

Action Research project – Research Report

I am planning on focusing on for my research:

- Education
- Mental Health
- And Relationships with family and friends

Findings from my first questionnaire:

A total of **126** young people (Prominently from the south east of England + London) answered my first questionnaire and I saw a great difference in the level of support across all areas of which I was focusing on for my research in regards to how the young people were supported by the government, health services and schools with their current education, moving onto further education, mental health and relationships with family and friends. My questionnaire showed that some participants received no support due to having been in either year 11 or year 13 and having no work needing to be issued and many no longer being seen as part of the school as they were leaving in the summer of 2020. (Percentages were rounded to the nearest number to give clearer percentage results)

➤ **Education**

- **8%** of those who took part in my questionnaire received no work from their school. (Some due to being a summer 2020 leaver and others due to lack of school communication or lack of availability to technology to complete their work.)
- **92%** of those who completed my questionnaire had received work from the school through varied methods of distribution.
 - **72%** of young people received work through emails from the school.
 - **12%** received work through the post.
 - **8%** of young people received work through an online website such as a homework website.
- **20%** of the young people who were receiving work from the school received no online method of lessons such as video calls, recorded video lessons or

phone call lessons. (Other **8%** were the students who weren't given work at all)

- **72%** of young people received online lessons through video calls, recorded video lessons or phone call lessons.
 - o **8%** received online lessons through pre-recorded lessons,
 - o **28%** received online lessons through phone calls,
 - o **64%** received video call lessons.

- **20%** of young people had the opportunity to received socially distanced face to face support from teachers in the school through either being a child of a key worker or through a support/wellness check system the schools had created to allow young people to leave the house and talk to their teachers in person if anything was troubling them.

- **8%** received support options for their personal education as a whole from their schools such as one on one calls to help with areas they were struggling with.

➤ **Satisfaction with the support they were provided in regards to their education** (With 0 being unsatisfied, 5 being neutral and 10 being satisfied) –

- **8%** of young people answered 0 on the satisfaction scale,
- **2%** of young people answered 1 on the satisfaction scale,
- **4%** of young people answered 2 on the satisfaction scale,
- **12%** of young people answered 3 on the satisfaction scale,
- **6%** of young people answered 4 on the satisfaction scale,
- **16%** of young people answered 5 on the satisfaction scale,
- **4%** of young people answered 6 on the satisfaction scale,
- **28%** of young people answered 7 on the satisfaction scale,
- **2%** of young people answered 8 on the satisfaction scale,
- **10%** of young people answered 9 on the satisfaction scale,
- **8%** of young people answered 10 on the satisfaction scale.

Overall from the results I gathered from my first questionnaire, in regards to the education of young people and the support they received for their education, showed

a great disparity in how the young people's education was handled by the different schools across the south east and London area. With some receiving immense amount of support and class work to keep them on track, almost as if school had just moved out of a school building and into homes. While others received barely any work and the schools left students who would be taking their exams the following year in the summer of 2021 or in the years after to teach themselves the content and if they didn't understand it or struggled it was up to the young people to find methods to better understand the work instead of the school helping them. This will definitely show a large impact on the results next year if no changes are made to exams by the department of education and equally due to the large difference in how the pandemic and lockdown was handled by schools.

➤ **Mental Health**

- **36%** of young people responded to the questionnaire saying that their mental health had declined since the lockdown was implemented.
- **44%** of young people responded to the questionnaire saying that their mental health had stayed the same as it was before the lockdown was implemented.
- **4%** of young people responded to the questionnaire saying that their mental health had improved since the lockdown was implemented.
- **16%** of young people responded to the questionnaire saying that their mental health had declined in some areas but had improved in others/had its ups and downs since the lockdown was implemented.

- Only **8%** of young people responded to the questionnaire saying that the schools had provided online help/support for their mental health, through calls and emails to website links such as ChildLine.
- **14%** of young people had access to in school support for their mental health with a teacher or school counsellor in a one to one socially distanced meeting.
- **78%** of young people responded to the questionnaire saying that their schools had provided no help or support for their mental health either in school or online since the beginning of the lockdown in England.

