

Covid-19

Young People's Emotional Wellbeing Report



March 2021

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Appendices

Appendices, including survey and responses to recommendations will be available on our website

References

[NHS Digital - Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2020: Wave 1 follow up to the 2017 survey](#)

[Young Minds - Coronavirus - Impact on Young People with Mental Health Needs](#)

[Herefordshire and Worcestershire's Children and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Transformation Plan](#)

[HWW Children and Young People's Mental Health Report \(2019\) - including responses to recommendations](#)

Section A

Introduction

I. About Healthwatch Worcestershire

Healthwatch Worcestershire gathers feedback about publicly funded health and care services and uses this to make recommendations to those who run the services about how they could be improved from the patient, service user and carer perspective.

II. Why this issue

National Context:

In 2015 the government published Future in Mind, highlighting the need for increased emotional wellbeing and mental health awareness, understanding and support for children and young people. It set out the objectives and improvements needed, to be achieved by 2020. Local Transformation Plans were developed to set out how this would be achieved and to report annually on progress. The NHS Long Term Plan (2019) also sets out a commitment to expanding mental health services for children and young people.

Covid-19:

The Covid-19 pandemic and resulting restrictions have had and continue to have an unprecedented impact on our everyday lives, our emotional wellbeing and mental health and the way in which we access health and care services and support.

In July 2020 NHS Digital published a follow up report to their Young People's Mental Health Survey (2017), to look at the impact of the first wave of Covid-19. They found that the number of children aged 5 to 16 who were identified as having a probable mental health disorder had risen from one in nine to one in six.

Young Minds published findings in summer 2020 about the impact of Covid-19 and lockdown on young people with a history of mental health needs. They found:

- 80% of respondents agreed that the coronavirus pandemic had made their mental health worse. 41% said it had made their mental health “much worse”, up from 32% in the previous survey in March.
- 87% of respondents agreed that they had felt lonely or isolated during the lockdown period.
- Among more than 1,000 respondents who were accessing mental health support in the three months leading up the crisis 31% said they were no longer able to access support but still needed it.

In February 2021 Anne Longfield, Children’s Commissioner for England made a speech outlining the impact of the pandemic on children, including the rate of clinically significant mental health conditions increasing by 50%, the increased risk from abuse, domestic violence and alcohol consumption and the decrease in physical activity.

‘It’s impossible to overstate how damaging the last year has been for many children - particularly those who were already disadvantaged.’

Local Context: Services for children and young people in Worcestershire:

In Worcestershire support for children and young people’s mental health and emotional wellbeing is commissioned by **NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)**. The CCG has overall responsibility for the delivery of **Herefordshire and Worcestershire’s Children and Young People’s Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Transformation Plan**. In Worcestershire, this is carried out in partnership with Worcestershire Children’s First, providers of mental health and emotional wellbeing support and local schools and colleges.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust are the main provider of mental health services for children and young people in Worcestershire, including -

- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)**
- **Reach4 Wellbeing** - Group support sessions for low mood and anxiety
- **School Health Nursing Service** - Drop in and one-to-one support in schools
- **Chat Health** - text message support by School Nurse
- **BESTIE App** - Worcestershire specific information about managing emotional wellbeing and finding support. For those receiving CAMHS support additional personalised features
- **Healthy Minds** - Online, group and individual support and self-help information for anxiety and depression for those age 16 and over

Kooth - Is a digital mental health and wellbeing company. Children and young people in Worcestershire can use it to access information and self-refer to online counselling, using typed conversation.

Schools and Colleges currently provide a variety of counselling and support services. In 2020 Herefordshire and Worcestershire received additional funding from NHS England to provide **Mental Health Support Teams in Schools**. Initially teams will be working with specific schools, with support starting from January 2021 and due to be fully operational in these schools by November 2021.

There are also a number of voluntary organisations in Worcestershire providing emotional wellbeing support for children and young people, including Mentor Link and YMCA.

During Covid-19 Worcestershire County Council's Public Health team identified the need to provide information about Covid-19 and access to support to younger people in particular. They were also aware of the impact of the pandemic on how young people may be viewing the future, especially as a result of what may be perceived as negative messages being portrayed by the media. They have set up an online information hub, aimed at young people and young adults called The Rona Hub and are promoting resilience with the slogan 'Let's take back our lives.'

Healthwatch Worcestershire - our previous work:

Since 2014 Healthwatch Worcestershire has carried out a variety of work and published reports looking at the experiences of children, young people and parents and carers, in relation to emotional wellbeing and mental health. We have participated in meetings of Worcestershire's Children's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Partnership Board. Feedback from our previous reports has been included in updates to Herefordshire and Worcestershire's Children and Young People's Transformation Plan.

Healthwatch Worcestershire's Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Report (2019) found that accessing information and support for mental health was not always easy and raised some issues around waiting times and satisfaction with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and availability of appropriate mental health support for children and young people with Autism Spectrum Conditions.

