Lockdown Lowdown

What young people in Scotland think about their lives as lockdown restrictions change.

Lockdown Lowdown: The Voice of Seldom Heard Groups During COVID-19 Pandemic Report

Introduction

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the world. As a result the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP), Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland launched a national survey to ask young people how the pandemic is impacting their lives. Two and a half thousand young people completed the survey which has since influenced decision makers at a national and local level across Scotland. More information on phase 1 of Lockdown Lowdown can be found here: https://syp.org.uk/our-work/political-work/covid-19/

In September 2020, SYP, Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland launched phase 2 of the Lockdown Lowdown Project. This phase repeated the National Survey, led by Young Scot, and included a new in-depth study of seldom heard young people's voices by conducting focus groups with young people from five seldom heard groups.

In phase 2, the national survey received over six thousand responses, and we held facilitated discussions with around forty young people from specific seldom heard groups about the impact of COVID-19 post-lockdown and the impact of the new measures and restrictions in their lives.

Methodology

We held five focus groups with targeted groups of young people with particular lived experiences, asking them questions and documenting the impact of the pandemic on their lives. The groups were as follows:

- Young people from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities.
- Young people with disabilities and additional support needs
- Care experienced young people
- Young people with experience of the criminal justice system
- Young Carers

Focus group sessions were scheduled on Monday and Thursday evenings in October and November 2020. Participants used a sign-up link to register their interest in

participating, and we worked with relevant national charities and put posts out on social media to promote the opportunity to take part. Invitations were then circulated among MSYPs, #iWill Ambassadors, Young Scot Hive Volunteers, and other partner organisations who work with young people in Scotland. Young people and practitioners were encouraged to circulate the opportunity, and it was publicised on the SYP and Youthlink social media platforms. In order to support as many young people as possible, participants were also offered a phone top up or a voucher if required. Participants were also encouraged to indicate any further support or access requirements they may have in advance of the session.

Young people were able to sign up to as many sessions as they felt appropriate, so that they could partake in several conversations from more than one perspective.

The questions asked during the focus group sessions were proposed by SYP and agreed with the Scottish Government. In addition to the general questions posed to all groups, a set of specific questions relating to the lived experience of each group was also agreed; the specific question responses can be found in theme 6.

Focus groups were held on Zoom, and facilitated by staff members from SYP and Youthlink. Using Zoom as a format allowed participants to make use of features such as the 'reactions', which they could use to signal to facilitators when they wished to speak. The 'chat' function also allowed participants to add to the conversation in a different way, which many opted to do. Overall, the use of Zoom was helpful in allowing the facilitator to keep track of the conversation, and to ensure that everyone was able to contribute.

At the time focus groups were held, various restrictions were in place in different parts of Scotland to mitigate the impact of the second wave of COVID-19. This context is likely to have influenced the perspectives of participants, many of whom referred to 'Lockdown' as an on-going circumstance, rather than a past experience.

Answers from participants have been anonymised and any identifiable information removed to ensure the confidentiality of participants.

Participant Profile:

Focus Group	Number of Participants Signed Up	Number of Participants Present During Focus Group	Age Profile
BME Young People	8	8	14- 21
Disabled Young People	9	5	16-22
Care Experienced Young People	9	3	22-24
Young People with Experience of Criminal Justice	5	4	14-23
Young Carers	18	17	15-20
Total	49	37	

Theme 1 – School, learning and employment

During the focus groups, we asked young people a range of questions that focussed on school, learning, employment, and their sense of future plans. The responses below give a mix of opinions from participants.

In this section we asked about:
- The changes in the school year over the last 6 months and going forward.
- Blended learning and plans for coursework/exams.
- Digital Access
- Life plans and sense future

A few of the participants who took part in the focus groups were at school, with the majority being in further or higher education, employed or unemployed.

We asked those who were at school what's it like being back at school?
Young Carer participants responded:
"During lockdown we've had to do our work at home and it can be hard for a lot of people, especially if you've got lots of people in your family there can be a lot of distractions, and especially for people who learn better when they've got someone by their side, speaking to them and explaining stuff to them, it's a lot easier that way for a lot of people. It's much better being back at school"

"Going back to school… 'it wasn't too bad for me, because I'm in my last year, so the subjects I have now are the subjects that I believe I'm really good at, so it comes more easily to me. Catching up wasn't as difficult as I thought it would be, the teachers understood the situation I was in so it's been fine."

A Young Carer Participant responded with concerns around wearing face masks in schools and how this made them feel unsafe due to the impact that this might have on their family:

"Since we've back at school, they brought in that you need to wear masks in corridors, but at my school a lot of people aren't really wearing masks. Obviously I'm a young carer, and the person I care for is at risk, so it's a big risk me going into school and mixing with

people, obviously there's rules at school but I see them at the weekend and they're not following the rules. I feel unsafe at school. I don't want to get it from someone and put my dad at risk. I'm still going into school for now, but my mum is keeping an eye on numbers, and if it gets to risky they'll keep me and my brother at home."

How do you think the changes in the school year have affected young people?

A young carer participant responded:
"Lack of access to technology has set back at lot of young people in their course and what they're doing. Primary school aged young people are in that place where they've got to have some sort of physical support, otherwise it doesn't click with them, at least that's how it was for my younger sisters, and having someone like myself trying to teach them at home it's not the same. So it's really different for a lot of people and they're missing big chunks of their education because of it."

We asked those appropriate about the impact of not sitting exams and how this has affected their confidence:

A young disabled person responded:
"I'm not really sure how it has affected me, there hasn't been much communication with me directly through school or via the SQA."
"I'm not too bothered, I'm not too bothered about much right now and I don't really know how to feel about it."

Several Young Carer Participants responded:
"It's a bit more pressure having no exams and having general coursework, it's not too bad, at least you don't have to revise, but we're in a situation where the teachers don't know what they're doing, as we'd usually have a period of study leave which we won't have now. There are a lot more tasks and a lot more homework right now than we'd usually have. We don't really know what's going on."

"A lot more pressure on coursework and not sure what's happening."

"Overall participants seemed that not having to sit exams was okay, and they weren't concerned about it particularly. What they were concerned about was the impact on their

workload due to increased coursework and due to this, the impact it might have on their caring responsibilities"

Leaving school early for school leavers
There were no participants who identified as school leavers.

We asked school aged participants about the impact the changes have had on the school year and one of the key barriers was access to technology. A number of participants were able to answer questions on the impact using digital technology has had on their experiences during lockdown and since restrictions had eased.

How was your experience with digital technology? How was this rectified, or is this still an issue?

Young disabled people responded:
"It depends what I'm doing really. Technology has helped me keep in touch with family. With my disability, it's harder for me to interact with it with my friends I have ASD – it makes it harder for me to socialise generally – so that's nothing too new."

"I'm not quite as active socially as I was before lockdown, exercise was built into my day before with walking places so I have to go out of my way to exercise. I'm sitting much more. Technology can be distracting for me, so it is much easier for me to go and do something that I shouldn't be doing to avoid it. It is useful to connect with people but it's not the same as meeting people in real life."

"With education, it's been hard for people with disabilities to access funding for access to technology. The green badge/landyards has been good for those who don't need to use a mask."

Young Carer participant responded that their own learning had suffered as a result of them helping siblings and parents accessing digital technology.
"Taking on a [caring role] role has impacted my own learning. When they [siblings] weren't allowed to go to school, they had homework to do every weekday, and they're nine and ten, so that was quite a lot. We basically set up a home school, and it was having to be constantly helping with that, signing them into google classroom and stuff,

helping my mum with the zoom class and stuff. I had my own schedule of class calls, but I had to work it around their schedule as well… it was kind of all over the place"

"Lockdown was okay, it was alright for me. I've heard that if people didn't have chromebooks or their Wi-Fi was really slow, it was really hard. They couldn't attend online courses even in our house, our Wi-Fi is okay, but when my mum was in a zoom meeting it was slow. I had to help my mum with her zooms, it was a bit all over the place."

A number of the participants we who took part in focus groups were in further or higher education or in employment. **When asked if COVID-19 is impacting on their starting or returning to further or higher education they had a number of concerns**. Some shared with us that they had lost their jobs or places at further/higher education institutions as a direct result of the pandemic.

A young person with experience of the criminal justice system said:
"It's impacted me quite negatively. I lost my job in March, I was working for Farmfoods for four years and lost my job. That had a knock-on effect for rent and that sort of stuff. It's been quite a difficult last six months for myself personally my mental health has gone quite downhill because I've not had the chance to socialise with people. I've not had the chance to form an extended household, that sort of stuff."

"They went on to say that they had taken some positives away and had focussed on voluntary work, including work for the Scottish Government and other youth work charities."

"It's impacted me positively in other ways, it's a weird one, because I've got more opportunities. I was commissioned by the Scottish government to look over their strategy on what they want to see in the justice system for care experience young people in the next 30 years, so I've done that, which was quite lovely. I received a letter from Maree Todd today which was quite nice as well."

We asked if the pandemic has influenced decisions around where to stay, getting to know new people, starting new courses, uncertainty around whether they will be able to get a job, or worries that the job will will be secure.

Participants with experience of the criminal justice system said:

"I'm very concerned about how job opportunities are going to start coming around again. I'm very concerned for me, I'm very concerned for my peers who are around the same age because a lot of us did lose our jobs and our apprenticeships and stuff like that. I'm concerned that the Scottish government aren't taking it seriously enough – they say they are but I'm concerned they're not. I'm concerned that we're going to end up in an age where there are no jobs at all… I'm really concerned about the economic impact on jobs, hospitality, everything, the prices of food and stuff like that."

An ethnic minority young person said:

"I don't know how secure my job is at the moment, I don't know what the situation is with redundancies, I work as a finance analysist for the bank, we've been furloughed since march and we don't know if the furlough scheme will continue and we might lose our jobs, but it is all up in the air at the moment."

This was one of the only participants who had experience of the furlough scheme and they said that their employer had been very supportive during this time, further responses on this topic can be found in the mental health theme.

Further education, jobs and life plans

A number of participants responded to this question about starting/going back to further education or a job, and how COVID-19 is impacting on this. Specifically, we asked:

How has your college/university experience been different to how you thought it would be?

