

## Covid-19 effects on Mental Health and Wellbeing: Of Children and Young people in Wrexham and Flintshire.

### Introduction.

Wrexham and Flintshire Youth Services have been working together to support the work of Wrexham and Flintshire PSB Boards, the aim of the work is to see how Covid -19 has affected young people with the objective of 'to protect children and young people's physical and mental health and wellbeing'.

In, March 2021, we ran a consultation to find out how Covid-19 had affected young people, the results were open and honest and played a very important part in the recovery plans in both authorities.

We have since developed a second consultation. In order for us to understand the Covid-19 impact further and to help recognise how young people's physical and mental wellbeing' is now, if it's improved or not and where further supported is needed.

This second consultation went live between; May 6<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2022.

Over 429 young people responded to the online consultation, which highlights the need for us to think about how we support our young people across Wrexham and Flintshire going forward after the pandemic and beyond.

Below are the survey findings and additional views from respondents

These results reflect what young people have gone and still going through.

Sadly, listening to young people's voices along with some young people's concerns, about the long-term effects that will run further than their mental health and wellbeing, education, work and future.

We would like to thank the young people from Flintshire and Wrexham for taking the time to participating in this consultation process. Information collected will be used to inform the PSB's (Public Service Boards) in Flintshire and Wrexham County Council.

Furthermore, this consultation process will help us to produce new and innovative ideas, by keeping our services current and thriving. It will help enhance our relationships with our service users and further develop our knowledge of their wants and needs. It has provided us with direct live feedback from young people and will enhance a closer connection within our communities.

Respondents taking part in the consultation, what area they live in, age and gender.

Fig 1.

This single response question was answered by 429 young people with their age.

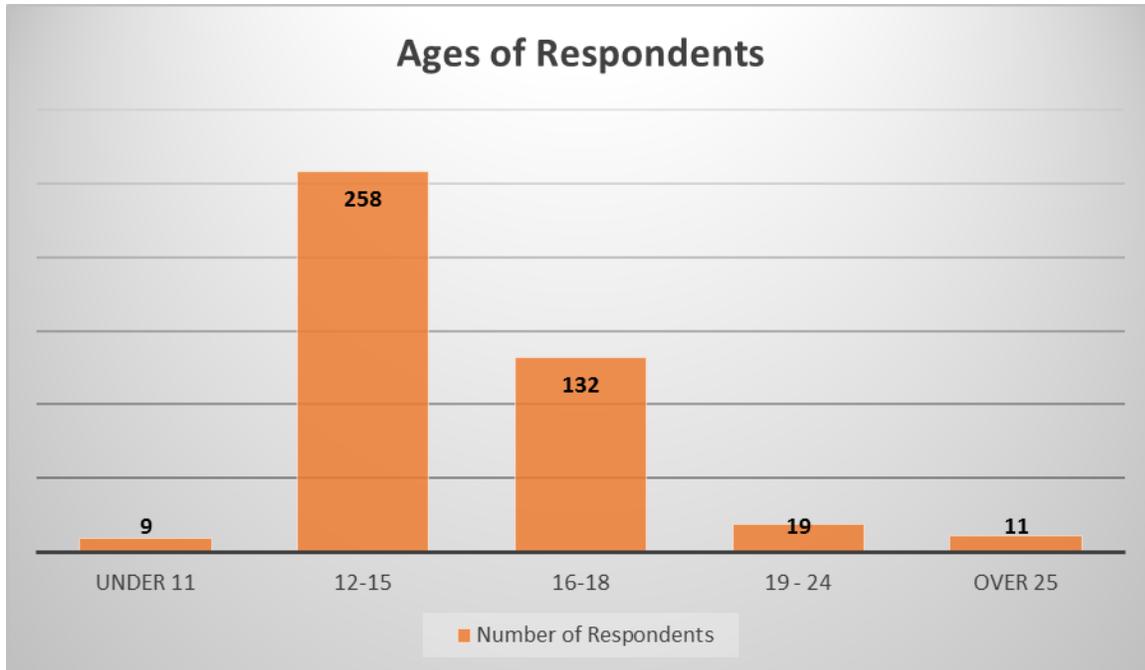


Fig 2.

What area do you live in?

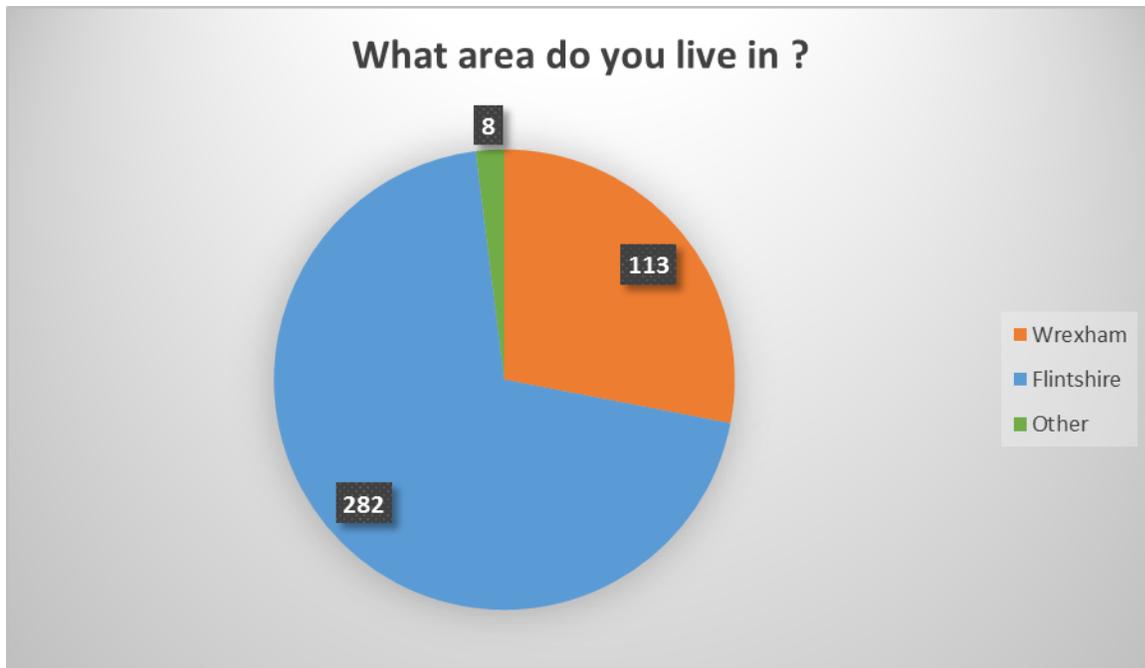


Fig 3/4.

What gender do you identify as? This open response question was answered by 377 respondents.

