



The Health and Wellbeing of Young People in the Epping Forest District during the coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic 2020

#Your Say Youth Survey Findings By the Epping Forest Youth Council

Background

Since March, young people have been experiencing extraordinary times, schools are closed, parents are working from home, and lockdown has prevented them from seeing their friends and extended families.

Epping Forest Youth Councillors wanted to hear how the young people were feeling in the Epping Forest district during this period and what effects it will have on them over time.

With support from officers, they conducted a survey during July, four months into lockdown. This would be an opportunity for young people to share their experiences during the pandemic and express their concerns about their health and wellbeing, their future regarding their education, and mental health. The Youth Councillors hope the findings will help shape the services for young people in 2021 and beyond.

1. Methodology

The methodology adopted for the project was to conduct an online survey using 'Survey Monkey'. Youth Councillors asked friends and schools to participate and the target was to gather a sample of 270 surveys. The data collected did not require any

personal details other than age. Surveys were anonymous to protect the identity of individuals. The target age group was 11 – 17 years, secondary school pupils.

The survey consisted of 12 questions which covered subjects such as feelings and emotions, mental health, coping mechanisms, education, loneliness and isolation, communication, learning experiences and issues facing young people during lockdown. Participants that provided additional details under 'Other' is available on request.

2. Summary of the Findings

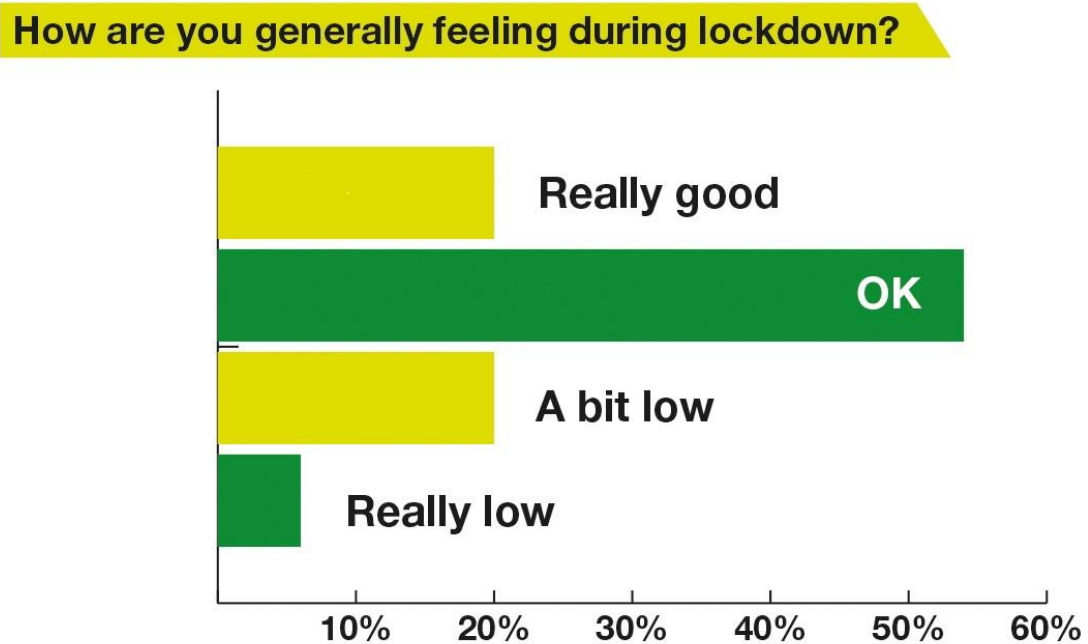
The Epping Forest Youth Council surveyed 383 young people during lockdown. This number exceeded the target set.

2.1 Questions asked

Q1. How are you generally feeling during lockdown?

74% of those surveyed were feeling 'really good or 'OK' during lockdown, the remaining 26% were feeling 'a bit low' or 'really low'.

Table 1.