All participants noted how different their college or university experience had been which had knock on impacts to their lives for example young disabled participants responded:

"I've started with an open university course and they do in person event, which have all been cancelled this year. It will be 2021 that they do in person things. Which is sad, as the social aspects are what I look forward to and get more out of it and meet new people and be a bit more productive, studying with other people helps me a lot."

"I'm ahead in the reading at the moment, which is good, but in most other ways it is detrimental."

"Starting university has been very different, the Open University has cancelled all in person events. I have also not seen my counsellor or psychiatrist in person since February. The isolation has made quite demotivated and not as productive. I have ADHD and the boredom/sameness is torturous."

Young carers responded:

"I was in uni for 3rd year and I've now progressed into 4th year. In third year they kind of understood that caring responsibilities don't stop just because you need to study. I had an email the other day because apparently, I hadn't been on my uni lectures all week, and it was basically "if you don't engage, you're getting chucked out". Well, I'll try and engage as much as I can, but obviously I've got a caring responsibility at home and I've got to dedicate time to that. I'll engage as much as I can and of course I want to pass and I want to do well, but I'm not gonna stop caring for the person I care for just because I've got a lecture to go to."

"Last year they made a consistent effort to read people's support plans and try to understand where we're coming from and things. But this year they brung in new staff who don't know us, they don't know what's going on personally, they've not read support plans, one of the lecturers said "what is a young adult carer" Friends I've spoken to in other unis and colleges have found that staff don't seem to understand that our caring responsibilities don't stop outside the hours of 9-5."

"It's all been online, I'm being taught online. I've stayed at home which has its benefits, but it's the connectivity issues that have been really concerning, not being able to access materials or contact the staff at unis when needed. It's been an up and down experience. Some lecturers are struggling also to use online technology."

Young people with experience of the criminal justice system said:
"Our course got cancelled in March, they were like "we're so sorry but we can't put your qualification through"... I'm doing child health and social care and as soon as I pass that I'm going on to university to become a social worker. They have since started the course, but it's very practical and placements make up so much of the course, I'm not sure how we are going to do them yet."

"I expected a nice easy transition online, but we didn't get that chance, because our course is very practical, so that was kind of it"

Young disabled people said:

"I'm working, doing a post grad and working at the same time. My uni experiences has been different, it's all online. My research is lab based, so I've had to tweak my dissertation to be a more online research. I've had to ask for extensions and working from home, not having the software or access to the library to do the work."

Young people we spoke to had a mixed sense of what the future holds. For some participants lockdown and the pandemic has given them time to think about the future and for others, they are worried about the impact that COVID-19 will have on their future chances. One participant recognised that this had been a really difficult year for a lot of people so not being too hard on yourself was important. We asked participants:

How have the last 6 months of COVID-19 and the restrictions impacted on your sense of self and your future life plans?

Young ethnic minority people said:

"I'm not really worried about the Future plans it hasn't changed much of my life style, regarding the future, it's still the same, I still know what I want to do when I group up. I want to go in to the video games industry."

Young Disabled people said:

"Personally I'm planning on staying on an extra year at school before I decide what to do, because I've never really been certain on what I would like to do at university or college. I know what I want to do career wise, but just how I get there. Covid has delayed what I was planning By next may I'll be out of school and I don't want to be out of school and still not know what I am doing. I've been to a careers advisor, there's one in my school, I've set up an appointment."

"In lockdown I've now decided what I would like to do. I've now decided I'd like to pursue a career in radio making podcasts and talking to people. That's where my career path is going to take me. Before I lost my sight, I had my heart on studying modern languages and going off to university and becoming an interpreter/translator, but losing my sight has made me realise, and doing volunteering with RNIB I think has stood me in great shape, helping me meet people and seeing what my strengths are and letting me see what I'm good at. It's taken me to be in lockdown, having that reflection to make me realise this is what I want to do – it's been good in that respect and realise my potential."

"For the future I'm definitely looking forward with a career change, not sure what in yet but definitely looking to change and being able to recharge my batteries, may just take some time off and relax a bit. Absolutely, I think its been difficult for maybe some of us who are in work as well as studies, where its been constant change and increased workload working from home so even if I wouldn't be able to do a career change, I will definitely take some time out to relax as I do feel burnt out since lockdown being always on the move but stuck in one place"

"Young people with experience of the criminal justice system said:
The financial impact has taken a massive hit, and my mental health has been impacted negatively. I suppose, quite a lot of my plans have been put on hold and I've had to push back a lot of stuff so I was planning on running for my local council to be a counsellor in my local area, I've decided not to do that because of the pandemic. I've taken a step back and said I'm not running this time but I'll run in a few years... a lot of my plans now are on hold."

Theme 2 - Relationships and Friends

The impact on relationships and friendships on young people during the pandemic has been explored in this theme. We specifically asked about family and friendship groups including the impact social distancing is having on young people.

We asked young people what has been the impact of restrictions on relationships with family and friends? And how has social distancing impacted your wider friendship group?

The responses have been grouped in to different headings below.

Family

Participants said that spending more time with family has been a positive experience. One participant said in their home, everyone has an understanding that each member of the family is working or learning during the day and they come together to eat and check in, then go back to work or learning.

Young ethnic minority participants said:

"We're all at home, not in anyone's way, we each work in different rooms and then come out for lunch and snacks. My parents would order food and we'd have a lunch together as a family and then go back to work and then come down for dinner again, it was nice to check in with each other and bond and have that family time. Relationship wise it's been healthy."

Another participant said how it has helped them get in to a regular sleeping pattern, this was echoed by others in the focus group:

"It really regenerated my sleep, it has helped me get a good sleeping pattern, and reset myself."

The impact on seeing extended family members was a theme throughout the workshops and is explored in later themes.

Young carer participants said:

"My grandma is feeling a bit lonely... she can't see her mates and she can't work technology very well so it's not like we can facetime her all the time."

Relationships with partners

Where appropriate we asked about relationships with partners and asked participants to tell us about their experiences and what it has been like not seeing them as often as they usually would:

Young Carer participant said:

"My partner is long distant regardless, but because of COVID, all the times we'd planned to see each other we haven't been able to. It's hard because you just don't know what's going to happen, you don't know if being apart for too long is going to get to hard for one of us."

A participant with experience of the criminal justice system said:

"I've basically seen my partner once or twice in the last 8 months. We've had to stick to it because her brother has medical problems. She said she would come and stay with me and I said I wouldn't allow that, you have to stay with your family."

Friends

Participants talked about the impact restrictions has had on their friendship groups with further examples under the 'at school or university' section.

A young ethnic minority participant said:

"It's been difficult with friends, not being able to see them or go around their house. But we have kept in touch online through zoom and stuff."

A young disabled person said:

"I've had to put my plans on hold to meet new people and this year everything has stopped. I did have friends before, but they're in other countries so it's difficult to see them. I have one friend in Edinburgh, but I live in west Lothian and I haven't been able to see him."

At school or university

Young ethnic minority participants said:

"At school, before the summer we were learning from home and the amount of homework they sent home was so so stressful. I hit a lot of things in the house to relive that stress. When I went back to physical school, it felt a lot easier was they weren't giving us as much to do at home anymore. Not much has changed at school with social

distancing, except in school now there's more one way systems and you have to wear a mask, there's hand sanitation stations everywhere, year groups can't mix to limit contact, so if you have a friend in a different year group you can't see them."

"I'm a distance learner, so I get emails saying I shouldn't be doing this or that like go out and see people a few weekends ago, but I haven't been in close contact with the university. I'm at home, working from home so it's hard to know what to do."

Social Distancing

Social distancing has had an impact on relationships and changed the way that young people interact with each other. Some participants said that they had not had much interaction with friends because of restrictions and distancing, and others said that their friendship groups are not really adhering to the rules when it comes to distancing. It has been especially difficult for young people who have had special events cancelled or adapted to online because of the restrictions.

A young disabled participant responded:

"Social distancing has impacted my friendships because I can't go to any meet ups and I don't have much of a social live right now, I feel quite pathetic, other than my birthday when I went out for dinner, I haven't don't anything."

Young ethnic minority participants said:

"Social distancing hasn't really made that much of a difference, we've been going to the park and stuff and meeting with other folk, it's not really bothered me. We haven't been able to hug, or that, but we've been sticking to the rules."

"Social distancing has been strange, some of my friends are in halls and some are at home, it was my birthday last week and it was hard to hangout with my friends as I didn't want to leave anyone out, so I decided not to have a celebration for my birthday. We did something online instead."

Cultural Impact

During the focus group with ethnic minority young people, one participant highlighted the impact that restrictions had on Eid celebrations:

"I know nearer the beginning of lockdown we had Ramadan and Eid. Being away from family and friends was difficult during that period not being able to have celebrations

and being in the house. No restaurants were open and that was really hard and loads of people struggled. Luckily, we have been able to connect with zoom and other technology. This is the first time I've been away from my family for Eid and we've lived away before, but it's really difficult not being able to travel to see friends and family. We've lived away before, but it is a celebration of being with friends and family."

A young disabled participant responded by saying that things were slightly easier for them to attend things online, although it's not quite the same experience.
"Some concerts and events have actually been better online or via zoom, for accessibility reasons it's more accessible to access something online like a music concert or an input from a celebrity. But I don't think I get the full experience, but it is better for sensory reasons."

Theme 3 - Space

During the focus groups, **participants were asked about their use of space both inside and outside and how their use of space has changed during and post lockdown.**

Most participants said that they felt they had used outside space more than ever before. However, some participants were shielding, or family members were shielding so their experience of outdoor space was limited.

Young disabled participants said:

"I think for me, I've been lucky that I've had family members to go out for walks with. I think that has been really beneficial for me, in terms of getting my confidence up about my local area I definitely think that one of the positives during lockdown has been my confidence of walking around my local areas, out with the street I live on has improved and my confidence has come on leaps and bounds."

"I'm a lot more familiar with the area I live in and I'm much more confident in walking. Before I was really hesitant and holding on to people and its much less now. I have discovered the different layouts of the roads, know when kerbs come up and so on, so it's really come on a lot. It's also been good to get out to new places for a walk, we're lucky where I live there's nice walks along the prom."