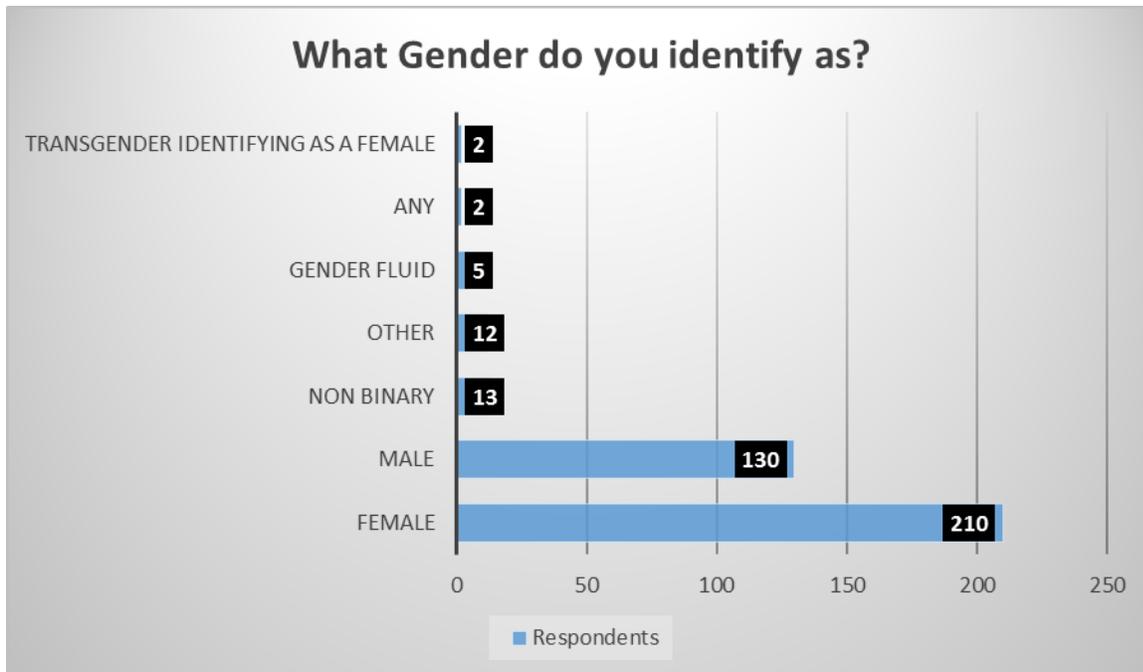
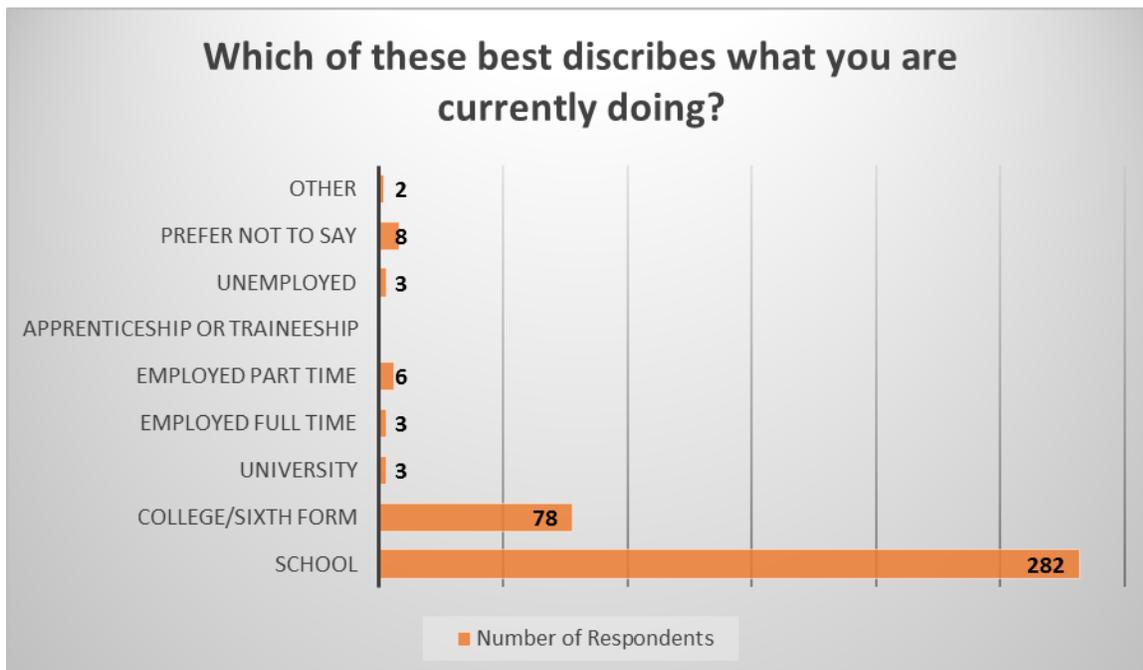


Fig 5.

Which of these best describes what you are currently doing? This single response question was answered by 385 young people. One young person being home –schooled.

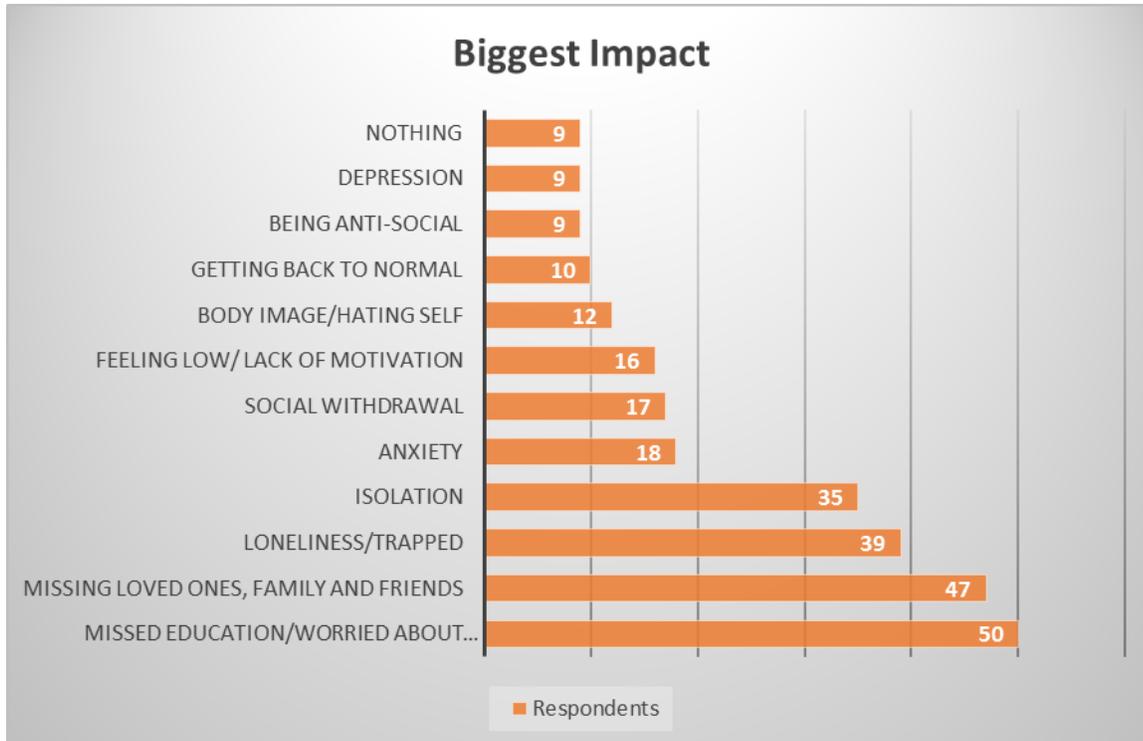


## Mental Health and Wellbeing:

We asked young people a series of question around their mental health and wellbeing as we wanted to see how young people’s mental health and wellbeing is now 12 months on from the first consultation, we undertook in March 2021; fundamentally to see if young people’s mental health and wellbeing had improved or not and look at where further support may be needed.

Fig 6.

We asked young people, ‘What has been the biggest impact on your mental health and wellbeing from the effects of the pandemic. This open response question was answered by 279 young people.



The answers have been collated into themes, due to some young people referencing more than one issue.

Fig 7.

Biggest Impact on young people's mental health and wellbeing.	Respondents
Missed education/worried about education/catch up/stress/pressure/lack of support/home learning	50
Missing loved ones, family and friends	47
Loneliness/trapped	39
Isolation	35
Anxiety	18
Social withdrawal	17
Feeling low/ lack of motivation	16
Body image/hating self	12
Getting back to normal	10
Being anti-social	9
Depression	9
Nothing	9
Covid -19	8
Stressed	8
Lack of confidence	7
Lack of support	7
Eating	6
Lack of exercise and weight gain/over eating	6
Lack of health care and support groups	5
Masks	5
Grief	4
Toxic environments/family issues	4
Don't know	3
Self-harm	3
Addiction to games/technology/porn	2
Alcoholism	2
Cyber bullying	2
Financial	2
Missed youth worker support	2
Optimism for the future	2
Suicidal	2
Groomed and trafficked	1
Intentional overdose	1
Mental breakdown	1
OCD with Hygiene	1
Over sleeping	1
Paranoia	1
Positive effect of the environment	1
It's had a Positive impact with family	1
Positive time with family	1
Receiving counselling	1
Scared	1
Under eating	1

Below additional views from respondents on the Impact they have and are still feeling with their mental health and wellbeing:

*“Alcoholism, depression, suicidal, anxiety, social withdrawal, over sleeping and under eating”.*

*“As a result of not being able to see family and friends, I used social media much more and because of this I suffered from cyber bullying and took an intentional overdose and ended up in hospital”.*

*“Before covid, I enjoyed going to school but after it I hated school and don’t want to go”.*

*“Complete and utter isolation”.*

*“Spending so much time to myself has led me to believe that I am full of flaws and has shown me **how** I truly feel about myself. It’s messed my head up and now all i think of myself is shame for being me”.*

*“Isolation of support groups, lack of support, struggling with depression, no motivation to do anything, feelings of hopelessness ‘a what’s the point when it all sucks and is only going to get worse’ mentality, procrastination, feelings of inadequacy. Feeling guilty by the media and government into being to blame for their mistakes and blunders, feeling like I have to apologise for my existence and right to be in spaces/public spaces - treated by public not welcomed - lack of places to go for wellbeing without being seen as a societal nuisance as a young person. Any form of health was impossible to look after when getting to the doctors was made so difficult and inaccessible. Being constantly dismissed/only there to tick a box as a young person, however I was lucky enough to receive counselling, unlike many others”*

*“My anxiety disorder has suffered greatly due to the pandemic with thoughts of catastrophizing and with depressive episodes during lockdowns”.*

*“Not being able to talk to the youth workers and my mental health progressively getting a lot worse”.*

*“Weight gaining and things like that effected my mental health during lockdown”.*

Fig 8.

