

## Life under COVID-19

Initially at the start of the pandemic, I felt devastated. Being a year 11 student, I felt robbed of the opportunity to sit my GCSEs and prove myself, and cheated out of the chance to experience true exam pressure. All of my revision and hard work now seemed like it has almost been for nothing, which was really upsetting. On top of this, I missed out on what should have been everlasting memories, such as prom, prize giving and other end of school celebrations.

Although missing out on these experiences has been awful, I have managed to use this time effectively instead. I have done research into viruses, widening my knowledge on the very cause of the pandemic, I have completed online work experience and done some A-Level preparations as well as a course on ventilation as I felt this was appropriate in the current crisis. I also did a course on biochemistry. Throughout the pandemic so far, I have discovered that I am an independent learner, which is a huge positive for me.

Being in a family of 7 with 4 siblings, I have been able to see how this pandemic has impacted them. My older sister in year 12 has had so much anxiety over the lack of online teaching that she has received. It is almost as if she was teaching herself. I worry about how this lack of online teaching will impact her in year 12 and how it will impact on her A-Level exams.

I have helped my brother in year 9 with lots of his school work, again due to the lack of teaching. This was obviously very distressing for him, as he felt he wasn't being taught what he needed to know. My brother in year 7 was distraught over missing out on school. He found the work set very hard and was overwhelmed with the amount of it, so much so that he began having severe panic attacks where he couldn't breathe and began vomiting. It got so bad that my parents had to seek professional help for him. My brother in year 4 was delighted to be off school, however he struggled to stay motivated to do the online work and didn't enjoy online learning at all. My dad has been working from home and although this has been entirely new to him, he has coped well with the change. My mum has found it very stressful having to try to help with school work and manage so much of it.

We have managed as a family to make sure we have had lots of exercise and to communicate and help each other. I feel like this pandemic has brought us all closer. My 3 younger brothers have also spent time on their music, helping them to relax, and through their online music lessons, feel a sense of achievement.

At the moment, I feel stressed and angry as I await my GCSE results, knowing that a ridiculous algorithm or the Government randomly at the last minute are deciding on young peoples' futures.

They have had 5 months to plan for the results day, and yet they have made a complete mess of the A-Levels resulting in many inaccurate and unjust grades, limiting young peoples' futures.

I think that the mental health of young people has not been taken into account by the adult decision makers and this needs to change. In order to recover from the pandemic, I believe that schools must open again in September and remain open and young people should be the top priority since our future careers are at stake.