"If this hadn't happened, I wouldn't have the chance to explore as much. I felt it was easier, because it was quieter. Because of the rules you're not meant to go in to other people's cars. I've been trying to stick to the rules as best as possible because my mum is a nurse and works in the local hospital, she's going into the hospital every day and at a higher risk. I take precautions for her sake and stick to it as best I can and because I'm not able to get in to people's cars, I have to walk."

"I did some meetings on my phone whilst on walks so that I could get fresh air and like work in a different environment and come from a difference perspective, and I made use of my garden space."

"Mostly went out for a walk in the parks or around the city during lockdown, socially distanced"

A young person with experience of the criminal justice system said:

"I got out as much as I could, but I was mostly indoors because I had my own concerns about COVID. I did have COVID during August, I was quite ill with it myself. I'm still very concerned now that there's not enough information on it. We're still trying to figure out what it is and how it affects people. I don't feel the Scottish government have done enough or are doing enough to stop the spread of it. More needs to be done. I've looked into the tier system, my local authority has really high cases. We've got a hospice, and they've got really high cases of COVID at the moment as well, so do the surrounding areas. We've be put into a tier three, which for me isn't good enough, we should be in a full lockdown so we can stop the spread of the disease and people dying from it, that's my personal opinion."

A young ethnic minority person said:

"There's lots of outdoor space that we have explored since the start of march, outdoor space became so important."

Those participants who were shielding, or had family members who were shielding or vulnerable said:

Young disabled participants said:

"I didn't really go out as I was shielding. However, when restrictions eased, I went down the cycle path in my power wheelchair for the first time (this was on more than one occasion) and it was great to be outside again.
My mum is vulnerable so at one point I didn't go out at all - but I have a garden and use an online workout service"

"My family stayed in a bubble for me."

A young carer said:

"I had a good enough space outdoors, we have quite a big back garden. Since the person I care for is shielding, we haven't been going out a t all, so I was lucky to have a back garden. It also means that when restrictions loosened, I was able to see my friends in my back garden as well without having to go out to like a park where it could be busier."

When asked about the use of indoor space, participants said that they had felt cramped inside especially when the whole family was at home, some managed to find space in the garden or in other areas of their home.

A young disabled person said:
"My dad was furloughed, so we were a little cramped. Definitely a few arguments happened! We do all have separate rooms"

A group of young carers said:
"I kind of took over the kitchen, but obviously that's not really the best place to use, our front door is there too so there's people walking through – it just wasn't an ideal situation. My bedroom isn't exactly the best place either – bedroom is supposed to be a space for you, why would I have meetings there, it's not professional either so I didn't want to use it."

"I had to do zoom calls in my bedroom but I share with my sister still, so it was hard to get privacy. I've got two little sisters, they come into my room randomly at any point, so there were times I had to sit in the bathroom because there was nowhere else in my house that would be free."

"I used the garden at times to get space and a break from everyone. Being in your house with your family 24/7 can get exhausting. It's nice to have a breather."

"Before, I took getting out of the house for school for granted, I didn't realise that I needed that break from my family during the day. I didn't realise I needed that until lockdown."

"I use my garden, my mum put up a little shed for me which ended up being a little office space that I could use to study in."
"I did find that being inside constantly gets quite stifling. Especially within family spaces, it gets exhausting and suffocating."

"It's difficult to get internet signal when every member of your family is using the internet."

A group of young ethnic minority people said:

"The government can't really provide spaces for people, this has been such uncharted territory for everyone"

"I guess a mixture of both, normally I'd stay inside and my parents take me out for exercise and we go out as a family. We're defo going out more than we ever did, and we're keeping it up. We were confined in a small indoor space, so we made the time to go out."

Theme 4 – Perceptions of COVID restrictions

The perceptions of COVID amongst young people varied from focus group to focus group. In this theme we explored the perceptions and impact that wearing face coverings, social distancing, travelling on public/school transport and loneliness and isolation on young people.

We asked participants to think about the perceptions of COVID-19 restrictions and mitigation measures, i.e., face coverings, bubbles, hygiene, physical distancing, school transport. Different rules for different age groups, and in different settings especially looking at the balance between risk and freedom.

Please note that the focus groups took place between the 8th and 29th of October 2020, prior to the new restrictions which made the wearing of face coverings mandatory in class for senior phase pupils.

Face Coverings and Social Distancing

The majority of participants agreed that face coverings should be worn in public and participants did not have an issue with wearing them in school. Participants agreed with social distancing, although found it difficult to do in schools and when socialising with friends in public.

One participant from the young carers focus group said they felt that generally masks are not worn correctly:

"I feel like a lot of people don't understand masks. People are like "it's not stopping me from getting it, but it's stopping others, and I feel like a lot of people don't realise that."
"You know the medical ones? I feel like a lot of people don't know that you've gotta pinch the nose in and that's super important."

Participants from the ethnic minorities focus group said that they felt that wearing a face cover was not an issue, but didn't understand the time limits being put on restrictions with establishments closing at 10 o'clock at night.

"Yes, there is a balance between the board, it shouldn't be a questionable thing to wear a mask or not, if it is scientifically proven that wearing a mask will limit the spread of coronavirus then I personally don't think this effects my freedom in anyway."

"I'm all for the masks, but I don't understand the time restrictions, coronavirus doesn't wait for 10pm or 6am, why is it okay to open at that time, but not an hour or two later, I don't really understand that aspect of it."

"It's required when you are walking to your next class to wear a mask, it really doesn't bother me unless I've been running and need to breath."

One participant from the ethnic minorities focus group said that there school is over populated, which led to an increase in positive COVID-19 cases. The over population in the school makes it difficult to social distance. The Western Isles Council has given everyone a snood to use as a face covering.

"I live on an island, so we actually haven't had any cases up here yet, last week, some islands further down from where I am saw increased in positive cases and the whole community has locked down. We have to wear masks in school and had to social distance, but it was really hard to. Our school is vastly over populated, so it didn't really work. My council gave every pupil a snood."

Young carer participants challenged having to wear face coverings inside, but said can be outside with the same groups of people without.
"We have to wear masks in school, but when we're outside, even when we're shoulder-shoulder in class, we get told to spread out outside. It's a bit all over the place."

A young carer who attended an Independent school highlighted a stark contrast to the majority of other in school participants regarding class sizes and social distancing.
"I go to an independent school and we've got everything set up a bit differently than state schools would, we've cut our classes in half so we have a lot more social distancing. We're still closer than we probably should be but you have to consider factors around resources. We have been given areas outside for different year groups to stand in which is good, but at the same time everyone is still in clumps together"

A care experienced participant said
"I wear my mask to go shopping. I go shopping once a week and [occasionally] pop down to the shop by myself she needs any other bits and bobs. At the start of lockdown, she got deliveries, and had her cooking done for her."

Young disabled participants said that social distancing can be a barrier for them as they rely on lip reading, this has been difficult in school as teachers can not get close enough for them.

"Social distancing, but that's got one barrier for me, it comes back to the hearing thing I have to tell my new teachers when you're speaking to me please don't stand more than 2m a day. If social distancing increases to 3m then I wouldn't be able to tell what they are saying."

"Having a sensory impairment keeping 2m, is a massive challenge for blind and partially sighted people. I was able to ask Jason Leitch a question about that and even he struggled to answer that as it's a hard thing to think of blind and p sighted people to keep them safe. It's been the biggest challenge for me. Although now, sighted people are allowed to guide blind and p sighted people, this has made us more relaxed as a community. I am trying to be as independent as possible but it's good that I know have the chance to get a guide when I'm walking about if I choose."

Whereas another young disabled participant felt that social distancing was better for them:

"But I like my personal space, in the wheelchair and my autism, I don't want people in my space and near me, but it makes it harder for my to communicate."

See Through Masks

All other participants were asked if they had seen see-through facemasks being used, however only one participant has said that they had seen see-through face masks/visors being used in an education setting.

A care experienced participant said:

'My lecturer has been outstanding. She's trying to wear the see-through ones and she's given us all re-usable ones. She says that's more important than anything – making sure deaf people can lip-read.'

Bubbling

Only one participant shared their experience of bubbling with another house hold from the young carer focus group they said:

"Also with bubbles, personally we've decided to make a bubble with our neighbours, my mum goes over there and I look after their little kids sometimes so it's just easier, but I

feel like a lot of people aren't sticking to that – their like "I've got a bubble" but they've got like 7 other bubbles… and it just doesn't work."

A participant with experience of criminal justice system said in response to being asked if they feel the restrictions give the right balance between risk and freedom:
"No. The way it's run they're killing people. COVID's killing people, mental health is killing people. I know that's very blunt, very harsh. Before we went into Tier 3 lockdown, I was part of a mental health football team. We were following the exact same protocols as what the FA were telling professional footballers to follow. We were following the exact same protocols. But then we got told we're no longer allowed to meet or train, so it's having a negative impact on health. They're not balancing each area, they're just reading a number and going "oh god that's really high", they're not balancing out the risk. It shouldn't be up to the SG to say what tier we should be in, it should be up to local authorities. Yes, each LA has a health board, so I believe it should be up to them to depending on their risk and how many numbers they have."

Have you felt any stigma?
When asked about feeling stigma, a care experienced participant said:
"Pubs shutting early is much better. When the pubs were open, I was out for a walk myself and there was someone drunk following behind me, that was really scary and I had to phone the staff. Since the pubs shut at six it's making me feel better. I feel more safe going past the pub."

They also talked about a time when they were shopping and had a panic attack wearing a face covering, the shop staff were very supportive and the participant did not feel any stigma against them:

"One day I went out shopping with one of the staff members and I couldn't breathe. The staff member gave me a lanyard so I could take my mask off."

Do you think young people generally understand why restrictions are in place?

"Depending on their age, depending on their mental age. Youthlink and young scot have done a really good job of trying to simplify what the restrictions are for each area. That can only go so far because there are some young people who can't get online. There are still barriers to information."

Impact of restrictions

Participants were asked to think about the impact of mitigation measures such as grouping, hand hygiene and face coverings on particular groups in schools e.g., school corridors and communal areas, and on school transport, and when going offsite e.g., for lunch breaks.