We asked young people on a scale of 1-10, how they felt their mental health and wellbeing is right now. (With 1 being low and 10 being very good) 307 young people responded

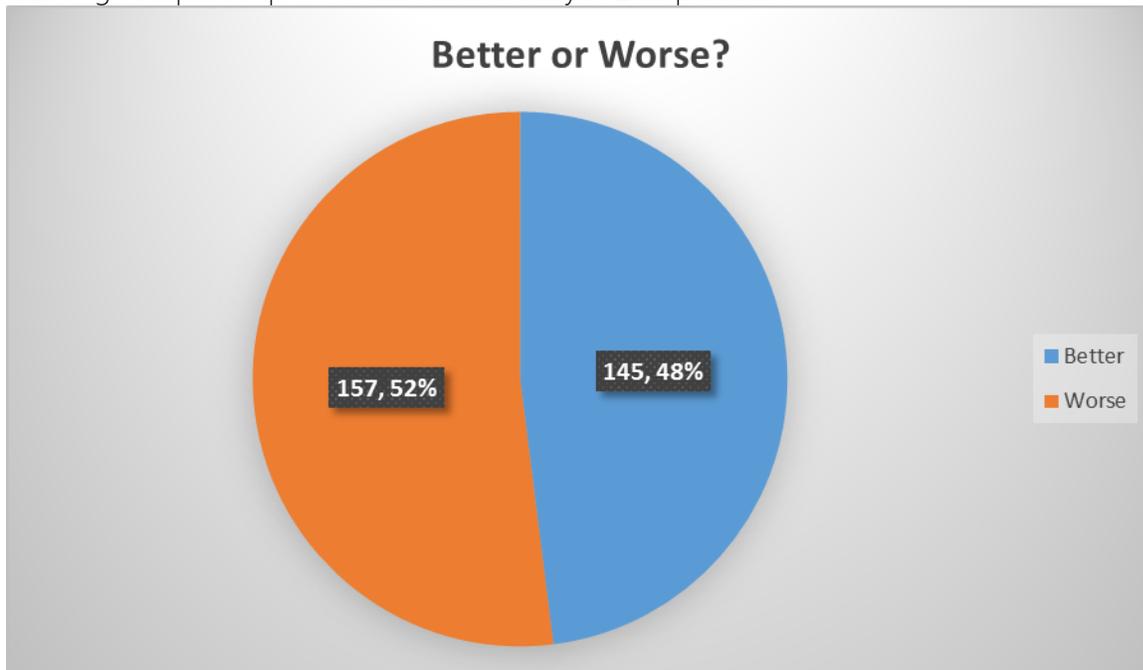
Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1	17	5.54%
2	21	6.84%
3	23	7.49%
4	37	12.05%
5	38	12.38%
6	36	11.73%
7	39	12.70%
8	45	14.66%
9	27	8.79%
10	24	7.82%

Fig 9.

We then asked young people:

Do you feel your mental health and wellbeing has got better or worse over the last 12 months?

This single response question was answered by 302 respondents.



We asked the young people to explain, why they feel their mental health and wellbeing has got better or worse over the last 12 months.

There is a slightly higher percentage of young people feeling worse.

For those who said it feels worse; some young people said; that they worry about things going backward.

Young people feel there is not enough support, for them and they are struggling alone!

Some have higher anxiety levels, lower moods, generally feeling worse.

Young people feel they have more things to worry about now.

Life now has more pressures and stresses. Some commented they are only just finding out what support there is for stress, feeling sad, having low energy and not wanting to look after themselves.

Out of the 157 who said; worse, 33 young people are really struggling with their education, worrying about how much they have missed.

Comment about, education and they are now doing exams, but they don't feel they are prepared as they didn't do any revision last year.

Some young people are coming to the end of their degree but with only 2 years of minimal guidance from teaching staff. Some young people don't like going into school, or school life in general. With some commenting school has become more challenging.

4, young people have commented about having suicidal thoughts, 1 young person has acted on this and attempted to take their own life.

Out of the 145 young people who said they feel better, 71 mentioned that this was helped by being able to go back to some sort of normality, going back to a routine, such as school or college.

For some young people being able to spend time outside and spending time with family and friends, being able to get back doing sports and doing the things they enjoy.

This has helped young people feel more confident, less isolated and less lonely, although some have said they still need some help and others have said they feel better but still not the same as before covid!

Views from respondents:

*“As lockdown has been lifted it seems things have been getting worse for me school wise, socially and mentally, I believe this is due to being unfamiliar with these circumstances”*

*“At certain times, I felt extremely low and I took it out on myself in a stupid way. I should've spoken up and talked to someone about my mental health rather than struggling with it alone”.*

*“Barely any improvement in university face to face learning and scheduled online lectures since March 2020 meaning students were left to do two years of their degree with minimal guidance from teaching staff. No reduction in workload to accommodate the change of teaching style and completely independent learning has made me very stressed, overwhelmed, and general low mental health due to feeling like the state of support from the university was going to make it near impossible to complete the degree to a good standard (if at all)”.*

*“Being able to get back into clubs and properly socialising with friends and family has been a big step forwards for everyone and has allowed us to get back into our comfort zone”.*

*“Getting back to social groups has removed feelings of isolation, however work still feels aimless/pointless”.*

*“I had my first attempted overdose a couple of months ago, and I started struggling, and still am, with self-harm, not eating and a lot more”.*

*“I used to love going out to different places but now I'd rather stay home and watch TV which has affected my eyesight a lot. I'm also really shy now and I'm sometimes being left out because they don't notice me”.*

*“I've joined volunteering roles, dropped out of college (a negative space for me) and got a job I really enjoy”.*

*“I've stopped having contact with a parent who was having a detrimental effect on my mental health, since then my grades in school have improved and I'm much happier”. “Being stuck with this parent during lockdown was unbearable, he has mental health issues that he won't accept help for and they were made worse during lockdown”. I felt trapped during the weeks I was with him”.*

*“Some days are good others are really bad”.*

A study conducted by Cardiff University found: Levels of depression in Year 7 starters rises after the pandemic, Children who started secondary school in 2021 were more likely to report increased symptoms of depression than those starting Year 7 before the pandemic.

Responses to a student health and wellbeing survey revealed 21% of starters last year reported increased depression symptoms compared to 15% in 2019. The survey involved 120,000 11-to-16-year-olds from 202 schools in Wales and the data was analysed by researchers at Cardiff University. The research suggested the rise was caused by increased rates among girls and gender non-binary students, as the level of schoolboys reporting depression symptoms did not change.

It was children in Year 11 who had the highest prevalence of mental health difficulties compared to other year groups. 36% of the oldest secondary school year respondents reported elevated symptoms of depression in 2021, up from 33% in 2019.

Professor Simon Murphy, director of the Centre for Development, Evaluation, Complexity and Implementation in Public Health Improvement, said: *"These results, gathered before and 18 months since the beginning of the pandemic, provide important insights regarding changes in young people's mental health and wellbeing during this time.*

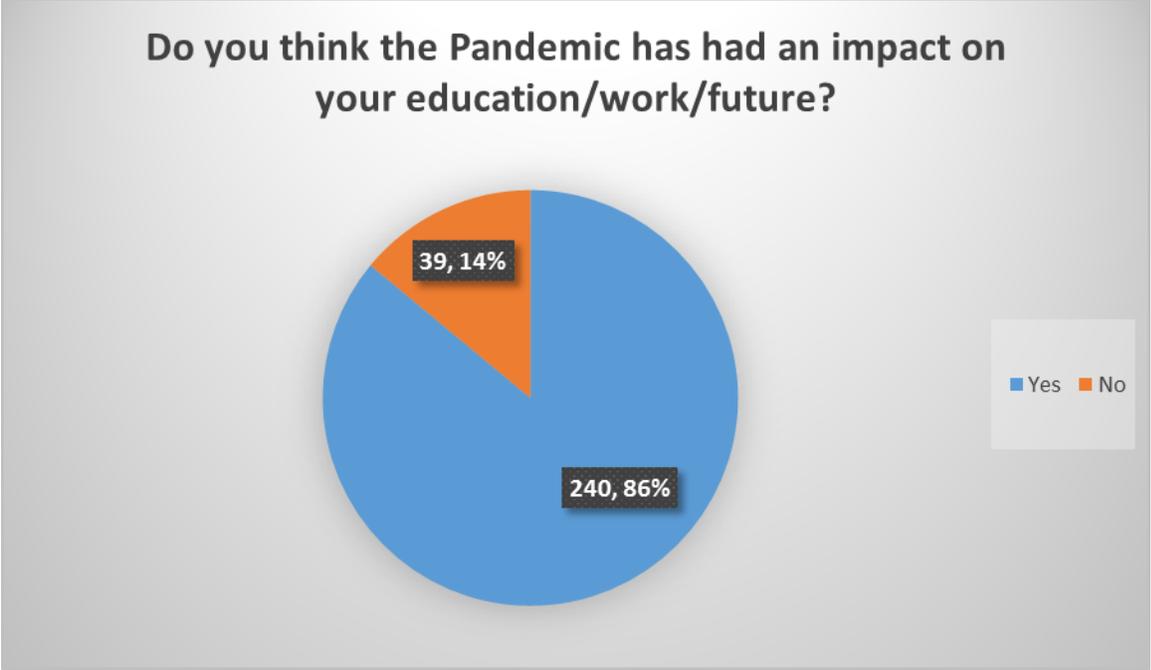
*"While it is not possible to say whether declines in young people's mental health are due to the pandemic or a general trend, it will be important to continue to monitor these indicators to aid Covid-19 recovery efforts in Wales."* <https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2022-08-04/depression-among-year-7-starters-increases-post-pandemic-study-finds>

Education Work and Future.