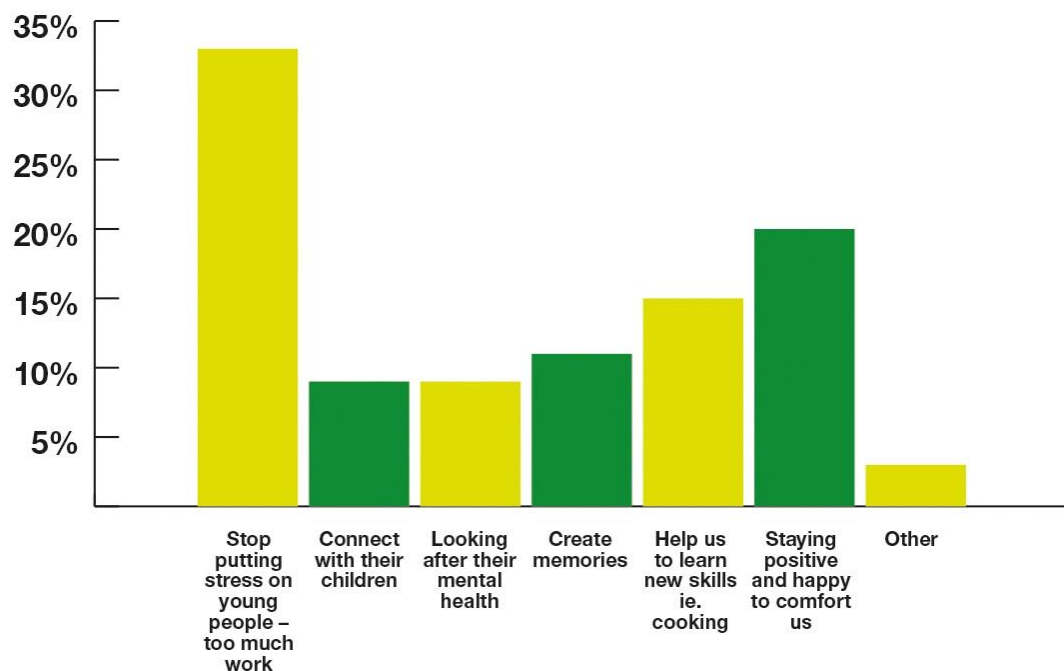


Q2. What do you think adults could do to help improve young people's mental health during lockdown?

Regarding improving young people's mental health, 33% said that they were stressed and were given too much work. 20% said that it was important that adults stay positive and happy to support them. 15% said they were enjoying learning new skills such as cooking, gardening, exercise and making memories.

Table 2.

What do you think adults could do to improve young people's mental health during lockdown?

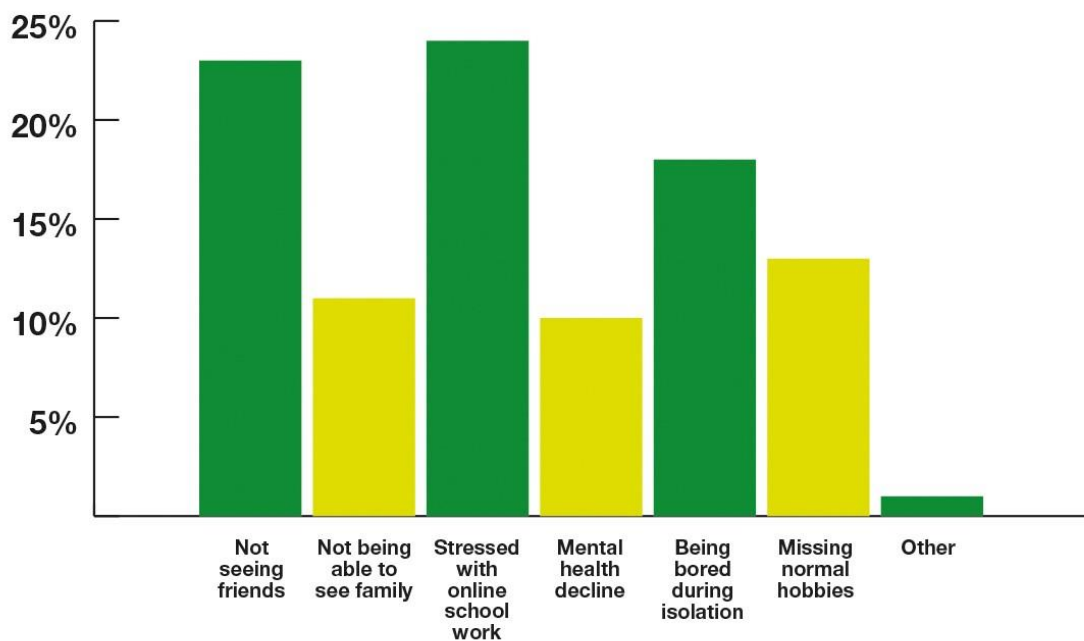


Q3. How are young people being affected most during lockdown?