- **24%** of the 78% who received no support from the school for their mental health sought out mental health support by themselves.
 - **10%** of the 78% of young people who received no support from their school had already support for their mental health in place.
 - **44%** of the 78% of young people who received no support from their school for their mental health didn't reach out for any support. (Of which **24%** said they didn't need help and **20%** said they were too caught up in things going in in their lives to reach out for help or didn't know where they could access actual help.)
- **Mental health scale since the beginning of lockdown** (With 0 being extremely bad, 5 being the same/neutral and 10 being very stable and health) –
- **4%** of young people recorded 0 on the mental health scale.
 - **4%** of young people recorded 1 on the mental health scale.
 - **12%** of young people recorded 2 on the mental health scale.
 - **4%** of young people recorded 3 on the mental health scale.
 - **24%** of young people recorded 4 on the mental health scale.
 - **28%** of young people recorded 5 on the mental health scale.
 - **4%** of young people recorded 6 on the mental health scale.
 - **8%** of young people recorded 7 on the mental health scale.
 - **8%** of young people recorded 8 on the mental health scale.
 - **0%** of young people recorded 9 on the mental health scale.
 - **4%** of young people recorded 10 on the mental health scale

Overall the research results from the first questionnaire in regards to the mental health of young people showed that across the south east of England and London the mental health of young people has been impacted very differently with some young people's mental health improving throughout the lockdown and others having stayed the same or worsened and some having ups and downs within their mental health. It also showed that schools across the south east and London handled the mental health of their students, who would be staying on for the duration of 2020-21 and the years after

and 2020 leavers, very differently and to varying levels. Not all schools across the south east and London provided mental health support for their students whether that be online or face to face. Some young people responded saying that their school provided great support for their education but when it came to support for mental health there was none, showing that schools may not be taking into account the impact the lockdown has had not only on the young people's education but their mental health as well and that is a serious issue as negative mental health can affect young people's ability to learn and live their life. Showing that several young people have been left to their own accord for their mental health at young ages, some young people also responded to the questionnaire that when reaching out for support from mental health companies and services they received little help and some who were previously on mental health support with services such as CAHMS received less support than before the lockdown while others received more. Showing a large difference and range in the mental health of young people and the support they received if it was needed and the support offered/provided.

➤ **Relationships with Family**

- **14%** of young people recorded that their relationships with family had worsened. (Whole family, not just household)
- **24%** of young people recorded that their relationships with family had stayed the same. (Whole family, not just household)
- **44%** of young people recorded that their family relationships with family had improved. (Whole family, not just household)
- **18%** of young people recorded that their relationships with family had its ups and downs/ both improved in some areas and worsened with others. (Whole family, not just household)

- **38%** of young people recorded that their relationships with the family within their household had worsened since lockdown in England.
- **6%** of young people recorded that their relationships with the family in their household had stayed the same since the start of lockdown in England.
- **40%** of young people recorded that their relationships with the family within their household had improved since the lockdown in England.

- **16%** of young people recorded that their relationships with the family within their household had its ups and down/ improved in some areas and worsened with others since the lockdown in England.

Overall the results from the questionnaire in regards to relationships with family shows that the young people within the south east and London have experienced varying levels of change within their family relationships with many worsening due to the lockdown while others have improved. Many news broadcasts and reports have shown that domestic abuse has increased since the start of lockdown and ChildLine and south east and metropolitan police have reported an increased number of calls based upon domestic abuse and violence, showing that the lockdown may be having an increasingly negative effect on young people and people in general. Although none of the young people who took my survey mentioned any form of abuse or violence and reported that if their family relationships had worsened it was due to verbal arguments rather than physical or due to differences in beliefs. The results from the questionnaire when connected with the reports of increased abuse and violence shows that many young people across the UK and the world are possibly trapped in households that are abusive and toxic due to the lockdown. Some young people stated that they had worsened relationships due to having been away from home for so long due to being at university or due to issues in differences of beliefs such as if the young person was LGBTQ+ and their parents weren't supportive and disagreements on issues such as BLM.