Young people were asked a series of questions on, if they felt the pandemic has had an impact on their education, work or future. And if it had, how they felt the pandemic has affected it.

Young people's answers:

Fig 10. Do you think the pandemic has had an impact on your education/work/future?



This single response question was answered by 279 respondents

Fig 11. How do you feel the pandemic has affect your education/work/future?

Young people comments

Response answers	Respondents
Lost education, missed education will affect our future	80
Worried about grades/unable to move forward with further study or careers due to lower grades	35
Little or no effect	29
Finding work/career of choice	18
Having to sit exams now when never had to do them before	17
Gaps in knowledge- missed specific subjects	15
Lack of support during and after	11
Motivation	10
Unable to catch up	8
Health/mental health	8
Don't know	7
Fear of Covid coming back	6
Things have improved/ more positive	5
Not able to get into the University of choice	3
Not being able to buy a house	3
Socially	3
Life is harder	3
Missed memories/opportunities and experiences	3
Employers being less favourable	2
Badly	2
Expectations from teachers	1
Higher standards of hygiene	1
Losing jobs	1
Confidence	1

Additional views from respondents about their education, work and future.

***“A whole year worth of education just thrown out the window”***

*“I've had so much time off school, not being able to be in during the correct lessons. This could affect how my final exams turn out, which will lead to bigger problems during my future, i.e. looking for a higher course in college, getting into one of the higher universities and my ability to work in the area of study i want to work in”.*

***“Demolished any chance of social mobility, and thus probably won't be able to afford house/ high paying job”***

*“Feel like there's no point trying because it'll be impossible to achieve the things I want to do with the current climate of the housing market/economy/wages - work is a soulless machine, no one has your interests at heart they just want to exploit you and blame you for not working fast enough (from all and my current jobs I've had throughout the pandemic) It has made me realise how messed up every system we have is and that I don't want to exist within it. The system is for the*

*1% and not the everyday worker completely failed by the education system. My future looks bleak in terms of finding a job I could actually like that supports me financially”.*

*“Harder to get better results”.*

*“I feel that it has somewhat stunted my ability to adjust to pressure in terms of important scenarios. I had a break down when I did not do as well as I could in an exam. It also may affect me in future, for better or for worse that I am of the covid generation, as I could be seen as a harder worker, or either someone who got let off easy”*

*“I missed out on loads of school and I feel stupid”.*

We then asked: On a scale of 1 to 10, how much does this worry young people. (With 1 being a little and 10 being a lot).

Fig 12. This single response question was answered by 287 young people.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1	52	18.12%
2	22	7.67%
3	23	8.01%
4	30	10.45%
5	39	13.59%
6	21	7.32%
7	28	9.76%
8	30	10.45%
9	21	7.32%
10	21	7.32%

The next section of the survey, we explored support over the last 12 months through either education, work and or other services. These questions were targeted around, if the young person needed support, where would they get support from and who did they seek that support from.

The following statistics were developed from the survey findings, alongside a series of examples that respondents included in their answers.

Fig 13. If you needed support with your education/work/future where would you usually look for it? This open response question was answered by 245 respondents.

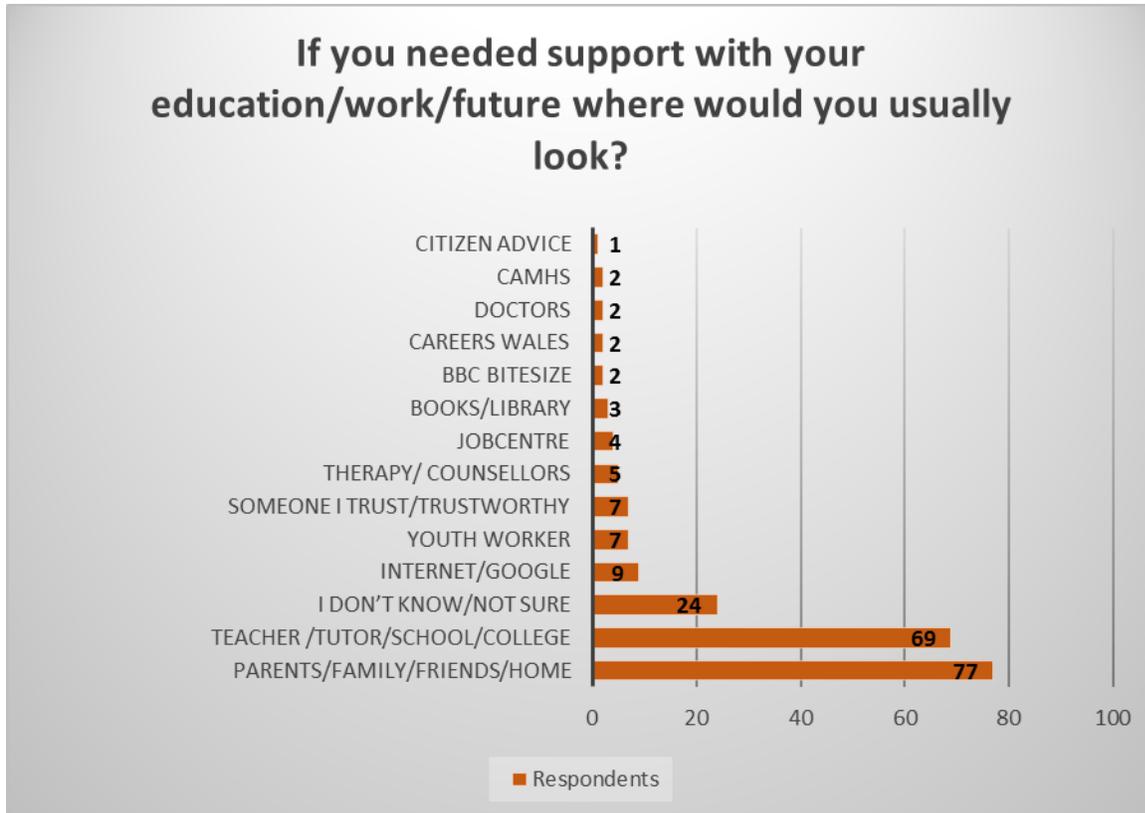
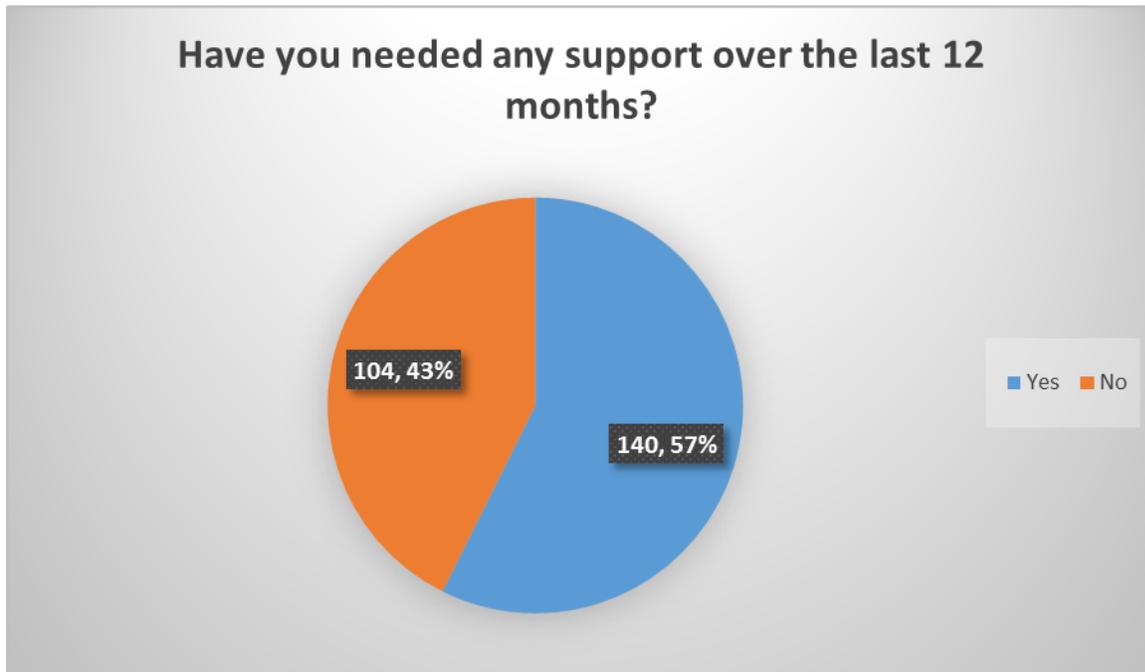
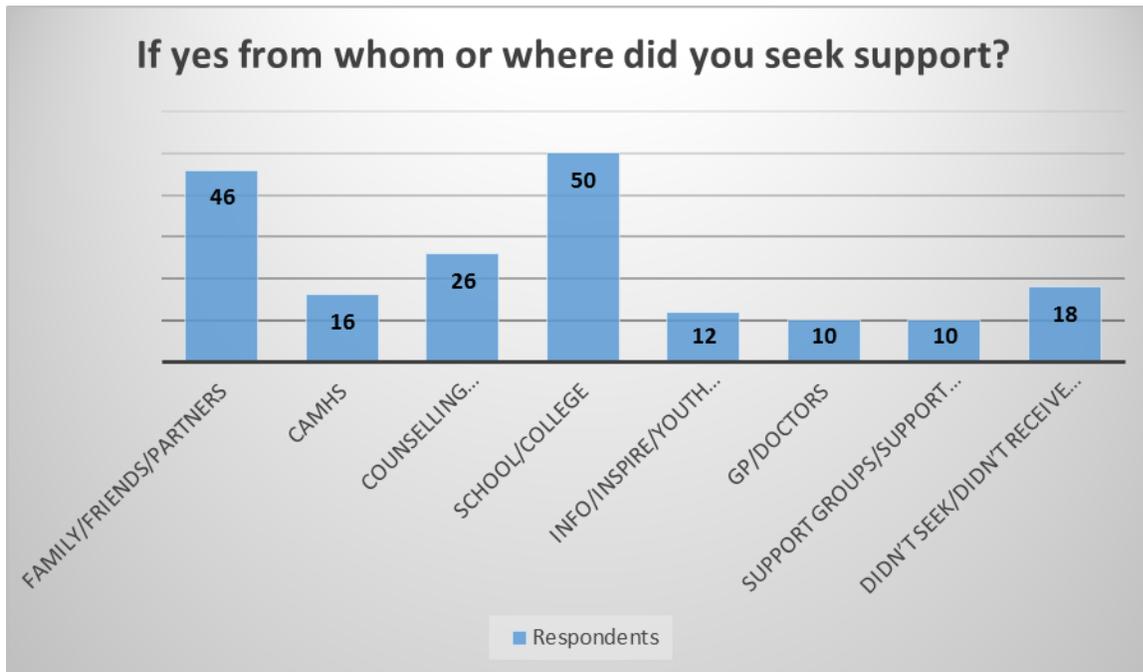