When asked this question, 24% of young people said they were stressed with online schoolwork and 23% said they were missing their friends. 11% were unable to see their extended families and 10% were concerned about the decline of their mental health.

Table 3.

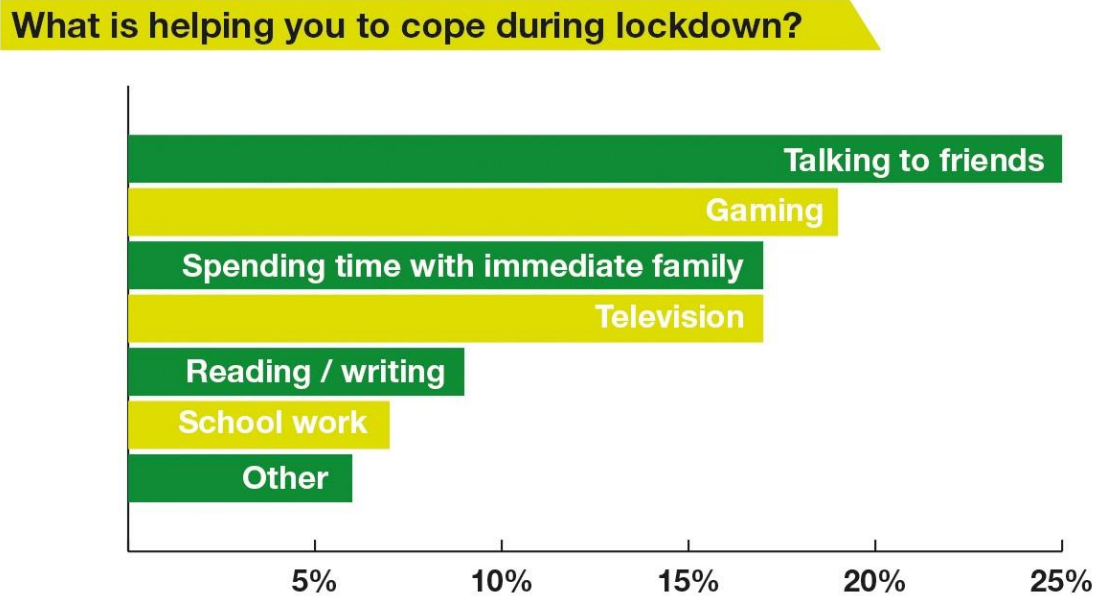
How are young people being affected most during lockdown?



Q4. What is helping you to cope during lockdown?

When asked what had helped them cope during lockdown, 25% said talking to friends, 19% said Gaming, 17% said spending time with their immediate family and 17% said watching television.

Table 4.



Q5. Are you worried that your education/ future might be affected because of lockdown?

Young people were worried about their education and that their future might be affected because of lockdown and not being at school. 60% of those surveyed said 'YES', they were worried and 24% said 'NO' they were not worried. 16% said they didn't know.

Table 5.

Are you worried that your education/future might be affected because of lockdown?