III. Our work

In order to gather the experiences of young people in Worcestershire during Covid-19 and the impact on their emotional wellbeing and mental health, we carried out a survey for 13 to 19 year olds during December 2020 and January 2021. We wanted to find out about the issues worrying young people, if they felt able to talk to someone, find information and access support. We also wanted to identify potential barriers to accessing support, especially in relation to changes made as a result of Covid-19 restrictions and the increase in remote and online support.

Section B Feedback from Young People

262 young people completed our survey between 3rd December 2020 and 31st January 2021.

The survey was promoted via our website, News Bulletins, Twitter and Facebook. It was sent to all high schools and colleges across Worcestershire and to local voluntary groups and organisations, including members of Healthwatch Worcestershire's Reference and Engagement Group. It was distributed by Worcestershire Children First, including through their looked after children teams.

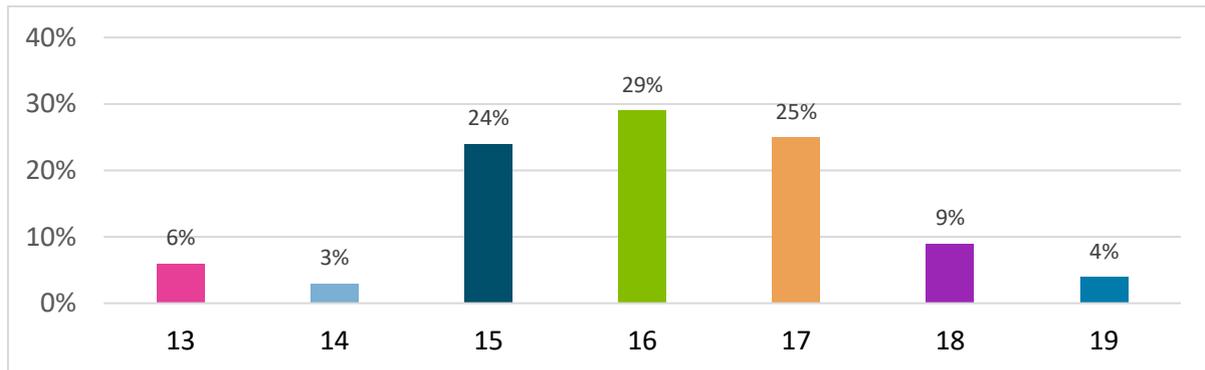
The majority of the surveys were completed online. Platform Housing supported two young people to complete and return paper copies of the survey and an additional paper survey was also completed and returned.

1. Who completed the survey?

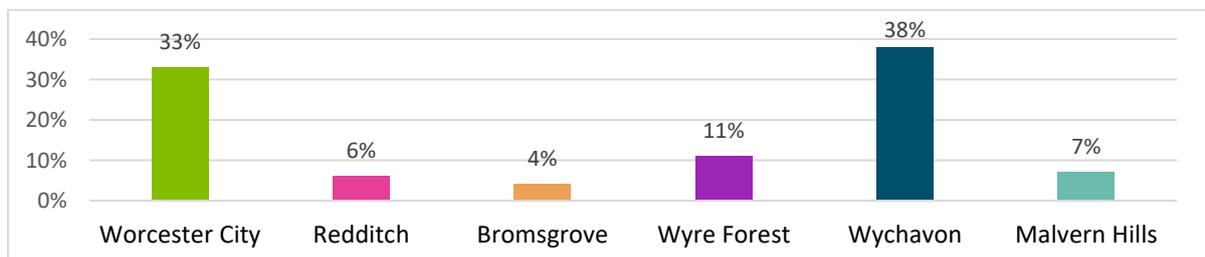
Gender identity:

- Male - 25%
- Female - 68%
- Trans Male - 4%
- Trans Female - 1%
- Nonbinary - 2%
- Unsure / Questioning / identify in another way - 2%

Age of respondents:



Where do respondents live?



Disability / long term health condition

43 young people told us they have a disability and /or long-term health condition, including -

- Autism Spectrum Condition - 15 people
- Learning disability - 14 people
- Visual impairment - 6 people
- Hearing impairment - 4 people
- Physical disability - 4 people
- ADHD - 3 people
- Anxiety / depression - 3 people
- Undiagnosed / potential Autism Spectrum Condition - 2 people
- Tourette's Syndrome - 1 person
- Chronic fatigue - 1 person

Ethnicity of respondents

90% of the respondent described their ethnicity as White British. In order of prevalence, other ethnicity responses were - White other; Asian / Asian British - Indian; Asian / Asian British - Bangladeshi; White - Gypsy Traveller; Mixed ethnic group - White and Caribbean; and Mixed ethnic group - White and Black African.