Fig 14. Have you needed any support over the last 12 months?



If yes from whom or where did you seek the support? This open response question, young people could answer with more than one place they sort support.

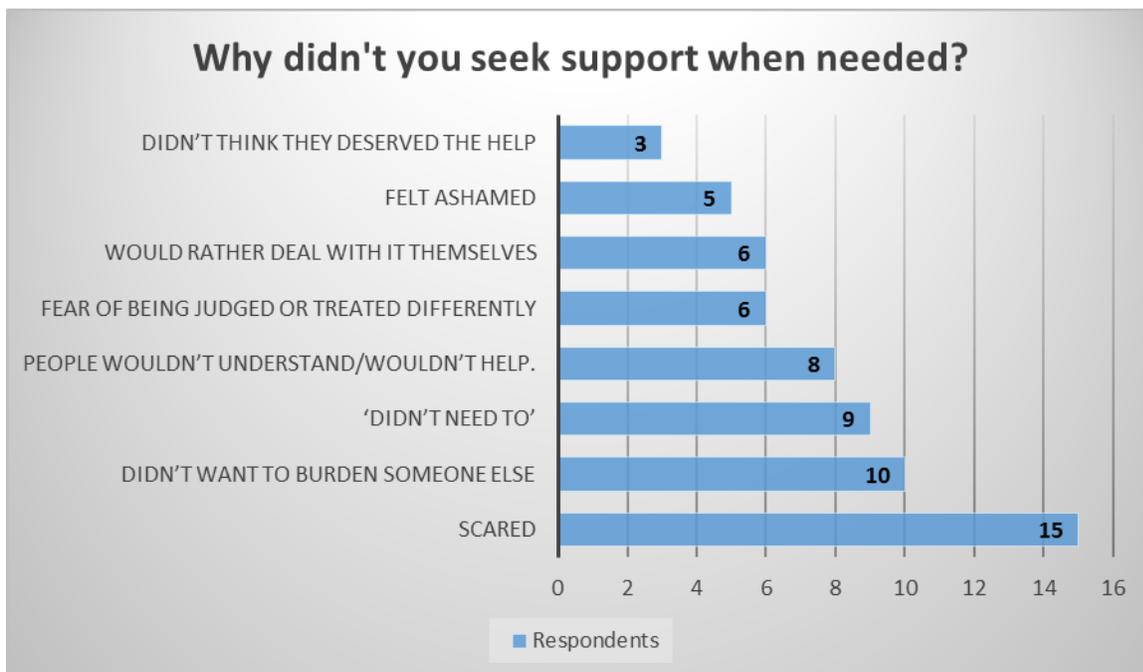
Fig 15.



If you needed support but you didn't seek any support when needed, why not?

Fig 16. This was an open response question.

We have themed the answers from young people, 'why didn't they seek support', in graph below'.



Some young people stated; 'they thought people would think they were 'making it up' or 'no one had the time to listen as everyone was busy', 'not being comfortable talking to other people about it'. Some young people said; 'they didn't know where to look for support', with others quoting they couldn't get through to the support.

Additional views from respondents:

*"At first I did not seek support as I believed that people thought, I was perhaps making it up, or that the problems I was facing were not great enough to warrant support in the scheme of things".*

*"Because I didn't want to put my problems on somebody else, because they might have a lot of problems going on for themselves"*

*"Because I was under 18 and couldn't do it myself since members of my family don't believe in mental health problems".*

*"Cos I have catholic parents who don't believe in suicide".*

*"Difficult to get appointments/ see professionals in person, many things have been over the phone or online".*

*"I did not seek support because i felt embarrassed and guilty".*

*"I feel as though I couldn't or that, I deserved what was going on with me but I just couldn't reach out since I have issues with trusting".*

*"I think it's a common worry that support can be hard to access, and when it is accessed, I've found that for myself and others around me, it's not helped or 'cured' you, which can leave you feeling hopeless and like you've exhausted all help".*

*"Not brave enough to seek help and open up".*

*"When youth club wasn't on I didn't know where to go for support".*

The Samaritans suggests in; 'Pushed from Pillar to Post' research that young people have negativity and concern about the future,

*People aged 16-24 have experienced the biggest drop in employment compared to other age groups due to higher numbers working in hospitality and retail. The increase in unemployment is concerning as there is a significantly higher rate of suicide among unemployed, compared to employed people. Financial concerns, such as problem debt, are also associated with increased suicide risk. [www.samaritans.org/wales/about-samaritans/research-policy/coronavirus-and-suicide/one-year-on-data-on-covid-19/coronavirus-young-people-and-self-harm/2020](http://www.samaritans.org/wales/about-samaritans/research-policy/coronavirus-and-suicide/one-year-on-data-on-covid-19/coronavirus-young-people-and-self-harm/2020)*

Fig 17. We asked young people; if the pandemic had affected relationships they had previously established, for example. Family, partners, friends, teachers, support workers and /or other professionals.

239 young people responded to this question.

Young people response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Family	122	51.05%
Partners	38	15.90%
Friends	156	65.27%
Teachers	65	27.20%
Support Workers	8	3.35%
Other Professionals	7	2.93%
None	59	24.69%

*Other professionals included: Youth Workers, CAMHS Worker, GP, Dentist, sports coach and therapist.*

Social Media, Internet and Social Media Platforms.

In general, most studies reported that social media use increased during the Covid-19 pandemic with the usage of a variety of social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok).

Fig 18. We asked young people:

In the last 12 months, do you think you are going online and using the internet more?

This single response question was answered by 245 respondents.