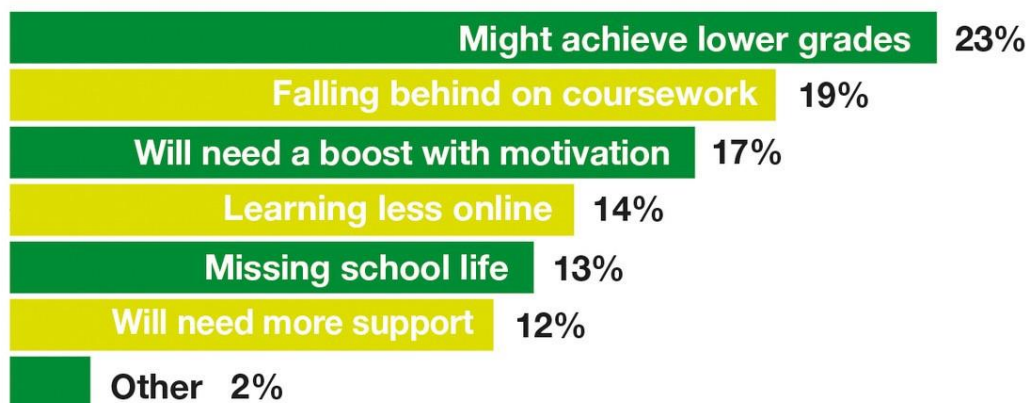


Q6. In which ways do you think your education/ future might be affected?

23% were worried they might achieve lower grades and 19% were worried they had fallen behind on coursework. 17% said they will need a boost with their motivation. Importantly 13% were missing the social contact of school life such as taking part in school performances and competitions.

Table 6.

In which ways do you think your education/future might be affected?

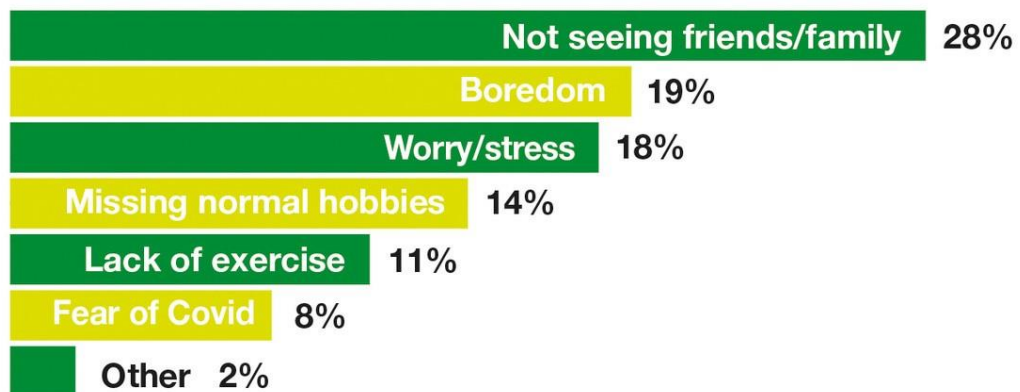


Q7. What is the worst thing about being in lockdown?

28% of the young people surveyed said the worst thing about being in lockdown was not seeing friends. 19% said boredom, 18% felt worried or stressed, 14% missed taking part in their normal hobbies, 11% said the lack of exercise and 8% were afraid of the Covid-19 virus.

Table 7.

What is the worst thing about being in lockdown?

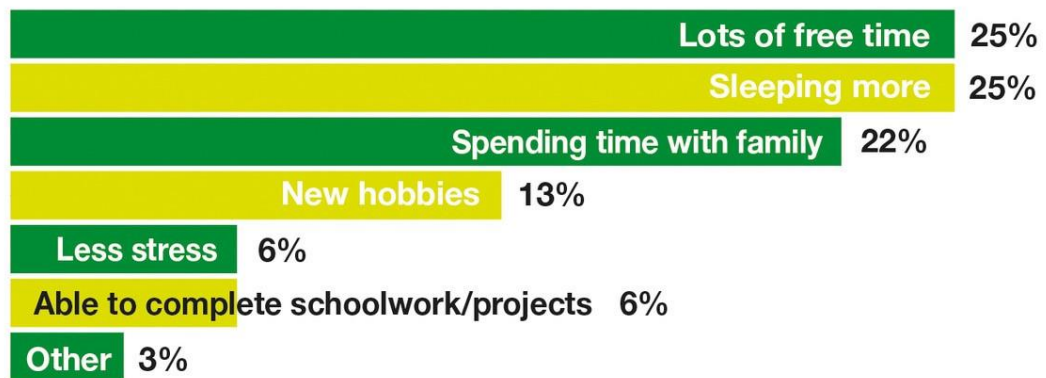


Q8. What is the best thing about being in lockdown?