Have there been any issues caused by these measures?

A young person with experience of criminal justice said:

"In a way, nothing's changed but it has changed. Our college paid for a proper fog tunnel with people to man it. The precautions they're taking are unbelievable, I'd be happy to stay in college all day. The way they've done it, it seems so seamless …I don't think anything's too difficult, stay two metres apart, bring your own lunch, wear a face mask. They've got that many hand sanitiser stations throughout the college that they're always like two metres apart from one another – there's that many of them.'

Public Transport

How have you found using public transport?

Participants have found using public transport busy and overcrowded:

A young person with experience with the criminal justice system said:

"Terrible. The amount of times I'm having to sit on twitter and ridicule first bus for social distancing or the busses being over-full. One time I phoned the police where there were 30 people when there should've been 10. The police told him off and he got sent back to the depot."

A care experienced young person said:

"The bus one day was so busy. I felt suffocated because there were too many people on the bus. Before (COVID) I would've been fine with that, but it was just so busy. I had to get off a stop early and walked the rest".

A young carer said:

"I was on the bus to school the other day, there was a boy a few years young who had a hidden disability lanyard on and he wasn't wearing a mask. I thought "ok fair enough, it's not my business", but there was one lady who kept turning around and like shunning him (tutting), but it's not his fault. I'd understand if he was being ignorant… but at the same

time, you don't know people's situations, you can't be annoyed at someone for something they can't help."

Theme 4 - Social Media

The role of social media during the COVID 19 pandemic has been really important for young people to learn about up to date information, share experiences with their friends and family and overcome their personal barriers in this theme, we explored with participants the impact of social media is having on their lives and how they have kept up to date with developments and risks.

We asked how the role of social media has helped in mitigating loneliness/keeping in touch with friends/family.

A young ethnic minority person said that social media has helped their loneliness and isolation:

"I think that definitely yes, social media has helped a lot. At the beginning we were using house party and there have been others since. It's nice to see young people use social media to keep in touch and be innovative. It's been good to see younger people teach older people what to use also."

Several young disabled participants said they had mixed experiences with the use of social media and technology.

"On my brothers birthday this year we did a zoom quiz with the family. We've done it for my uncle, gran, brother and doing one for me next month. I now write for a music magazine which has come about after lockdown, my use of social media has increased and I saw they were looking for someone. I emailed them asking if I could write for them and they said yes."

One young disabled person felt that their friends and family had less time for them due to the restrictions and not being able to socialise with each other as often.

"People have less time for you and you feel that you're not a priority as it takes time to reply. I always prioritise my friendships, but my friends don't often and it can be hurtful. It's hard to interpret messages, and I'm quite sensitive, I have attachment issues. And it'shard to navigate online."

One of the young disabled participants who has loss of sight said that using technology has not been easy as every platform is slightly different and they are not able to interact as

well as others online. However with continued use, they are more comfortable using it now:

"Because I've overcome the barrier for technology and there's still a way to go. It's been really overwhelming. But a positive for me has been the use of twitter, my use of twitter has improved and I feel more comfortable using it now. I like to talk, so your limited, and I prefer Facebook, but I've found twitter good for my voluntary work."

Linking in to mental health and the use of social media and screen time, one participant suggested that taking a screen and social media break was good for them:
"For the mental health side of things, having a break from social has been really beneficial for me. Not looking at emails, not looking at social and going back when I'm ready. Trying to see it for what it is, with perspective, it's hard to understand. Everyone has their ups and downs, but I think it's about embracing what you have and trying to make the best with what you have."

Another young disabled participant said that they have felt lonelier and more found it harder to engage online as social media was a trigger for them.
"I think social media makes me feel lonelier. Messaging has made my relationships feel less close. People forget to reply, take ages or are a bit more curt
People's images can be hard to decipher - are they edited or not? All the pressure to glow up too! I tried to avoid people who promote toxic productivity or hustle culture
Social media can trigger things, seeing people having a good time and feeling left out. Can impact me."

One young disabled participant said that they do not usually use social media, and would much rather be with people and join in in activities.
"I think not seeing my family has been challenging. I miss going to pubs and restaurants, but I'm trying to be sensible and trying to just abbey the rules, but at the same time you don't miss these things as I'm used to being in my own bubble.
I've missed not being able to see people but we've adapted as a nation and the whole world. It's not forever."

"Having patience is key. I wanted to join an archery club too but I can't do that from home."

We asked participants to explore the risks and benefits of social media in current climate. Many participants said that it was a life line for them to access information, however finding trusted information was challenging. The majority of participants took their information directly from Scottish Government briefings and the BBC news app. An ethnic minority participant said:

"There has been a lot of misinformation from adults, on social media, everyone has an opinion and some decisions are being politicised miss information being spread. Especially the people who are saying that coronavirus doesn't exist. There is also people spreading speculation like the army are coming to patrol the streets – it's very concerning. There's been little factchecking"

A young carer participant said:

"Everyone is spending way too much time on their phones, it can be really damaging. I spent a whole day just staring at my phone and I got addicted. People on their phones all the time are more vulnerable to stuff like harassment as their chatting to people constantly. A lot of friendships have ended for people as well, relationships and all that stuff, because they haven't been able to meet face to face but they have been on social media together, but it's not the same, or someone is different in real life from online. My partner has autism, and especially for them, text is just awful, because she can't understand if I'm saying something sarcastic or if it's a joke or something, it's hard to understand regardless, so I can only imagine the struggle that is for a neurodivergent person."

A young disabled person said:

"Feeling pressure on social media has been huge, everyone is learning a new skill or doing DIY and I'm not."

Theme 5 – Information, Mental Health, Wellbeing, Support and Digital Access

Information

In this theme, we asked participants about their use of information and digital access. How they had accessed support services or information specifically on COVID-19 and restrictions. We also asked participants about their digital access.

We asked participants where they accessed up to date information and support and where they go for the most up to date information on what you can and cannot do (in relation to COVID-19 measures).

The majority of participants said that they received information directly from the Scottish Government briefings or BBC news website. Some participants mentioned getting information from social media, however, understood the risks that this information might not always be accurate. Others received information from family members.

Young ethnic minority people said:
"BBC website, I've found the BBC website the best"
"Scottish Government website – it's the most reliable"
"Our local council website is very good here, even if it is mirroring SG information"

All ethnic minority participants were aware of the 'Aye Feel' platform. It's quite relevant to young people, it's good advice, and it's understandable.

Young disabled participants said they received information from:
"Watching the briefings on the TV. Although a lot of people say don't watch it as it can bring you down hearing about COVID all the time. The fact that everything is changing so much and so rapidly, it's good to watch the briefing every day and find out exactly what is going on. I think the problem is that everything is happening too quickly and it's too much."

"BBC news, or twitter that's where I hear the information about it."

"I started using Instagram this year but take breaks quite regularly - I have body dysmorphia so an image-based site is not the best idea! I read a few online newspapers and my dad likes the TV news Oh, and Reddit can be useful for chat - though I do a fact check with anything I read on there. I usually do fact checks, so if I read a few articles on the same thing I can look for the holes in the story, I find that the guardian is quite objective I'd say."

"I rely on my family as they seem to give a simple explanation and I choose not to listen to information from my peers at school regarding restrictions etc because the information may not be true. "

"I just read through everything with a pinch of salt however mostly follow the BBC Scotland source and evening news sources."

Young carers said:

"You can really just go on Instagram or Facebook and see everything, for example, I'll be scrolling on Facebook and find a link for the new lockdown rules. It's easy to access."

"Mostly just reading the news, or getting my brother to tell me'

"BBC news, TV, twitter."

"I tried to use the governments website and I put in my postcode to find out what was going on, it literally just told me "there might be restrictions in your area" and that was it."

Young care experienced participant said:

"I get information from staff, Facebook, TV. The staff watch the updates."

"I was given booklets at the start of lockdown, but there hasn't been another booklet since the start."

One participant from the young disabled focus group said they felt that the information direct from the Scottish Government is good, however felt that information generally needs to be more reliable.

"Online, more can be done to access, some people can't see the briefings, but a lot of the stuff online isn't reliable as hearing it straight from the briefings. Things can be distorted in the media and it is about getting the balance right about knowing the truth. There definitely needs to be an improvement of reliable information."

A young ethnic minority person said they felt that information from decision makers was difficult to interpret or relay on to other family members due to language barriers and information only being available in English. This is also highlighted in the specific questions for ethnic minority young people.

"For BME communities, getting information out in their own language would be made a huge difference especially for those communities that don't have English as their first language. An online space where all of the information is and is accessible. Other language other than English, in common languages would be good to see. A website platform that allows questions and answers and blogs, would have been a helpful resource."

Mental Health

Mental health has been a constant theme throughout this report and features heavily in all themes. The below quotes from participants tell us about the impact on mental health and the pressures that they feel during the global pandemic and also on what impact it is having on general wellbeing?

A young person with experience of the criminal justice system talked about the impact of social media on their mental health:

"Bit of positive and negative. Negatively, I'm a bit more conscious of how many followers I have on twitter. I didn't really care about twitter before the pandemic, now I'm a bit more concerned about who's reading it and what I'm writing about. If I post a picture, I'm worried about how many likes it's getting. I shouldn't have to be worrying about that stuff, it's a society problem – its society causing a lot of these issues, people worried about body image, likes, followers. On the positive, I'm more active on social media. I can engage with people easier – people are on it."

A young ethnic minority person said the impact of not seeing friends and having limited levels of contact has had an impact on their mental health;

"Not being able to see my friends, and having to communicate with them over social when I'd usually be able to go round their house. Keeping distance is difficult, if you're really close and round their house. Going for walks was fine in the beginning, but we're all a bit fed up now. We have to follow the rules, but there's so many of them it's hard to keep up and they change. What I've not found useful is all the speculation about the rules and announcements before they happen."

"It's hard to maintain the very little level of social contact."

Young Carers participants said:
"Deadlines and stuff were already a big stress before COVID, but now they're more of a stress. I don't get to physically see my lecturers. Deadlines are chasing up on us. I started uni two weeks ago and the first deadline is in a week. That's not much teaching and not much support time. That's a big pressure for me."