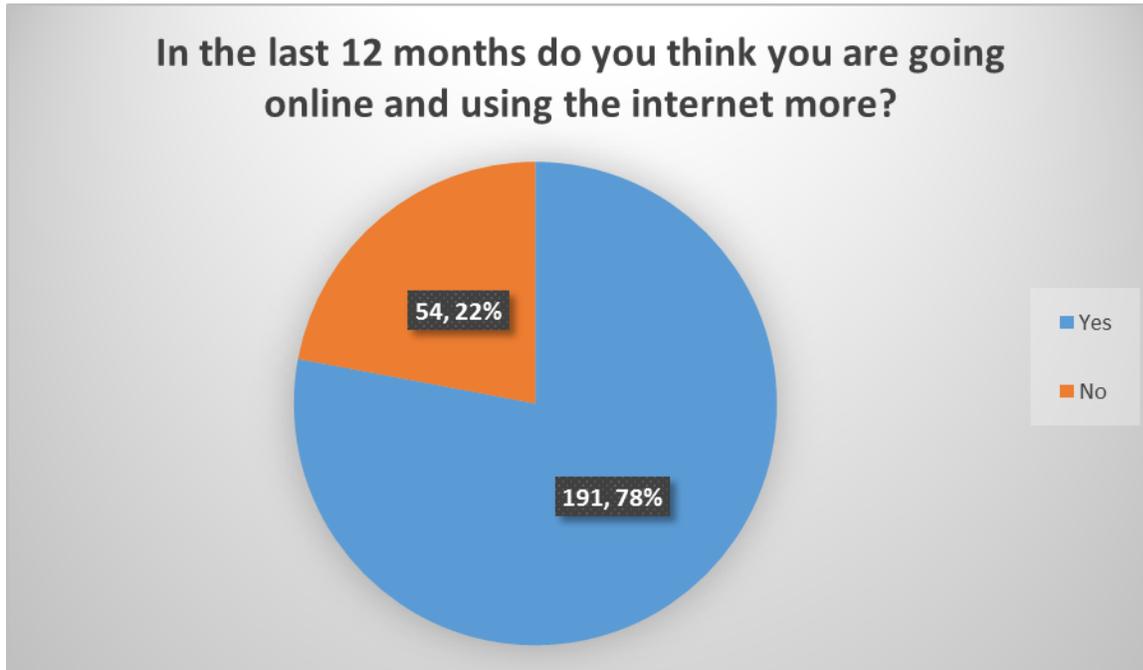


Fig 19. We then asked young people to why they turned to social media platforms.

Why do you think you are going online and using the internet more?	Young people
Education and research	46
Socialising	40
Because of the lockdown/pandemic	38
Entertainment	26
Bored or nothing else to do	24
Young people who thought the amount of time they spent was problematic or they were now addicted	12
Modern way	12
Escapism	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>191</b>

The young people said; 'they had more time to go on the internet and the coronavirus/lockdowns had played a big part in that and that this also was now the modern way.

A lot of education had also moved online, also events and therapy sessions.

Young people had started to use the internet more for entertainment and shopping and spent less time outside or with friends. Some young people spoke that there was nothing else to do and they were bored so they were using the internet more.

Additional views from respondents.

*"As well as being inside all of the time I have widened my network of friends and so reach out more often to them".*

*"Considering there wasn't a lot to do during the pandemic, the internet cured many peoples boredom, including mine. I am very used to using the internet now.*

*"Finding routes of escapism e.g. binge watching mind numbing unintelligent TV to escape the hopeless feeling".*

*"I am googling things i need for school and watching more Netflix but also I am reading books free online to save money".*

*"I have been using the internet more and more to talk to friends and complete school/college work".*

*"I'm basically addicted to my phone, I can't just leave it alone. I'm constantly checking my phone and wanting to see my messages all the time".*

*"My screen time weekly is over 47 hours on average".*

*"Yes to talk to friends, help me with school work, but also as an escapism from hectic life".*

How often do you go online and use the internet? This was an open response question.

The young people mostly mentioned that they spend a lot of time on the internet, 101, young people mentioned the word daily, and the majority of young people said lots, all the time, many times a day, often.

22, young people said they go on too much. Screen time is high, one saying that 'it often upsets me that I can't stop' and another saying they feel their 'internet usage is unhealthy'.

18, young people said; they are on the internet for 3 hours or under a day. 29, young people said; they are on-line between 4 and 10 hours a day and 6, young people said they are on- line for over 10 hours a day.

Further views from respondents:

*“I can spend hours and hours at once on the internet if I have free time and it is a really bad habit that I need to learn to break”.*

*“My screen time on my phone (which I mostly use for the internet) is around 4 hours a day. This was bad when I had health anxiety as I would spend most of this time googling symptoms”.*

*“Not that often! Maybe a few times a day but only about 3 hours per day maybe less”?*

*“Very often it upsets me that i can’t stop”!*

Fig 20, 21. The top 3 websites young people mostly use.

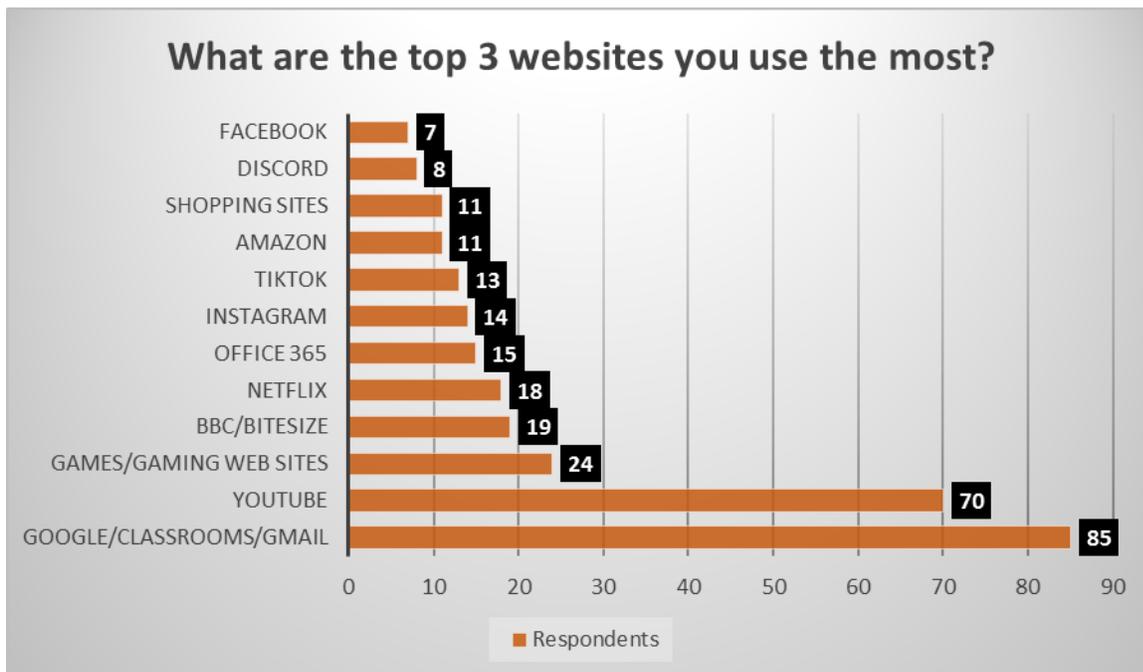
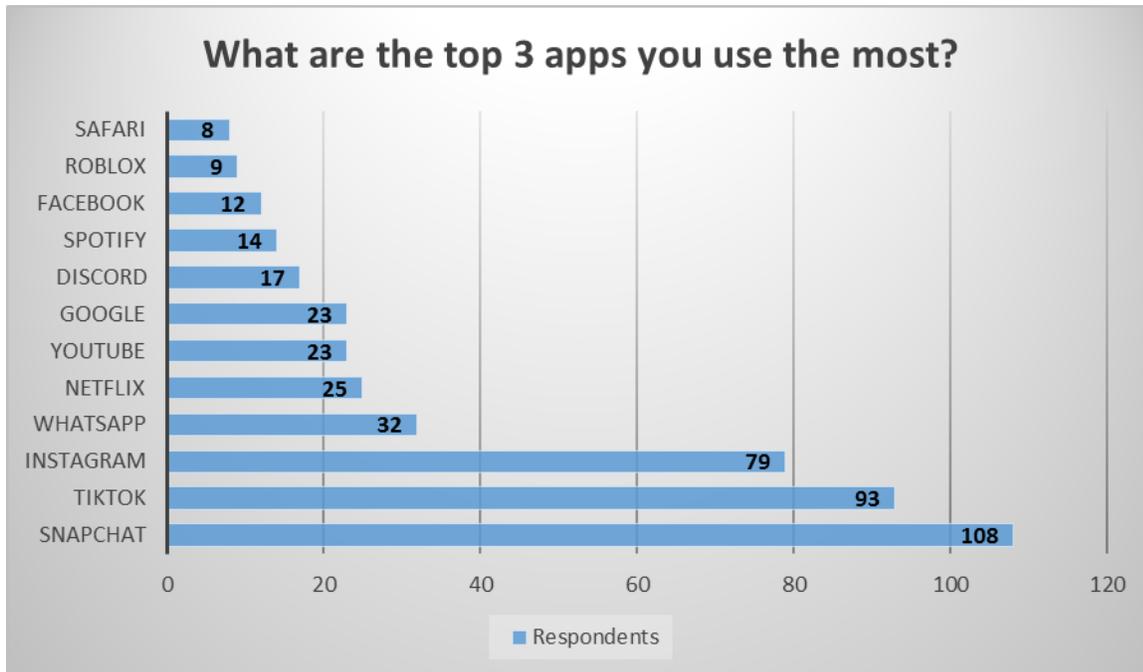


Fig 21.

Additional websites	Respondents
WJEC	6
Disney	5
Safari	5
Wordle	5
Teams	5
Twitter	4
Spotify	4
Mathswatch	3
Gaming porn/porn	2

Fig 22. We then asked young people; what are the top 3 apps you use the most?