On a positive note, 25% of those surveyed thought the best thing about being in lockdown was having lots of free time and 25% said being able to sleep more. 22% said spending time with the family, 13% said they enjoyed new hobbies, 6% were feeling less stressed and 6% said they had the time to complete schoolwork and projects.

Table 8.

What is the best thing about being in lockdown?

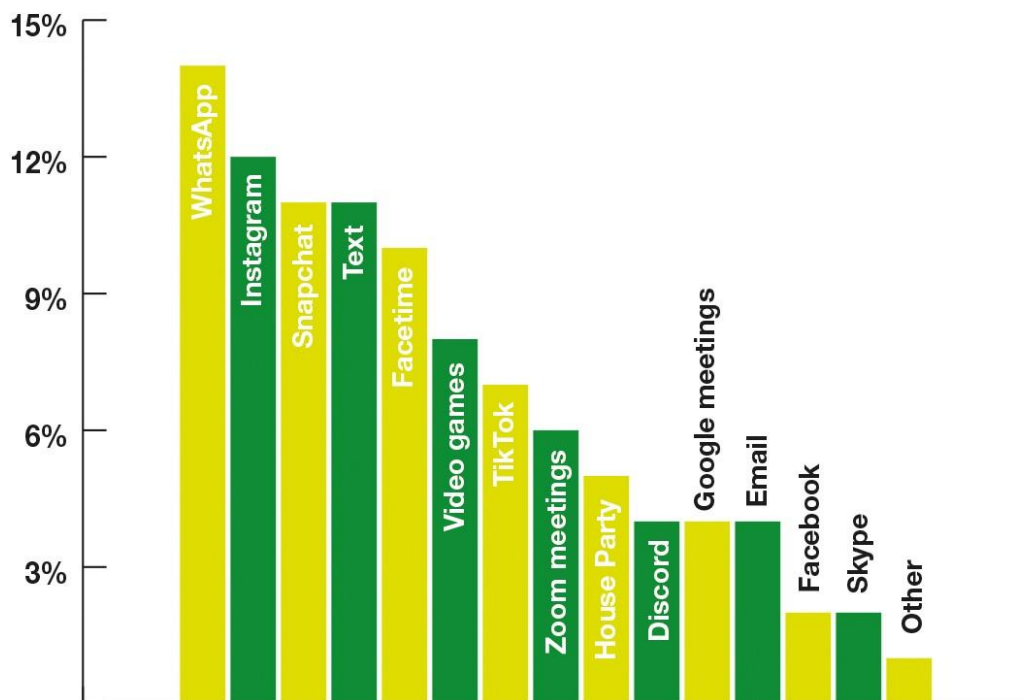


Q9. What methods of communication are you using to stay in touch with friends, schoolwork, family etc?

Communication during lockdown was very important, and 14% said they used WhatsApp to stay in touch with friends, schoolwork and family. This was closely followed by 12% using Instagram and 11% using Snapchat. The least popular forms of communication were 4% using email and 2% using Facebook and Skype.

Table 9.

What methods of communication are you using to stay in touch with friends, schoolwork, family etc?

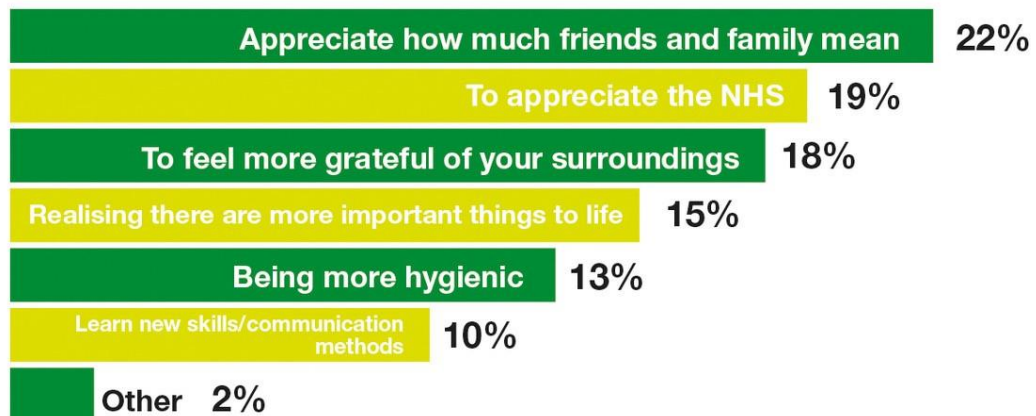


Q10. Is there anything positive that you feel people could learn from this experience?