"Body image. Before, I was kind of really struggling weight-wise and with how people saw me and stuff. Over COVID, I've seen a variety of situations when it comes to that. I've seen people who've ended up putting on weight or losing weight, I've seen two different everyone's situation is."

"Also, with gender identity and stuff, before it was like "I can't go by they/them, everyone will make fun of me", but now it's like, nobody really cares, it's a pandemic, there is a global crisis going on everywhere, no one is going to be paying attention to me, and it shouldn't matter."

Young people with disabilities said:
"I think there's been some very dark periods during lockdown. I've been very set back in my mental health journey; I've revisited some feelings and situations that I never wanted to return to. I had been meaning to join some support groups/clubs/socialise more."

"Before lockdown I had a lot of issues, I still feel bad, but they're different now. I think it has made it worse and I had a crisis point a few months ago and I felt quite powerless."

"My physical health wasn't good at the end of last year, so I have used this time to focus on my recovery."

"From my perspective, the biggest anxiety has been technology, one of the biggest challenges of this period, using teams, using zoom, using different platforms, as someone who is visually impaired the technology is not really friendly for people who are blind or partially sighted, all of the different things you have to click on, the thumbs up, the videos of people, it's not the most accessible. Using the technology, zoom and teams, when I'm on it with one person, it's fine, in the beginning, where there's lots and lots of people, brought up a lot of anxiety and stress."

"I think video calls like this, the only issue I have is hearing people, sometimes the connection lags and cuts, you miss what people say and I guess for those who have hearing issues this isn't the best for lip reading, I rely on lip reading, if someone isn't showing their camera, I can't see their lips moving and I recently discovered gallery view so I can see everyone which makes it easier."

"I had an assessment at school, I asked not to do it over zoom, because I was worried that I wouldn't be able to see or hear the teacher and I would get a bad mark. But the teacher encouraged me to do it and I passed, but they made sure I could see them."

We asked: What, if any, positives have come out of lockdown? What can be done to maintain those?

Young people with experience of the criminal justice system said
"I'm now getting paid from a voluntary position I had previously - I write a blog. I'm also doing work with Youthlink Scotland to design the "No Knives Better Lives" game which is really good, I'm voicing the main character on that game which is giving me a really good experience. The SG came to a group I'm in called Youth Justice, Youth Just Us, and they've asked us to design workshops and read documents and simplify them for the SG about the youth justice and criminal justice areas, we got paid for that which is nice and ran the workshops. So, in a way I've got morel life experience through the pandemic than if we didn't have the pandemic."

A young disabled person said;
"I've got used to it [technology] now. I have to commend you guys at SYP, you guys have been amazing whenever you are coming on, introducing yourselves, describing yourself, making it more bearable for us to take part because it is not east, when you're having to

look at someone on the camera, you have to visualise them, take for example when someone starts to laugh at something someone is doing on camera, zoom and teams is missing the ad side of things. It's been a tremendous effort and start to be using it. We're going to be using it a lot more when we're out of the pandemic."

Young carers said;
"To be honest, I've cut down and I'm taking care of my body more than I did before. I've had time to think to myself – does it really matter? There's so much going on in the world that no one's going to be focusing on what you look like."

A young ethnic minority person said:
"I don't think anything has changed."

We asked ethnic minority young people: What if anything did help your mental health and wellbeing during this time? And what do feel could have helped to improve your mental health and wellbeing?

"Working from home has been great for my mental health"

"Spending time with family – we've been locked in the house for a few months, we wouldn't have spent this time together before."

"Going for regular walks has improved my mental health and keeping this up now."

"Because I'm not commuting, I'm using the commute time to do the headspace app."

"My work has been pretty good we're all still on furlough, but my boss has been checking in. But for me, it's about filling the time and we've been recommended apps like headspace and other things to keep us going whilst on furlough."

"Uni was good at the beginning, but the support there has dried up and I've not had much contact. All of the support has been online, which has been okay, but it doesn't replace face to face."

Who would you speak to if you felt your mental health suffering?

"I think I would speak to my line manager and my family. It's dependant on me to reach out to these people. Universities are focussed on freshers at the moment, so the support for older year groups isn't really there."

"I've been lucky with my employer, there's a big thing with mental health in our company for mental health day. We spoke to Tim Peake through work, they've been great!"

Young carers said that they did the following to help with their mental health during the pandemic:

"Walking the dog a lot. I think I mapped every possible place I could walk outside my wee village. That's kept me going."

"I've really just been paying a lot more attention to myself. I've been practicing the things I love like make-up, music, all the stuff. Also, if I have time to like go out, I've been taking ages going to the shop – like, ages. I've just been sat outside the shop so I can just chill. Or I've been going down to the skate park so I can just chill. I'm literally taking ages to go across the road to the shop."

'A lot of walking the dog for me as well! Just getting out of the house really.'

Wellbeing and Support

We asked participants about the information and support they have received for their mental health and wellbeing. We also asked whether that support/ signposting has been relevant to their needs. The support each group received has been mixed, with some receiving face to face support, some receiving virtual support, some finding support for themselves online and some receiving little to no support at all.

A young care experienced person who was in supported accommodation said:
"At the start of the lockdown, the staff took my phone away from me because I was getting too stressed out. I was getting so anxious by using my phone, I spoke to the manager and I agreed that I'd put my phone away but still have access to my iPad and

iPod and stuff to keep in touch with people, but there was so much rubbish coming through, folk texting me their concerns which was impacting me. I was getting more concerned about other people's concerns and that was really impacting me. My stress levels have gone right down lately."

I now have a permanent [support] team, I'm a lot more grounded when it's the same staff members around me all the time. Having a permanent team means it's the same people every time. It's quite hard if I get told I'm getting somebody I like but then they swap, it's quite hard for me. The continuity is much better"
"I've been looking after the flowerpots and hanging baskets in the garden"

"I've been doing more stuff outside since lockdown ended. We're doing a step count challenge with the staff team at the moment. It's a daily step count to keep us all motivated. I feel so much healthier and more fit, before I didn't walk a lot. The only time I would've walked before was to go to Dreamtime (community project) two days a week and to get my shopping, but the Sunday before last I did 20,000 steps!"

"Now if I'm really upset, I just go for a walk to calm down."

[When I'm feeling down] "Sometimes I do some colouring, play with my Nintendo, go for a bath, listen to music, speak to the staff."

"I have certain staff I like to speak to, so if they're not on I'll email them."

Some participants form the young disabled group had been to face-to-face appointments and some of their appointments had taken place virtually. They said:
"I have managed to attend a few appointments, but the majority have been online, but I have been to hospital for a few of them. When restrictions eased, I was able to go back to the hospital for all of my appointments."

"I was left with no one to talk to and have nowhere to go. Entertainment and distractions only help so much. Sleeping, healthy eating and exercise doesn't make me feel much better. I am starting ADHD meds soon but I think I will be stuck feeling down for a long time."

"My mum had no health treatment throughout - her appointments were cancelled. What support? The NHS, to my knowledge, barely have a functioning service! Any treatment I accessed was through charities or through a private service (some places offer scaled fees depending on your income). I do have a support worker - but this for a previous diagnosis that was replaced with ADHD. I'm an incredibly social person so I get intensely lonely - friends are very frazzled currently and don't have a lot of time for socialising."

"I have been getting support from work, about mental health and wellbeing however not much else apart from that, even with work it's just been asked in an email or pointed to some resources but nothing else like that. There has been a lot of signposting, rather than engagement with direct services."

"I think the good thing recently has been able to talk to people around you. My dad is my go-to person, so I have really strong bond with him and if I'm feeling overwhelmed, we talk about it. I think the resources that have been sent out like the SAMH resource has been really helpful. But everyone is trying to divide their time up with work and other life, we're all trying our best to keep active during the day. I just recently thought about picking up my modern languages and thinking about doing that to pass the time. I've ran out of ideas of things to do and if I have too much time to think about stuff it can make my mental health worse."

"I've found a lot of support in my bubble, but the external support hasn't really been there."

One young disabled person heard of the 'Aye Feel' platform – they saw it on twitter, but hadn't clicked on it.

When we asked the young carers focus group about access to mental health support they said:

"I got support from breathing space, I felt comfortable talking to them. I just went online and typed in "mental health support", sometimes it's easier speaking to random people. In my circumstances, there was no other option."

"I've been referred back to CAHMS but the waiting time is so long, it's over five weeks just to get your initial choice appointment. It's a really long wait to get support."

"I've been at counselling for years now and I still have my online calls for that. It's kind of hard to communicate with them when you have to wait for an appointment. I've mostly just gone to my girlfriend for support. I can't be with her physically, but I can facetime her. It helps to unload. My mum too – I'm her carer, but at the same time, I sometimes need her to be there emotionally for me. That works for me."

"Support through family and friends who are carers or experienced carers to."

One participant from the young carers group had made use of the 'Aye Feel' platform and said it had been helpful.

Digital access
We asked focus group participants if they had been given any devices by their school, authority or elsewhere to help them access information, taking in to account whether they are appropriate for their needs and had adequate data packages attached.

Some participants had been given devices by their school or local authority area; however, they weren't sure if they had data packages.

Young ethnic minority participants said:
"Our school gave all senior pupils a laptop, so S5 and 6 and I believe they were thinking about giving it to all other students if the school were to close again. I'm not sure if they had data packages."

Young disabled participants said:
"Everyone had access to some kind of digital device and no one had run out of data – some hadn't been out much, all with good internet connections."

Young Carer participants said:
"Our school decided that its compulsory for us to have iPads, so we were fine. My little sisters were given a laptop which was really slow. Now that they're back at school it's a lot easier. It was still helpful to have the laptop because they were able to access that, instead of taking turns on my iPad which we had to do at the start, and that wash horrific. They've developed their computing skills a lot as well."

"My school called us once a week to see if we needed anything. We had laptops and devices supplied to us through the city council scheme."

"Our school, everyone s4-s6 has been given a Chromebook. For some people, their Wi-Fi hasn't been great. Mine kept timing out at the start, so it was a bit difficult trying to use it. I'm not sure what you can really do about Wi-Fi, not sure how data packages work."