According to NSPCC and Barnardos:

*"Online grooming crimes have risen by more than 80% in four years. We may see even higher levels of online child sexual abuse, as record levels were reached during the pandemic, and have not subsided, meaning there may be a long-term increase in risk".* <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

Barnardo's Interim Co-CEO Lynn Perry MBE said:

*"The increase in the amount of child abuse material online is horrific. Viewing these images is illegal and can be just as harmful to children as physical abuse.*

*"As well as a rise in adults viewing harmful and illegal content, Barnardo's frontline workers are increasingly seeing children watching violent and abusive pornography online which is affecting their understanding of healthy relationships.*

*"In order to prevent abuse, it is vital that there is support and advice not just for adults at risk of becoming offenders but also for children showing harmful behaviours. We also need social media and pornography sites to take urgent action to ensure that they are not continuing to host illegal and harmful content on their platforms."* <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/news/barnardos-statement-stop-it-now-figures>

Open space / Communities.

We wanted to find out if young people had used open space more within their communities due to the lockdown restrictions, and if they will continue to use these now restrictions have been lifted, moreover if lockdown has changed their relationship with the outside world.

Fig 23. Did you use open spaces such as parks, country walks or nature trails to support your mental health during the pandemic? This single response question was answered by 232 respondents.

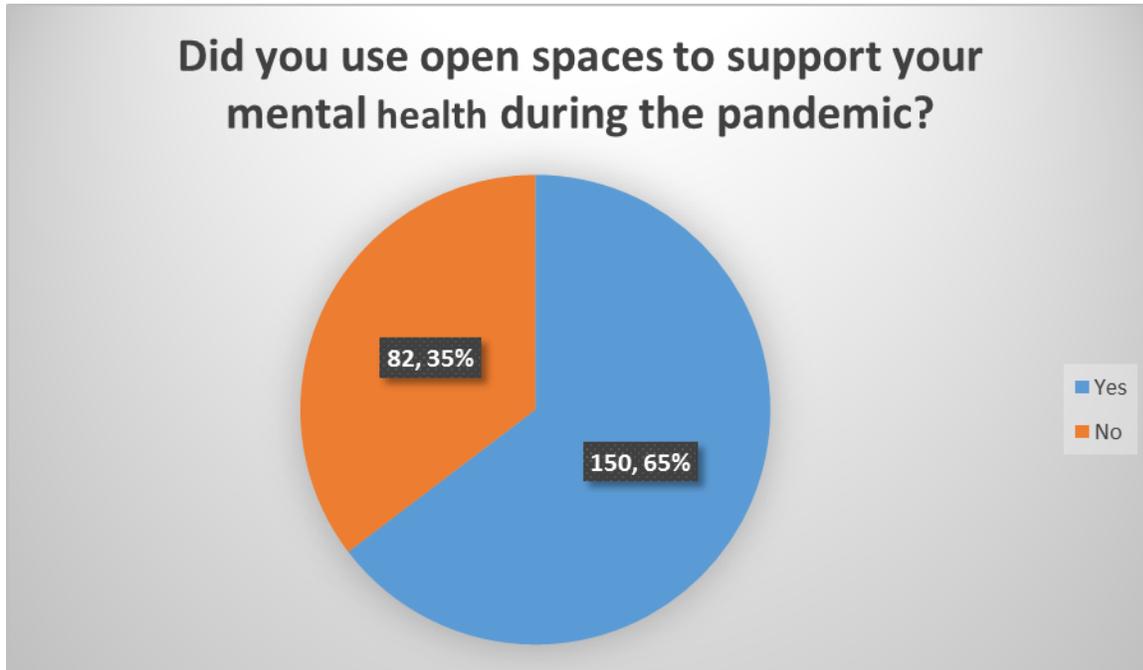


Fig 23. If yes, is this something you will continue to do in the future?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	149	73.76%
No	53	26.24%

This single response question was answered by 202 respondents

Fig 24. Do you feel safe going out in your community?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	163	69.96%
No	70	30.04%

If No please explain why not.

This was an open response question for young people to add their thoughts:

Our survey has highlighted that;

**38** young people spoke of being scared, this included being kidnapped by groomers, rape, dying, other people, getting hurt, creepy people, getting jumped, lots of crime and drugs in the area.

**13** young people were not confident to go out in their communities, this included meeting other people, being harassed, people making fun, being judged, people not liking me and laughing at me, other people seeing their face and body, not wanting to go out on their own, getting bullied and fear of the 'New World'.

**3** young people mentioned that their community is not Trans and LGBTQ+ friendly!

**2** young people didn't feel comfortable in their community for getting 'catcalled'.

Additional views;

*"Because I feel like I could get kidnapped by my groomer or get catcalled".*

*"Because I'm gay and I think others will hurt me".*

*"For a start my community does not feel like a safe space to be LGBTQ+!"*

*"I feel judged, like everyone's staring at me and laughing at me".*

*"I have an expensive bike and people always want to take it. And there is always big gangs of people causing trouble".*

*"Men couldn't walk alone by myself might die or get raped"*

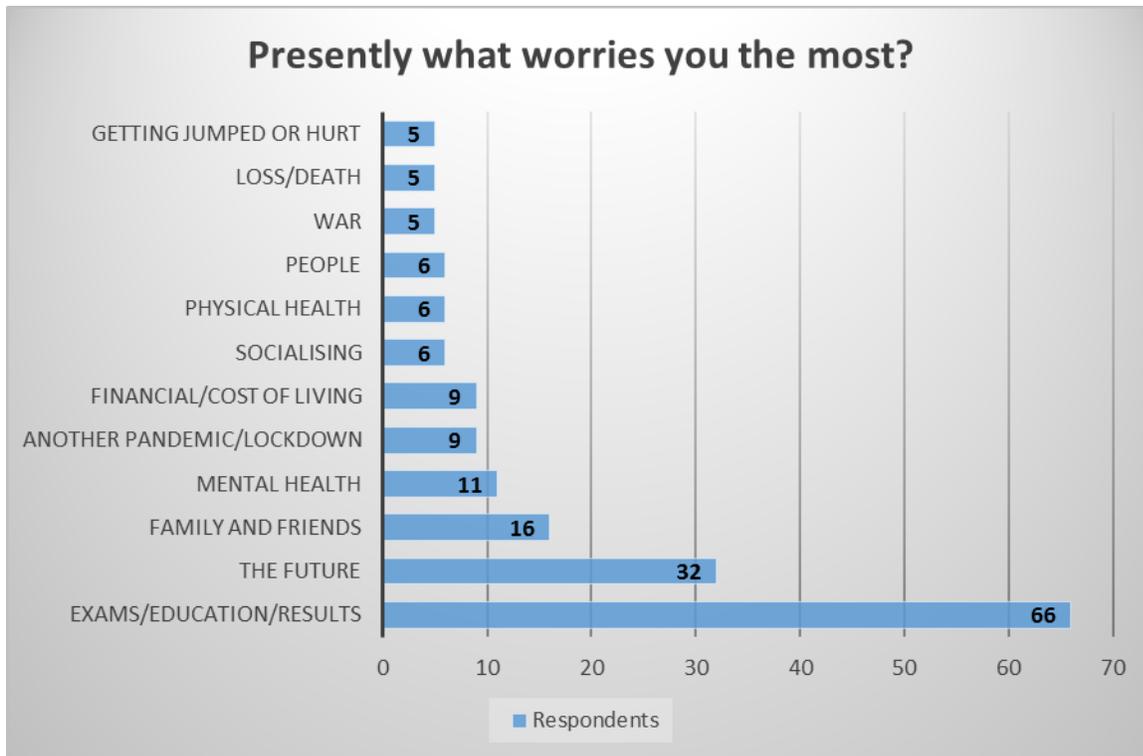
*"People are everywhere, they will see me, my body, and my face, everything. I hate that"!*

*"Idiots from my school have started hanging around on my street and knocking on my door taking the mic out of me, I'm scared to leave my home because people are so disgusting".*

*"Within minimal things to do outside during the pandemic, 'the news was the only thing available', and it has caused more fears, as I have not been outside into the "new world often".*

We then went on to ask young people what worries them the most. This was an open response question

Fig 25. Presently what worries you most? This was an open text question.



Respondents also left additional views:

*"Academic results and my future".*

*"Cost of living bills".*

*"Death and being kidnapped and raped".*

*"Everything, school, not having friends outside".*

*"Existing in a world where it's increasingly hard to exist without working myself into the dirt, be financially stable or otherwise just be because the world is fucked and no one cares, it's all about green washing and ticking boxes and paperwork and lies instead of lives Getting depressed, losing my support network, not being able to afford anything, finances, unable to have independence due to options lost in COVID, not being able to afford further education or a home".*

*"I am worried about Climate change and what is going to happen with our planet in the future".*

*"Losing the people that I love the most".*

*"My eyesight, my mental health and my education".*

*"My physical health".*

*"Probably my health. This is almost always my biggest cause of anxiety. I also worry a lot about the way I look and being alone".*

*"We'll have another quarantine".*

*“War in Ukraine, school/not doing well in school- currently I’m not doing the best I can in school as I am getting low grades”.*

On a scale of 1 to 10 how much does this worry you? (With 1 being a little and 10 being a lot).