When asked if there is anything positive that people could learn from this experience, 22% said they appreciate how much friends and family mean to them. 19% said they appreciated the National Health Service, 18% said they feel more grateful for their surroundings. 10% said they had learnt news skills and communication methods.

Table 10.

Is there anything positive that you feel people could learn from this experience?



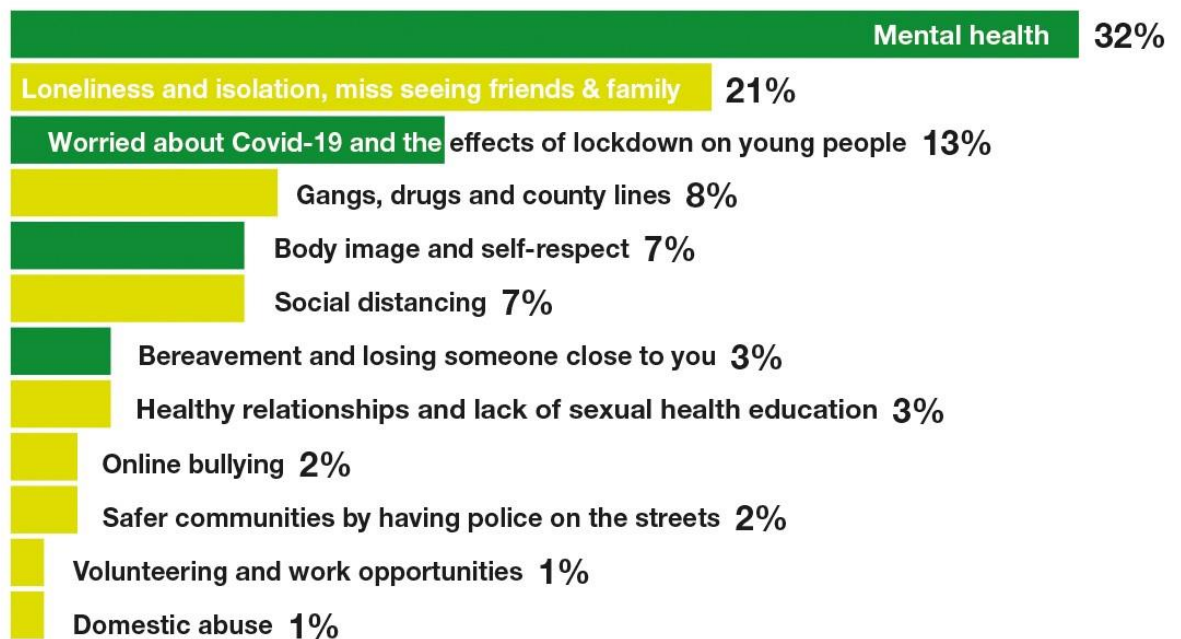
Q11. What are the biggest issues facing young people in the Epping Forest district?

Most of the young people surveyed thought the biggest issue facing young people in the district was mental health with 32% responses. 21% said loneliness and isolation as they were not able to see their friends and family members. 13% were worried about the Covid-19 virus and the effects lockdown would have on young people long term.

8% said gangs, drugs and County Lines were still a big issue. 3% of the young people surveyed said bereavement and losing someone close to them during lockdown was a concern. 2% said online bullying. 2% said young people would like safer communities by having a visible police presence on the streets. 1% said Domestic abuse was the biggest issue.

Table 11.

What are the biggest issues facing young people in the Epping Forest District?

