling worried and nervous
Trouble relaxing

Getting easily annoyed
Missing friends and family
Had little interest or pleasure doing things
Feeling low or down
Unable to sleep
Sleeping too much
Want to be by yourself more than usual
Feeling tired or having little energy
Eating too much or not enough
Feeling bad about yourself in some way
Trouble in concentrating on things

Anything you want to add:

12. How do you feel technology has impacted your mental health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic? Please choose the closest option to how you feel:

1 Very Positively
2 Positively
3 Neither Positively or Negatively
4 Negatively
5 Very Negatively

13. Can you explain why?

Access to Services since the start of the Pandemic.

14. Would you be comfortable contacting services to get help?

1 Yes
2 No
3 Not sure
4 Not answered

15. Have you found information on how to get support?

1 Yes
2 No
3 Not sure
Not answered

16. If yes, can you tell us where you found the information?

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17. Do you know how to get support if you need it?

1 Yes
2 No
3 Not sure
4 Not answered

18. If yes, where would you go? Please tick or circle any of the following:

1 Someone in your family or a close friend
2 Telephone help line (for example, Samaritans, NHS 111, Mind)
3 Internet websites (for example, Every Mind Matters,
Young Minds)
4 A teacher (for example, form teacher, head of year)
5 Someone working in school mental health (for example,
a school counsellor)
6 Someone from primary health care (for example, a GP,
practice nurse or school nurse)
7 Another professional (for example, psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker)
8 Other (please specify)
9 None of the above

19. If you have contacted any of the above, can you tell us about your experience?

[blank box]

20. How easy is it to access services? Please choose the closest option to how you feel:

1 Very Difficult
2 Difficult
3 Neither Difficult nor Easy
4 Easy
5 Very Easy
6 Not answered

21. If you answered 'difficult' or 'very difficult' for access to services, what is the reason for this?

[blank box]

22. Which of these services have you heard of?

CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services – NHS)
MIND
Kooth
Trailblazer (Wellbeing support in schools delivered by MIND)
Hammersmith & Fulham Council Children and Young People's Services
West London Action for Children
Stephen Wiltshire Centre
Other

23. If you have accessed support for your mental health and well-being, was it helpful? Was there anything else that you think might have been of help to you?

24. Do you have any ideas or suggestions of anything else that can be done to support young people with their mental health and wellbeing?

Demographics:

25. Do you live in Hammersmith & Fulham?

Yes
No
Not answered

26. Do you go to school in Hammersmith & Fulham?

Yes
No
Not answered

27. Have you had coronavirus (Covid-19)?

Yes
No
Not sure
Not answered

28. Do you know anyone who has had coronavirus (Covid-19)?

Yes

No
Not sure
Not answered

29. Did you go to school when they were open during the pandemic?

Yes
No
Prefer not to say
Not answered

30. How many people are currently living with you at home?

31. Do you have access to at least one working mobile phone and one computer?

Yes
No
Not sure
Prefer Not to Say

32. Which of the following best describes your ethnic group?

Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British - Chinese
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Other Asian background (please describe below)
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Black or Black British - African
Black or Black British - Caribbean
Black or Black British - Other Black background (please describe below)
Mixed – Other Mixed or multiple background (please describe below)
Mixed - White and Asian
Mixed - White and Black African
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean
Not Answered
Other ethnic group - Arab
Other ethnic group - Other ethnic background (please describe below)
Prefer not to give ethnic origin
White - Other White background (please describe below)
White English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish or British
White Irish

Survey Distribution List

(Please note this is not inclusive of all the organisations the survey was distributed to)

Maternity Champions at Peabody
Connecting Care for Children (CC4C)
Fulham Cross Girls School
Young Hammersmith & Fulham Foundation
Fulham Boys School
Parents Active
Fulham Parents Network
Action on Disability
GP Federation
Oxford Home Schooling
Harrow School Online
Teachers To Your Home
Minerva's Virtual Academy
Fulham Cross Academy
Westside School
The Childerely Centre
Intuition Parent Partnership
London Play at Hammersmith & Fulham
Amberley Youth Project
Shepherds Bush Library
Hammersmith BMX Club

List of resources for Parents and Schools

https://clic-uk.org/

http://depressionuk.org

https://giveusashout.org/latest/little-book-coping-skills/

https://hammersmithfulhamccg.nhs.uk/services/mental-health-services.aspx

https://hfehmind.org.uk

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