"We're not allowed to give in homework at school, you have to take a picture of it to send in for teachers to mark it."

Young people with experience of the criminal justice system said:
"Support, people, your friends, your family. We can have this discussion online, but the emotional human element is gone. If you were sitting round a coffee table, we'd be having a laugh, having a joke, it'd feel a bit more natural. The structure has changed."

"For college, with a lot of our work we have to write down and then take a photo of it and send it in. It's doubling our workload in a way. We'd be one week in, one week out, so we take our work and hand it in the following week."

"You can't replace the human element of sitting with somebody in an area and having a cup of tea right next to them, you can't ever replace that. Body language, that sort of stuff. At one point we had 29 people sitting in a zoom call, there's a delay over Wi-Fi etc, it's really difficult. You see a head not the body language."

When asked about data, one care experienced participant said:
"If you weren't so kind to give us a top up, I wouldn't have been able to make it. You're using that engagement. You're losing access to friends, family and support networks. I get 4GB of data to last a month. That can take one zoom call and it's done. The impact is, I can't access college, I can't access all these different things. Even getting online to check the symptoms, I wouldn't have got a test for COVID if I didn't go online and look through the NHS guide."

"I didn't have digital access until the end of April, so I went a month and a half without any digital access. I had to find a way to get online. The government were telling us "you have to get online" but they weren't providing support. With universal credit, I get about

£230/£240 a month, which is actually under the recommended allowance for a week, but that's a story for a different day… how can you expect somebody on £200 a month to go buy a laptop?"

"You need a decent laptop with the capabilities. So, the only way I could make it work was to go for the buy now pay later option, so for the next two years I'll pay it back. With the interest on top of that, I'm paying double what that laptop actually costs, so that's effecting my credit score and putting me in dept, I'm not able to get like a mortgage if I wanted to go for that. There's lots of different elements feeding into it. It's a wider issue that needs to be dealt with."

We asked this participant how they accessed information when they didn't have digital access or access to data they said:
"The radio. I have a really good radio so I access most of my information from that. I relied on my neighbours telling me at the beginning which was confusing, we were all trying to work it out together, what we could and couldn't do."

Young care experienced people said:
"I don't have a phone just now, so I don't need data but I use the Wi-Fi"

Theme 6 - Specific Questions for Seldom Heard Groups

During each focus group we asked participants specific questions for each seldom heard group. This section will outline the responses we received from each group of young people in relation to the specific questions they were asked.

Young People with Experience of Criminal Justice:

We asked young people with experience of youth justice systems about any support services (including mental health services), how those changed during initial lockdown, and how they have adapted since.

Participants said that they found it very difficult to access services and that the main changes have been that services have moved online which in some cases has caused a barrier to access.

Focus group participants said:

"I found it hard at first to reach out for services, as the demand was very high for them and to get an appointment was really hard… I had to wait for a month in a waiting list as services were all started from scratch."

"It was difficult unfortunately as the thing is that a lot of people have now requested for these services where this is a lot of demand and little supply for services making it a more stretch of resources so it is very difficult for everyone."

Young people with experience of the criminal justice system said that they have found it difficult to gain access to government schemes that would help with access to technology due to referrals and/or targeting.

They said:

"It's changed a lot. I do a lot with young people in the justice system and I've been through it myself. It's changed because a lot of it is online which is really hard for young people. It's really hard to reach out. I wrote a blog on digital divide and it was shared by the Scottish Government. That's what it is - there's a massive digital divide in Scotland.

Yes, the SG have said "here's some money, local authorities use it wisely and get it to people who most need it", but they're targeting 65-year olds and over, so their targeting the older community, what about the younger community? Especially care experienced young people, people from disadvantaged backgrounds. They're not getting the same access to support."

They're saying "disadvantaged families can access it" – yeah, they can access it, but they need a referral from a 3rd sector organisation, which in turn means that that they need to get in touch with a 3rd sector organisation, and if they don't have a phone or devices to get on then they can't do that either. So, you're still hitting barriers after barriers. There's not enough targeted work being done especially for YP. I've had to get my own laptop and my own phone on finance, where I'm paying double to what it should be.'

[young people need more access to] 'mental health services, the local council, the criminal justice system and care workers – support workers.'

"Some organisations and some services have done a great job in adapting to it and then there are some that are still lagging behind. I don't blame them for lagging behind I'm sure it's a financial issue or they're waiting on tech – I don't blame them, it's more about targeting the support better You can have as many orgs as you want speaking to young people and asking what they need, but if you can't get the right support, there's no point in it, it's a waste of time."

"Some organisations have gone online, they're giving people phones, phone top ups, access to laptops. It's hard with libraries being shut because people used to use the libraries' Wi-Fi to access lots of things and now, they can't do this. This is where charities have stepped in and said "we'll help you as much as we can to provide this tech but we can't promise anything."

We asked what has worked well during this time and is there anything they would like to see maintained? What were the issues and their recommendations to resolve these?

Young people said:

"Id love to see the engagement continue. Obviously, participation work has kind of dropped, but I'd love to see how you've engaged with us, how other organisations, even

the Scottish government are engaging more. They've gotten used to Zoom, teams, skype that sort of stuff. It's made it a lot easier in a way so I hope that level of engagement doesn't drop off."

"I don't think money is the answer to every problem. I think the answer to this is giving charities more support, maybe financially if they need it, but give them guidance. I want to see a bit of guidance on budgeting their money better and targeting support. The people who have the money, organisations who are getting money, making sure that they are getting the right stuff."

We asked has the support they've received since returning to education been adequate? What has support in education looked like? What is working well? Any additional support required/unmet needs?

The young people replied to say that support has been mixed since returning to education.

Participants with criminal justice experience said:

"Things have changed. It's a hard one to judge because the support at college has increased but it has decreased in some areas as well. It's increased learning advisors, learning development workers and learning support, but they've decreased other services because of that. Colleges and unis are struggling to meet the demand. My learning support worker is off sick, and they have nobody else to fill that place because there's so much demand from different students. My college has a counselling service where you can speak to a counsellor, they've had to hire five more to meet the demand. They're in a way dealing with the NHS demand. For me, I'm still waiting on support counselling but that's a 2/3 year waiting list. They're kind of picking up people just now and dealing with the NHS demand in a way."

"As a care experienced student, our needs haven't been met. They keep changing what they're saying, keep changing the course context, if you should be in or out or online or what you should be doing."

"Positives, I don't need to travel as much so I won't catch COVID. I don't need to wake up an hour and a half earlier to get the bus. Negative of that is that I'm using a lot more

data, a lot more gas, a lot more electricity. There's a positive to the negative and a negative to the positive."

"Support is school has been okay. New things have been added. Things have changed and whatever the council or government says will change in the school."

"Being at university's we have been told to stay home and work from home, which is okay but just getting a bit difficult being in one space the whole time."

"In school, we have to wear masks and socially distance from each other... I think they are (working well). Polices about COVID are being enforced in school by teachers.'

Young Carers

We asked young carers to think about any support or health services they have accessed for the person they are caring for and tell us how those services changed during initial lockdown?

Young carers responded to say that things were good initially, however contact in some cases has stopped more recently.

"My young carers service was really active at the start of lockdown, but then it hit a certain point and it stopped. When it stopped, we needed them the most. It's been four months since I've heard from my carers centre. They just dropped out… On a group call, you don't really talk about what's going on in your life. As a young carer, you don't really want to discuss some things, so I think they thought the group calls weren't useful."

"We rely on these group calls, and they just kind of left us."

"If you're not going to continue something, don't do it at all. If you don't have the time or if they have other things going on – just let us know! Communication is key. To make this situation better – communicate."

'We've still got zoom calls going on every week. At the start, they were much more on it… they were really supportive, they would also facetime us every so often just to check up, and then it got to the point where we had to split our groups between "seniors" and "juniors", as everyone had different schedules and different needs – sometimes they get the age level wrong in terms of activities, and a lot of people ended up dropping out because of that... They've been really communicative and they're always there. It's really helpful."

'My service did video calls to start off with and started going out when they could. They've been okay!'

'The communication and constant check-ups, and notifications of opportunities has been great over lockdown.'

'It's been easier to communicate online sometimes than it would have been to meet face to face.'

We asked young carers about their own mental health. How do you take a break from your caring?

All participants said how hard it was to take a break at the moment, and it was easier when they were at home during lockdown. Now that schools have returned it is harder to take a break. Another participant said that the restrictions have made it harder to see friends and get out of the house.

"It was easier to get time to myself when schools and colleges were off. Now that uni is back, my time out is the bus journey to work. It's ridiculous that that's the only time I can get a moment's piece. I just feel like I can't get a minute. I've got people around me who are breaking lockdown rules, and I can't do that, I'd putting everyone around me at risk."

"would usually see and have a sleepover with my friends every weekend, and to go to not having that has been hard. It's made things hard. I've tried to find things to do, just like sitting on my phone, and one of my teachers has given me a jigsaw to do, I've had a lot on my mind. I want to do something different; I don't really want to be in my room, but there aren't other rooms in my house for me to switch off in."

"I ask my family to help with care whenever they can so I can take some time out. Now that we're back to school and work that has become a bit harder, but me and my family stack the hours of the day together and divide caring duties up fairly."

"It's hard getting physical space to yourself when your family is everywhere. My 'space' would be the physical activities that I'm doing; singing, producing music, drawing, being creative, that's my space and my free time, which isn't a lot. Now that everyone's back at school, I've had more free time, but at the start, I was always on my feet. Whenever I did have that free time I tried to be creative and relax."

We asked: what has been the impact of COVID-19 on your caring responsibilities?

The focus group members said COVID-19 has changed their roles and that it has been difficult to access other support for the person they care for.