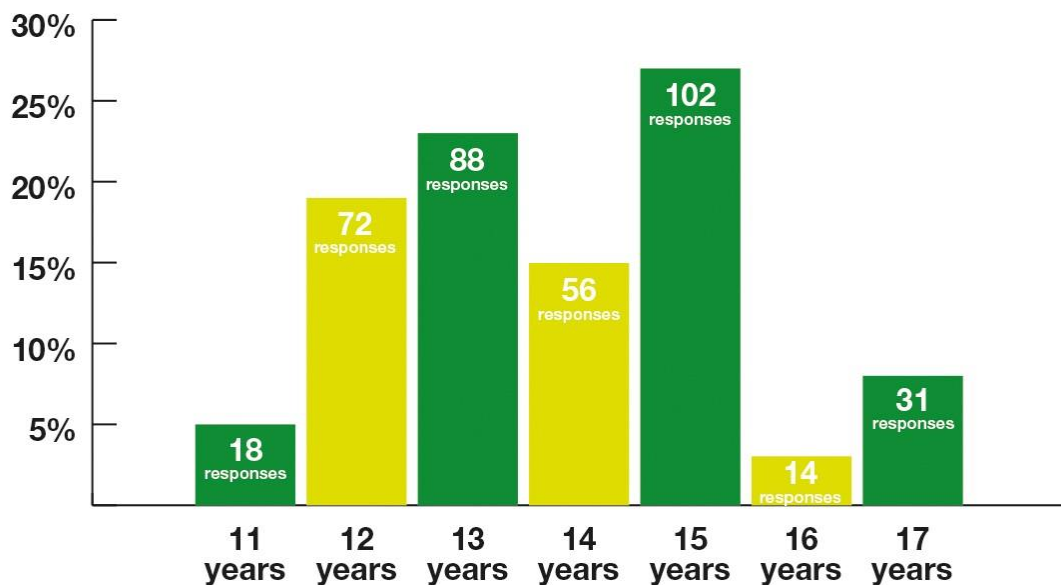


Q12. The target age group (secondary school)

The target group for the survey were 11 to 17 year olds attending secondary schools in the Epping Forest district. 50% of the participants were of the 15 and 13 age groups.

Table 12.

How old are you?



3. Conclusion

The survey has been an opportunity for 383 young people to tell Members and decision makers what they think. Whilst 74% of the young people surveyed state, they are coping well with the lockdown, there is also evidence that 33% are struggling, feeling stressed by heavy workloads. 28% are missing the contact of being with friends and extended family members as well as the daily routine of being at school. Educational pressures are also a key concern, as most of the responses relate to school workload, falling behind in studies and in need of motivation to return to school and catching up. Therefore, young people feeling pressure from education and the expectations of them to achieve both from schools and parents can lead to poor mental health.

As young people need to be connected with schools, families and friends, they are spending far more time on the internet during lockdown due to the exceptional circumstances they are in, which can put them at a greater risk of becoming involved in online gang and drug activity or being bullied online.

The findings can now start the dialogue with professionals and the Youth Councillors to improve the services for young people in the Epping Forest district.

4. Recommendations

- Service providers work together to address the increasing pressures of young people's poor mental health and their concerns about their future educational opportunities
- Continue the work with the CCG and introduce Youth Council representation on the Citizens Panel (One Health & Care Partnership)
- Continued promotion of youth activities and youth groups via the EFYC Youth Activities Map to encourage motivation and positive mental health and wellbeing
- Providing training through partnership working for the Youth Council to address the issues raised in the report and signpost young people to relevant services such as bereavement, counselling services and J9 training
- Officers will ensure that appropriate work identified as a result of the Survey will fit with and contribute to the Council's Economic Development – Local Skills and Opportunities project.
- Youth Council request additional funding to enable themselves, other young people and young adults (16 – 25 years) to be involved in externally facing economic development projects to improve their business and enterprise skills and to help shape the future of the district.
- Youth Council require £10K to work with the 9 secondary schools in the district and the New City College to support a youth mental health and well-being programme, during the Covid-19 period and the recovery stages.

APPENDIX A.

The Findings

Question 1. The young people were asked how they were feeling during lockdown.

209	54%	were feeling OK
77	20%	were feeling really good
75	20%	were feeling a bit low
22	6%	were feeling really low

Answered 383 replies

Question 2. What do you think adults could do to help improve young people's mental health during lockdown?