➤ **Relationships with Friends**

- **18%** of young people reported that their relationships with friends had worsened since the start of the lockdown in the UK.
- **14%** of young people reported that their relationships with friends had stayed the same as they were before the lockdown started in the UK.
- **24%** of young people reported that their relationships with friends had improved since the start of lockdown in the UK.
- **44%** of young people reported that their relationship with friends had worsened in some areas but improved in others since the start of the lockdown in the UK.

Overall the results of my first questionnaire show that many young people across the south east of England have actually improved relationships with friends despite not seeing them in school as they usually would and being able to spend the same amount of time with them as they would normally during the Easter break, after school and weekends. Although some young people did admit to continuing to see their friends despite the lockdown and not adhering to social distancing, the pandemic as a whole can still be seen to have a somewhat negative impact upon friendships as well as families, as the young people haven't been able to connect with their friends on the same level as they usually would.

Findings from interviews

I have completed a total of 6 interviews with young people from across the south east of England + London. The questions focused on the same topics as the questionnaire that I had sent out. Much like in the questionnaire answers that I received, there was a great difference in the level of support young people were receiving for their education and mental health and in the relationships with family and friends.

➤ **Education**

- From the notes I had taken during the interviews it can be seen that many young people feel as though the government should have set a standard for how schools should have taught young people during the lockdown due to the great disparity in how some young people were taught online and how others were left to teach themselves the content they were set and others not being set any work. Making the 'playing field' for the young people taking their exams next year very unfair and unbalanced.
- Other notes that I had taken showed that many were hoping that the government would make changes to the GCSE and A-level 2021 exams due to having lost 4 months of education that if the pandemic had not happened they would have been taught regularly. (No statements about changing exams 2021 had been made before I had conducted the last interview)
- A few young people who I had interviewed who were supposed to take their exams in the summer of 2020, commented that they hope that the government

doesn't unfairly lower their grades depending on where they are from and become very classist with the passing out of grades. (After the A-level results day a few who had taken part in the interviews sent me messages that commented on what they hoped wouldn't happen did happen and they felt as though the government had been unjust and needed to fix their mistakes and were later, when it was announced they could have their centre grades, happy the government realised their mistake but were ashamed the mistakes of downgrading lower economy areas young peoples' grades in the first place.

➤ **Mental Health**

- Many didn't wish to comment on their mental health through an interview despite knowing that they were completely anonymous for the research and only I knew who they were and what they had answered. When questioned why they didn't want to, many said they felt as though adults would demean and undermine how they felt about the pandemic and how it was affecting them due to the stereotypes of young people by adults and that the adults would undervalue their feelings and their mental states due to the pandemic affecting everyone and not just young people. (The adults reading the reports.)
- Those who did wish to comment on their mental health since the knowing of the pandemic/the first UK case/the lockdown stated that although they were scared at first they fell into the mentality of 'if they got it then they got it' and they could survive or they could die but they shouldn't stop living their lives as they were still young and should enjoy having little responsibilities while they could. While others comments matched the results seen in the questionnaire with some having improved mental health, others had worsened and others had ups and downs or stayed the same.

➤ **Relationships with family and friends**

- The notes from the interviews matched with the results from the questionnaires with many young people having relationships with family and friends being across the spectrum of having worsened, stayed the same, improved or worsened in some areas while improving in others. Many commented that being with their families all the time has brought them closer while others have said its drawn them apart due to only seeing each

other and having no outside communication causing disagreements and fallings out. Many young people commented the same for their relationships with family outside of their household and friends saying that the separation had brought them closer on a deeper level as they have been finding new methods of communication and ways to enjoy hanging out such as Netflix party which allows friends and people to watch shows together while being apart with a chat box to talk to each other while watching. And others stated that the distance has worsened relationships with family outside the households and friendships due to not being able to see or communicate properly like they would before the pandemic such as elderly family who aren't so well versed in technology so aren't able to video chat.