'My caring role changed significantly when I lost the person I was caring for and picked up a new caring role. I've been caring for my gran, and I've seen a change in her since COVID happened. Isolation comes into play, she's not seen people, the only person who can walk into her house freely is me, and it's very difficult to see somebody that used to have the ability to go on the bus and enjoy herself, go to the bingo, she's not able to do that anymore'

'It was more of an emotional worry at the start. It became more of a practical role when I was also taking responsibility for younger siblings' education'

"My mum hasn't been able to get the support she's needed throughout this change, and she's been panicking, it's been really hard for her, and she's been taken back into hospital. It's a worry for me, I've been having panic attacks and I don't have the support I need, as I'm staying with my grandparents now and they don't really understand what they are."

Young People with Disabilities

We asked young people with disabilities what has been their experience of any specialist support or health services and how those changed during initial lockdown, and how they have adapted since.

Participants in this focus group said they had noticed a difference in GP services and that any specialist services they have appointments with had been cancelled or moved online:

"I've not been unwell, or so unwell to go to the doctor, but on Monday I'm going for my flu jab, so it will be interesting to see how it is laid out."

"I was meant to be going to the QE in Glasgow for my annual eye review, but that has been cancelled because of COVID restrictions. It's similar to what we were saying about mental health, it's online only and only if you really need to go to the doctor, they are seeing you, but lots of stuff is happening online. They surgery isn't crowded, like they used to be, but they're obviously doing it for a reason, to protect you."

"My GP only does telephone consultations. My previous support worker offers phone and video call. I received 5 counselling sessions from a charity. For my ADHD diagnosis, I paid for that (I am very fortunate to have an income and savings). My mum's care was cancelled - she went months without her steroid and B12 injection. They have been very unhelpful and dismissive."

"The GP surgery isn't busy now which is great but difficult to get even a telephone consultation now unless it's an emergency"

"I see quite a few specialists but I can see some of them via video call. I did get some eye treatment (injections and new glasses) and the hospital where I got my eye injection was not full. However, I did get antibiotics just before lockdown in case I got sick)."

We asked young disabled people what has worked well during this time and is there anything they would like to see maintained?

Following on from the previous question, participants said that they felt having the option of online appointments with a specialist positive and something they would like to see maintained:

"I've been getting video calls with my physio, they've been working out great actually, we do arm stuff and breathing stuff, but it depends on the persons needs individually, I can do the stuff we do already and I don't need help doing it, but some people might need extra help or shown what to do in person. I've probably done about 8 sessions online."

"I think in person is important - I've heard of cancer diagnoses being missed. Some things can't be spotted over the phone. But counselling should be more flexible - commuting can be an impediment for some people."

Most participants agreed that more virtual and online services should continue but said that it depends on the service they are being offered. If you need treatment, you need treatment and some services can't be done over video call, like an x-ray.

What are the perceptions of risk relating to health conditions making people vulnerable to COVID-19/previously shielding? **We asked participants if they felt the current rules and restrictions are the right balance?**

All participants agreed with this statement that current rules and restrictions are the right balance.

"I've stopped going to crowded placed, but I didn't really like going to crowded places anyway. I'm worried about going out in general because of the virus."

"Yes, but I feel like it's not enough, like pubs and bars are shut in central Scotland but not in Fife?"

Some participants were concerned about the mental health impacts of restrictions:

"I'm concerned about the mental health impacts. Some people are just ignoring now but it feels more isolating when some people stick to the rules and others still miss out on a

social life. I'm really nervous about the economic impacts - I feel quite cynical about being part of a doomed generation. It feels very bleak."

"I think there's still a lot of unanswered questions about COVID-19 everyone is learning about it at the same time, including decision makers. They [the professionals] are clearly changing and making decisions based on what they know at the time. They're taking the risk and trying to shield those most at risk. It's a hard one because I think everyone is fed up of rules and fed up of it. We've all seen positives and negatives and I think everyone is a bit fed up and wanting to get back to some kind of normality."

"I think the balance is getting better, but at the same time, there's the restrictions, but I can understand why the politicians, doctors and professionals are being cautious."

"I hear from my mum who's a nurse that the cases are rising again and it's a worrying time for them."

"However, it is indeed difficult to understand something that changes every day however it's just difficult that there are discrepancies in locking down especially on a UK government level."

"The rules are a bit silly - meet up there, don't meet up here. Go to the pub but don't travel? Get on a plane - don't see your friends?"

We asked young disabled people if there had been any situations where they have felt unsafe and what additional measures could be taken to make them feel safe e.g., in school?

They said that being around lots of people was one of their main concerns:

"I would say when I went to Edinburgh - I was walking down Princes Street and no one was distancing. I don't mind crowds but was worried about the virus. I kept my mask on but most people didn't have one and were bumping into me. I had some symptoms after that day out but didn't get a test because I wasn't sure. They were very mild so I just stayed in for 2 weeks."

"I think there's been a couple of occasions where people have been crowding round me. One occasion at school there was a training thing for fire escape chair and I was a bit uncomfortable with that as they weren't wearing masks or gloves etc. the training had to be done, but it wasn't really thought about."

"I went back to school about 7 weeks ago, I had to catch up, but I had stuff with the teachers during lockdown. But I haven't been able to sit any prelims or exams. At school they wipe down everything I touch."

We asked young disabled people about the impacts of specific restrictions on different groups e.g. masks for YP with hearing impairments or developmental delays. If people were exempt from wearing a face covering what their experience has been or if they have felt any stigma?

"My school think I should be exempt from wearing a facemask, but I am not and wear one. It's easier with a visor, and they school aren't allowed to help me put it on or off, so if it falls down, they can't help me put it back on so I use a visor, although it's less effective."

"The body dysmorphia makes it impossible for me to use webcams - I get panicked about it. I also took some time off work to try and recover somewhat it took many calls to the GP to get a sick line - the receptionists are very intimidating and I missed the doctor calling - so I had to phone again the next day. Not the best at organising and I tend to forget appointments."

"My friends are all very stressed and don't have as much time. Yeah, the video calls are hard to process - all the faces! I find zoom/Teams meetings hard. It's a lot of information to be distracted by meetings were always hard - sitting still for ages makes me sleepy and I tend to take a lot of breaks. I pick up on people's moods and others feeling down makes me feel down. I love hugging people and being around others - I miss that physical contact ADHD means I'm quite time blind and it [time] moves in a strange way for me."

"I went on holiday in the summer and went to Ireland and the people there were wearing masks before Scotland, and it wasn't mandatory, but going in to town more people were wearing masks over there in may/April than in Scotland at that time."

"One person had said they have seen a teacher use the facemask with the see-through screen."

"I get additional support like for writing or things repeated to me. It's kind of changed, but at my school we have iPad, so I tend to have more independence If I go to the bathroom at school, they have to put on PPE".

"[a see through mask] It wouldn't make a difference to me, I couldn't see it anyway. I can tell the difference between a surgical mask and a cloth covering."

Care Experienced Young People

We asked care experienced young people what has been their experience of any support or services they access during the pandemic.

"I've had more people working with me during the pandemic. I've had quite a variety of staff".

We asked: How have those services changed during initial lockdown, and how have they adapted since?

"I usually attend a project twice a week which is a community project. I do a lot of singing and stuff. That's all gone to zoom, and I'm not a fan of doing it on Zoom – it's very chaotic. So I've stepped back from that, but once it opens back up I'll go back to it"

"I've not been on [a project the young person is involved in] zoom for about two months though. It's too boring. It's a long day three times a week, I'm paying a lot of money for it, because if you don't pay, you lose your spot, and I don't want to lose my spot. I absolutely love it when I'm there, doing it and seeing my friends, it's more fun instead of doing it on zoom".

"I've missed my friends and the staff. I'm close to one of the members of staff so I've missed her as well."

"[a project they're involved in] It's starting again and I'm so buzzing to go back."

"I've been rehearsing for Macbeth, we were supposed to be doing it from the end of October to the start of November, but we don't know if it's going to happen now."

"I like to hug people, so I'm finding that really hard. Lockdown would be hard without having zoom at all, I would've been really bored"

We asked participants what has worked well during this time and is there anything they would like to see maintained? What were the issues and their recommendations to resolve these?

"Nothing has really been better since lockdown".

"I was going to be transitioning to move into adult services, but all that is on hold just now, so we don't know when that's going to happen. Things are starting to move again this week."

"I haven't spoken to my social worker during the pandemic, because she's been off or working from home. This week was my first time actually meeting her because I actually don't know her. I was a bit nervous at the start but I was fine afterwards. I'm glad things are moving on now."

"I have improved on my cooking skills. I've been making sweet chilli pasta, fajitas and stuff. It was quite good fun".

"I've been going out for walks with members of staff. I've not seen my family. They stay in Irvine. I've not been down because [elderly relative] she's got quite a few illnesses. I've used facetime to keep in touch with family. I've got a brother and a (nearly) sister in law."

"I've been using facetime and messenger to keep in touch with people."

Ethnic Minorities

We asked young people from ethnic minorities if they have experienced any stigma or discrimination in how COVID-19 is discussed?

"I don't think personally I've been discriminated against. You have to be understanding you have to make sacrifices, this is something that every single person in Scotland has had to do. It's been hard not to meet up or be at home the whole time, but it's for the betterment of society to get on top of this virus."

"I have challenged discrimination in a public setting, I've challenged behaviour that I didn't think was right. It's more of a societal thing, there needs to be more progress to stop the connotations with the virus and the different communities. Everyone has had to sacrifice."

Focus group participants highlighted that the restrictions were brought back during EID celebrations and how they feel that other cultures have not been recognised during the COVID pandemic:

"Overall in the UK, like in Manchester, that the lockdown was brought back hours before EID people had already made plans and celebrating, friends and families were given a few to celebrate and then being put back in lockdown. We're now a few months away from Christmas and plans are being made to lift restrictions for Christmas, so I feel there's some discrimination there that other cultures and festivals aren't being taken in to account except for Christmas. And we're talking about it so earlier, it is favouring one group over another and it's really unfair. This has annoyed people in my community."

Some participants raised how they felt discrimination is perceived by ethnic minorities more widely, in particular how COVID is being reported and how COVID is highlighting other issues that affect people of colour:

"I think there is reporting on discrimination in terms of black people not getting the same care in the NHS as white people. Black people not having the knowledge or the power to stand up to staff, and staff are more likely to belittle or think that the opinions or concerns of black people isn't relevant. In terms of Covid-19, it is disturbing that a higher percentage of black Britons are more likely to contract COVID-19, or more affected by it.