Fig 26. This single response question was answered by 224 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1	43	19.20%
2	5	2.23%
3	7	3.13%
4	7	3.13%
5	19	8.48%
6	12	5.36%
7	24	10.71%
8	34	15.18%
9	34	15.18%
10	39	17.41%

We then asked young people; 'Has the Coronavirus Pandemic affected you in any other way that you would like to tell us about?'

This open response question was answered by over 150, young people.

Young people spoke of how Coronavirus had affected their confidence, making them feel lonely and isolated. Their lack of communication with others, has made it harder to socialise, some young people are struggling to have a social life and struggling with social anxieties.

Young people said; 'that they are suffering from anxiety and panic attacks, some are feeling paranoid and worried.

Relationship breakdown has been mentioned, but also the importance of family and friends and what they mean to them.

One young person said; 'they now have a greater understanding of diseases and viruses, and others said that they now feel they are able to help themselves better also some new hobbies have been found'.

Additional views from respondents:

*"Coronavirus made me realise how important my family and friends are, because when I wasn't with them for a while, it had a big impact on my social life".*

*"COVID, made everyone paranoid and worried, It isolated people and caused relationship breakdowns even among families as we couldn't be there to support each other if living in different households".*

*"Friendships in school due to lack of social life".*

*"I have been able to realise what's really important to me; for example, I've stopped certain activities like swimming as I realised I was happier without the added stress of balancing homework with the hours of pool time. Instead, I've been able to concentrate on school and my love of music and brass banding. In this way, I've become happier and less stressed. I have also discovered other forms of exercise that I enjoy, like home workouts, going on family walks, and using an exercise bike".*

*"I'm just so lonely even though I speak with people on-line but I don't meet them".*

*"It made me a lot more upset".*

*"It positively affected my hobbies as I had more time at home to find new ones and do work I enjoyed".*

*"Just feeling too scared to go out again - also mum is struggling with all the bills".*

*"My mental health and social skills".*

*"My mum has long covid, my nana die because of it".*

*"My step dad has almost always been horrible to me and covid made him worse"!*

Is there anything, you can think of that Wrexham or Flintshire Council could presently do, to better support young people's wellbeing? This open response question was answered by 150 respondents.

There was a lot of varied answers to this question, broadly, the answers were for better support for young people's mental health and better services for young people, also with a suggestion to share these results and comments with teachers.

What can Wrexham / Flintshire Council do to help support young people	Young people
More funding for young people's mental health, free support.	12
More youth clubs and safe spaces.	12
Places for young people to go and talk, some of these could be confidential	11
Don't know.	9
Easier access to support, better promoted.	6
Better wellbeing resources in schools, more funding for counsellors and therapists. Training for teachers.	6
More support for exam stress.	6
More activities and events and better promotion of these.	6
More support on a casual basis, instant messaging, phone services or helplines.	4
More support for young people who don't have a diagnosis.	4
Talking	4
Online youth clubs.	3
Teachers to approach the young people to ask about their mental health, a yearly check in regardless of age.	2
More support for LGBTQ+ and Transgender youth.	2
Better parks and skate parks.	2
Better online work.	1
Don't blame the young people.	1
Options not to attend sessions/ lessons that might trigger stress.	1
No homework, this causes more stress.	1
More drop ins and short notice appointments.	1
More volunteering opportunities.	1
More opportunities for young people to have their say.	1
Better access to Doctors appointments.	1
Help young people to understand mental health.	1
More funding for young people.	1
More sports and clubs.	1
Support for grief	1
Stop using Mental Health power points.	1
Take all bullying seriously.	1

Additional views from survey respondents.

“A place where kids can go to talk to each other about problems/worries”.

“Approaching students about their mental health instead of expecting students to openly talk about it and ask for help”.

“Change schools' wellbeing resources as everybody says that they don't work or have the opposite effect”.

“Do private and confidential psychological meetings for younger people in schools who have poorer mental health, without telling the parents, (This is what worries people the most)”.

“For teachers to take courses to be able to recognise when a child is struggling with their mental health. Give us the option to not attend PSE lessons which could be triggering (with a given reason). Not set homework (it causes unnecessary stress and most pupils have outside lives with problems)”.

“Free access to mental health support on more of a casual basis than what's offered by child, adolescent and adult mental health services in the hospital, and places like the INFO shop. i.e. an instant messaging/phone call service and drop in or short notice booking services in accessible hours (after-school and weekends), for people whose mental health is at a low but they are not experiencing a diagnosable condition, or for those who don't wish to commit to a course of therapy”.

“Get more youth clubs”.

“Give us more to do, nothing is going on in the Flintshire community which therefore makes us bored and causes anti-social behaviour, give us numerous places to hang out, put events on, give us a reason to get out of the house and turn our phones off for a little while”.

“Have a lesson a week in school for young people to talk about their health and problems”.

“Have better support for transgendered youth”.

“Have more activities that will bring people together as well as providing better guidelines for exam and mental health support”.

“I have noticed a worrying increase in the number of students self-harming throughout the area, I'm not sure if it's linked to lockdowns, but a very high number of students are struggling with it. It's awful to see people you know struggling so much and I feel quite upset when I'm unable to help them. At the moment, all I can do is try to be a good and supportive friend, however I think that really there needs to be more professional support in place for these situations. Our school does offer a lot of support and is part of several mental health pilot schemes, but I think there may still need to be more advice available”.

“Invest more into adolescent mental health services - the pandemic has exposed a crisis,

“Make more youth clubs that are on every day”.

“Mental health days- sometimes our brains cannot function without a break”.

“Offer support to families who have lost loved ones”.

Based on survey findings from listening to young people's voices.

This 2<sup>nd</sup> consultation highlights the need for us to re- think about how we support young people going forward after the pandemic, looking at the results, the majority of young people need more support and help now than they did between March 2020 and during the pandemic. As we come out of the Covid pandemic is clear to see young people are still struggling with the effects of last 2 years and the toll on their mental health and wellbeing and seem to be getting worse.

With young people's service for mental health and support i.e. CAMHS and counseling services trying to deal with the vast referrals, a lot of young people have been left trying to manage their stress, anxiety, and pre-existing mental illness or health issues on their own.

We have all as a society changed due to the pandemic, the impact has affected everyone's lives in one way or another. However It is clear that young people are finding it harder than others to be able to move on, there mental health and wellbeing has been challenged with very little or no support over the previous lockdowns.

All we want to do is to support young people through this transition, we want young people get the support that they need now, so they can start planning for their future!

The consequences of isolation and social isolation has had enormous effect on young people.

We feel it's essential to continue to listen to and put young people's voices at the forefront of what happens next.

As youth services, we have been able to adapt our services over the last 2 years to reach out to young people throughout the pandemic with online services, along with giving young people a voice by listening to them.

We want to keep developing their wellbeing in educational settings and developing their life skills by continuing to support and work with young people.

We have been able to put in place intervention in for our service users, developing resources for immediate help, 24 hour websites and contacts numbers making sure that all young people know where and how to find support now and that there are clear pathways between our services to others key services.

We are improving access and inclusion for LGBTQ young people by developing a safe environment and supporting our LGBT+ community to make positive life choices.

There is limited employment opportunities predominantly for the most vulnerable young people.

The impact of the cost-of-living crisis on young people and their families struggling to cope has put the need for effective early help.

Although, Welsh Government have implemented a number of measures to help against the some of the effects of the pandemic, families are still struggling. Some families are living with no jobs. The economic state of the country fuel rise, utilities prices still on the rise. The worst is actually still to come for all families.

Welsh Government conducted a, 'Review of the impact of mass disruption on the wellbeing and mental health of children and young people, and possible therapeutic interventions'.

The aim of this Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) was to explore the impact of disasters that have caused mass disruption (including school closure) on the wellbeing and mental health of school-aged children and young people (aged 3 to 18 years). Risk and protective factors for children and young people's mental health were explored, and the effectiveness of post-disaster interventions were highlighted.

3.6 UK research has suggested that COVID-19 is adversely affecting the mental health of children and young people, with child and parent reports demonstrating children's COVID19 related worries.

3.7 In the UK, children from lower socio-economic backgrounds seem to be at greater risk of falling behind in their education compared to peers.

Williams, Z. (2020). Review of the impact of mass disruption on the wellbeing and mental health of children and young people, and possible therapeutic interventions. Cardiff: Welsh Government, GSR report number 62/2020 Available at: <https://gov.wales/review-impact-mass-disruption-wellbeing-and-mental-healthchildren-and-young-people>

Addition info from Wrexham / Flintshire- we need to add here what we would like the PSB TO DO?

Recommendations?