245	33%	Stop putting stress on young people. Too much work
146	20%	Staying positive and happy to comfort us
110	15%	Help us learn new skills like cooking
77	11%	Create memories
70	9%	Looking after mental health
69	9%	Connect with their children
20	3%	Other ⁽¹⁾

Answered 383 Total 737 replies

Question 3. How are young people being affected most during lockdown?

250	24%	Stressed with online schoolwork
239	23%	Not seeing friends
184	18%	Being bored during isolation
133	13%	Missing normal hobbies (e.g. scouts, karate)
118	11%	Not being able to see extended family
112	10%	Mental Health decline
13	1%	Other ⁽¹⁾

Answered 383 Total 1049 replies

Question 4. What is helping you to cope during lockdown?

223	25%	Talking to friends
162	19%	Gaming
149	17%	Spending time with immediate family
148	17%	Television
79	9%	Reading / writing
60	7%	School work
51	6%	Other ⁽¹⁾

Answered 381 – 2 skipped Total 872 replies

Question 5. Are you worried that your education / future might be affected because of lockdown?

230 60% of those survey said YES
90 24% said NO
60 16% said Didn't know
Answered 380 – 3 skipped

Question 6. In which ways do you think you your education / future might be affected?

234	23%	Might achieve lower grades
191	19%	Falling behind on coursework
168	17%	Will need a boost with motivation
143	14%	Learning less online
125	13%	Missing school life such as performances, activities & competitions
118	12%	Will need more support
18	2%	Other ⁽¹⁾

Answered 380 – Skipped 3 Total 997 replies

Question 7. What is the worst thing about being in lockdown?

250	28%	Not seeing friends / family
163	19%	Boredom
160	18%	Worry / Stress
125	14%	Missing normal hobbies
93	11%	Lack of exercise
72	8%	Fear of Covid-19)
17	2%	Other ⁽¹⁾

381 answered – 2 skipped Total 880 replies

Question 8. What is the best thing about being in lockdown?

198	25%	Lots of free time
192	25%	Sleeping more
171	22%	Spending time with family
105	13%	New hobbies
46	6%	Less stress
44	6%	Able to complete schoolwork / projects
23	3%	Other ⁽¹⁾

380 answered – 3 skipped Total 779 replies

Question 9. What methods of communication are you using to stay in touch with friends, schoolwork, family?

268	14%	WhatsApp
223	12%	Instagram
207	11%	Snapchat
207	11%	Text
204	10%	Facetime
144	8%	Video Games
138	7%	TikTok
121	6%	Zoom meetings
100	5%	House Party
78	4%	Discord
72	4%	Google meetings
72	4%	Email
29	2%	Facebook
29	2%	Skype
23	1%	Other ⁽¹⁾

381 answered – 2 skipped Total 1915 replies

Question 10. Is there anything positive that you feel people could learn from this experience?

233	22%	Appreciate how much friends and family mean to us
198	19%	To appreciate the NHS
189	18%	To feel more grateful for your surroundings
157	15%	Realising there are more important things to life
134	13%	Being more hygienic
109	10%	Learn new skills / communication methods
20	2%	Other ⁽¹⁾

381 answered – 2 skipped Total 1040 replies

Question 11. What are the biggest issues facing young people in the Epping Forest District?

119	32%	Mental health
79	21%	Loneliness and isolation, miss seeing friends and family
49	13%	Worried about Covid 19 virus & effects of lockdown on young people
31	8%	Gangs, drugs and county lines
27	7%	Body image and self-respect
26	7%	Social distancing
9	3%	Bereavement and losing someone close to you
9	3%	Healthy relationships and lack of sexual health education
8	2%	Online bullying
6	2%	Safer communities by having police on the streets
5	1%	Volunteering and work opportunities
5	1%	Domestic abuse

373 answered – 10 skipped Total 373 replies

Question 12. How old are you?

102	27%	15 Years
88	23%	13 Years
72	19%	12 Years
56	15%	14 Years
31	8%	17 Years
18	5%	11 Years
14	3%	16 Years

381 answered – 2 skipped Total 381 replies

Footnote

- (1) Participants that provided additional details under '*Other*' is available on request.