That's because of different factors. Such as, it's not just about medicine, it's about what types of jobs these people are in – they're mostly in care, in service, in hospitality. They could not afford to not go to work because that's how they pay their rent. They don't pay their rent they would risk their housing, then they would be homeless. It's a cycle, and so I think when you're talking about BAME people's experiences of Covid, you can't just talk about it medically, you have to talk about their housing, their job, their all-round experience because that affects whether or not, how much they are able to follow guidelines."

"In the same way people didn't understand the guidelines, they were confused, imagine if you were an immigrant or a BAME person, and you your child was confused, so they weren't able to translate things properly for you, or you don't really listen to news sources from British news because you don't see yourself represented and so things, false rumors are perpetrated. The thing of like black people are immune to Covid was going round, and like 'oh, it's because of our melanin', and like unfounded medical things that are just taken to media and are spread and are propagated, and the Government hasn't addressed this or handled it.

"There was no strong statement from the Scottish Government or anyone saying there's this rumor going round saying that 'black people can't contract COVID, this is a false statement, you are even more at risk because of these factors, we acknowledge that, we're want to help'. It's always after the situation, after people have died, after people have experienced inequality, that then it's like 'oh, we saw that problem over there', but you saw that problem coming, you were there when it was happening, why didn't you do something immediately to solve it? So I think there is a need for us to look at those issues, not only look at COVID, not just look at the disease or how it's been treated, or even the care, which we know there's been discrimination in, and for me personally I haven't experienced that, but that's the general consensus of what I get. I would say as a BAME person, it's scary, because... yeah, I also speak from a place of privilege – I'm a student, I don't work in the service industry, I work in my church, it's really small, the numbers were, I clean my church but I am in a very small team, just me and my sister cleaning, there's only the two of us there, we have PPE and kit and protection, but our church is also in a posh area where the majority of the community is white, we have money, we are able to invest in that. What happens if you work in a sector... So I'm speaking as a black person from that position of privilege. A specific group of black

people affected more – carers, hospital workers, nurses, service-industry people, bar-tenders, those were the people who we saw being discriminated against. So yeah…"

"I feel like surrounding C19 and black people, it has brought to light a lot of issues in like medical care, the way black people are treated in medicine, and also like Daniella was saying, how a disproportionate amount of black people and other BAME – I really don't like that, I don't like the acronym – but BAME people are in like the care industry and the service industry, how they're more likely to be affected by that. A lot of my family and family friends work in the service industry, so many of them have been put at the forefront of the Covid-19 crisis, but like I am really lucky and privileged personally, to not have to have that kind of fear the same way because like my mom works for the government and like no one in my household, like immediate household, is like in any greater risk of being exposed to Covid 19."

We asked: Do you think that there are perceptions of higher COVID-19 risk among some minority ethnic groups

- *how do people feel about this?*
- *do they feel it's being adequately addressed/challenged?*

Focus group members said:

"From what I know so far, the number of minority ethnic people in Scotland as a percentage is low, so the numbers of minority ethinc people getting the virus is lower."

"I'm not sure about the data, but there's not been serious cases here or it being a wider problem with the minority ethinc community."

"Have restrictions on places of worship had an impact – it's been hard for my family, who haven't been able to go to Friday prayers, it's not just the prayer aspect, but the social side that is missing, meeting with friends, but right now we're able to go back and it's much better".

"They are not perceptions, they are realities. Perceptions implies that like it's in our imagination, an illusion, and like "oh, you only perceive it to be that way but it's not true".

"It is literally true like again because of the way I answered it. And so it's been, it's two things - perceptions are positive and negative. The positive one being black people are immune to COVID which ended up being a drastic negative, and these are not being properly addressed. I think there is such a lack of wanting from the government to come out, and "it's always rounded up" and "we're against racial discrimination", or it's never, it's never precise and saying "you know what, this specific community is going through this, and all of you are still relevant."

"We are all battling COVID together, but right now you need to say in relation to COVID-19, "This group is misinformed, we want to educate, we want to see Nicola Sturgeon stand up on a podium like 'sorry, black people who are in the service industry are highly disproportionate'" not to like treat us or give us stricter rules or anything like that. But say 'we're acknowledging this is a problem and we're working on a solution to solve it.' I think it's really key. I mean again this was happening early on in the pandemic and not much changed in the situation of the world, and we're not all wearing masks and blah blah blah, but I think at the start it would have been very necessary to do that."

"On the one hand it has been shown probably in the sciences that black people are more likely more susceptible to COVID-19, and like I know like that's out there, but I personally haven't seen in any way shape or form the like government reaching out to the black community and being like 'so here's how you should combat this, here's how you should further protect yourself', I think there's a lack of Communication within like the government and the black community like letting them know that this is what's going on. This is a b and c and here's what you should do. Like yeah, you know, you're like at more risk.

"So, what does this mean for you? what does? Yeah, like I feel like there's been like a lack of communication or lack of it getting across and then on the other hand and with like the perception of having being more likely to have COVID. I feel like that could really lean into like racism in a way, like people being like, 'oh this person is more likely to have COVID, therefore I won't want to associate or be near them'. Like I know there was loads of reports of Asian people being discriminated against because of people are like, 'oh you're Asian. It's a "China virus", so you're more likely to have COVID, you're like going to pass it on to me, like you're infectious' and that, so I feel like there's also that kind of side of it in terms of perceptions, people taking that step further into a racist way, being like, 'oh this person is not, this person is an immigrant per se, or this person's

Asian or black so they're more likely to have COVID they're more likely to pass it on to me, they're infectious and I can't associate with them."

We asked if there is an increased perception of risk, what impact, if any, does this have on young people's day-to-day lives?

"It's things like being, especially in the context of the black lives matter protests happening, right, black people were told you have a higher risk, but then we were like, 'oh we want to protest', and it was, it was the fear of like, 'oh do I stand up for what I believe in or do I stay at home?' And that was the big battle. And aside from all that, it was a thing of what happened to Mercy Baguma, or with a man who supposedly had COVID spat on her on a train she then gets COVID and dies and then they do an investigation and nothing really happens. And I'm like 'that right there we're talking about.' We're being targeted. People know that like, 'oh' - people who are spiteful, hateful - are like 'oh I have COVID so I'll do that'. It's like, but you don't have any proof to do that, but she died of COVID, so like those kind of things are examples. And the black people hear, and I'm like, 'no, I can't even trust them because if that that happens to me…' There's such a lack of trust. I believe that, and so that's the effect they have. It creates a lack of trust and then we are less likely to believe you when you tell us that we are at higher risk. It's a really vicious cycle."

"And so I think that when there's Injustice in medical practice and Injustice, there's a long history of black bodies and black people being used as experiments or, and I literally mean that to Henrietta Lacks whose cells till this day, her cells are being used in Labs all around the world to generate medicines and cures that she's never given credit in that regard. Everything from that to my uncle who works as a doctor, an uncle or family friend, who works as a doctor in one of the hospitals - a patient telling him 'No, I want a white surgeon. I don't want you to operate on me.' Those kinds of biases in medical practice. Or the thing with black people not being believed when they're in pain and a GP being like, 'oh, well, don't you think that slightly exaggerated', and feeling comfortable enough to say that to me is how we get to this point. And so I think that in terms of COVID-19 those perceptions have a real impact on whether we believe your briefings, whether we listen to your briefings, and whether or not we know that when there has been injustice, you'll rectify them."

"Personally, for me, I don't think COVID has had an impact on my life, but I couldn't like fully point out like it's done this and this and that, so I mean I would have to think about it for quite a while. But I mean, if people are, like I know what I want to say, I just don't know how to put it into words… If someone is perceived as being more likely to have COVID-19, obviously it would like stop them from being able to go out. I am going to give an example - my friend for instance, she's black - her family, her mom and her brother both have an immune deficiency, and they're also black. So there's also the added 'oh, and you're also more likely to get it and more likely to be hurt by it'. So like for a lots of the lockdown, even up until now, even when, even up until now when everything's open, everything like they don't really go out that much, they don't go to the shops. Some actually don't get to fully experience outside world life, even though everything else is open, because like there is a fear that 'oh even though everything is open, I'm more likely to get it and I don't want to put myself at risk.' And I feel like that could be better avoided if people knew that there was, if there was more communication, and people knew ways that they can protect themselves even more.

If people perceive themselves as being more likely to have it, they'll be more likely to stay away from like the outside world, even now, like when everything is like changed, stay away from the outside world and keep themselves more likely to be shut in, which can also lead to things like loneliness because they're not being able to talk to other people, and face-to-face interaction is so important. I know for instance her mom is really lacking that. Also jobs as well. Just employment in general.

My mom is really lucky she works for the government, so working from home isn't an issue for her, but for many other people I do know that they haven't been either. There's two different situations, either they haven't been able to go to work because it's, they don't want to put themselves at risk, they don't want to put their kids at risk, they don't want to put their family at risk, so they haven't been able to go to work which is hurting their finances. Or they are having to work where they are putting themselves into danger which isn't also a good enough, which isn't like a good option either."

"No, I think you've absolutely answered that question. You've talked about the lack of information for black people to enable themselves to keep safe. You've talked about the fear and loneliness and, so fear in relation to leaving the house and risking getting ill. I think that you touched on sort of fear of going out and being subjected to racism,

whether intentionally or unintentionally; you've talked about the impact on people's financial circumstances, so either people not being able to go to work because of the industry that they work in, either their industry not being open - I think that was sort of implied, you know, so when you talked about hospitality for example, that's not open so the jobs aren't there, or you know, if you can work from home great, but a lot of people don't have that option, so having to go to work and therefore putting yourself at risk. So I think yeah, you've talked about a lot of ways that it could impact on young people."

For more information or to discuss the findings of this report please contact:

Jamie Dunlop, Deputy Chief Executive of the Scottish Youth Parliament

Gordon Lamb House | 3 Jackson's Entry | Edinburgh | EH8 8PJ | hello@syp.org.uk

Registered in Scotland SC227548, Scottish Charity Number: SC032662.

@OfficialSYP

www.syp.org.uk