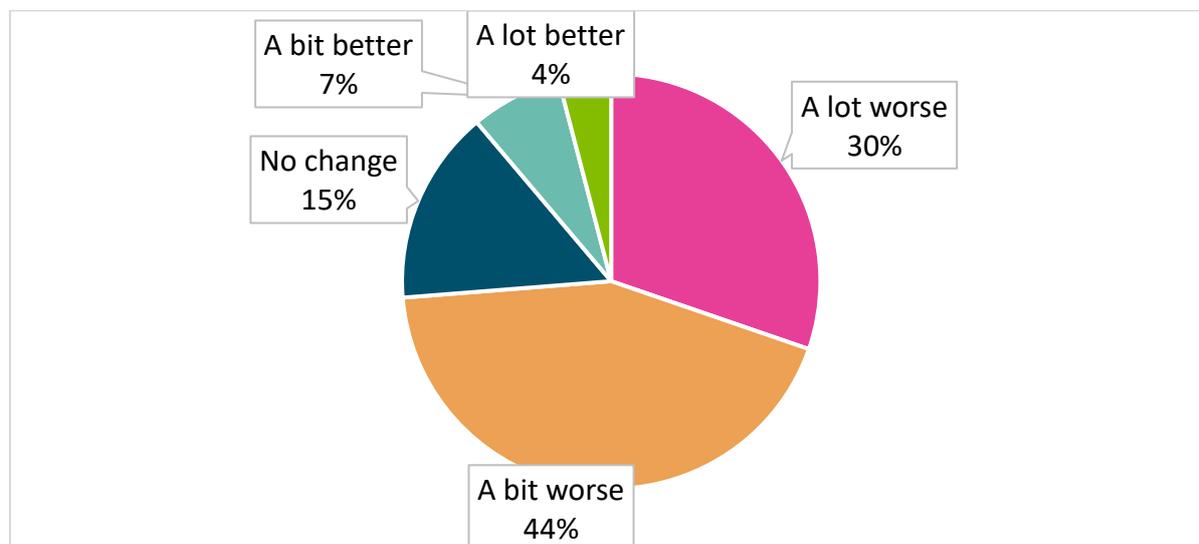
Note

Not all questions were answered by all respondents. Where non-response is present percentages are reported based on the numbers answering the question. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and therefore may not total 100.

Where themes / comments are reported these are set out in order of frequency, starting with the highest number.

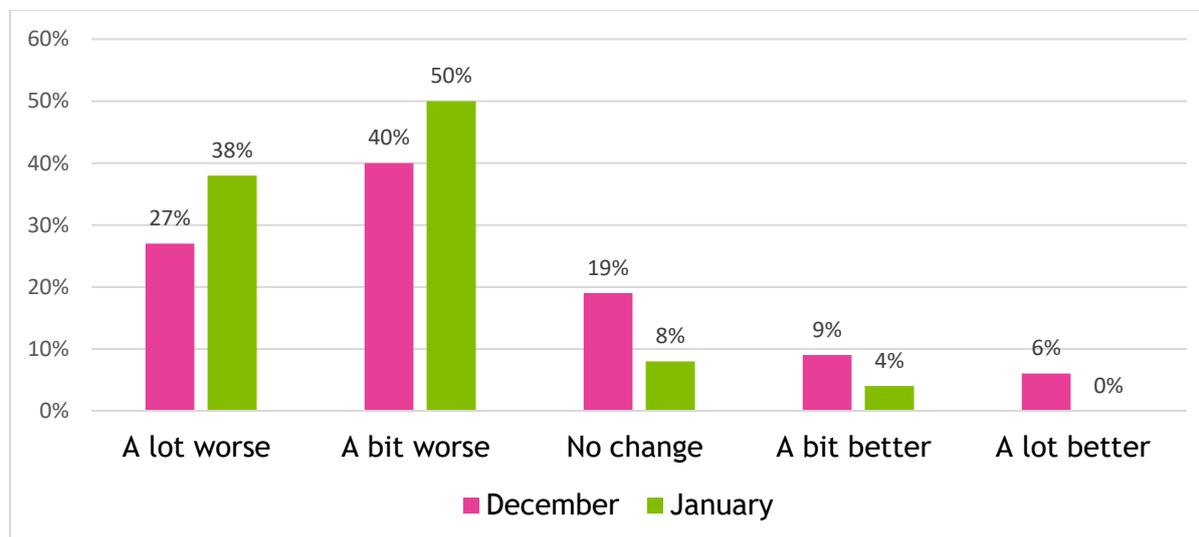
2. Impact of Covid-19 on emotional wellbeing

2.1 How much of an impact has the Covid-19 pandemic had on your mental health and emotional wellbeing?



Responses show that overall, 74% - nearly three quarters of the young people who took part in our survey, thought that the Covid-19 pandemic has made their mental health worse. 30% felt that their mental health was a lot worse.

2.2 Comparison of responses received in December and January:



Comparison between the responses given in December and those in January suggests an increased impact on mental health over the time scale of the survey. In January 88% of young people saying that they were feeling a bit or a lot worse, in comparison to 67% in December.

This may reflect the return to lockdown on Tuesday 5th January with schools only remaining open for vulnerable children and children of critical workers.

2.3 Why is this?

We received 162 comments explaining why Covid-19 had impacted on emotional wellbeing. The majority of these, 137 comments, gave negative reasons while 23 gave positive responses.

Comments about negative impact of Covid-19

i. Social isolation/lack of social interaction with family and friends - 66 comments

‘Being isolated from others. Not being able to do things that would normally help. The long focus on health’

‘Miss having freedom with friends’

‘Not having the freedom to go out and about’

‘Stress of not seeing loved ones’

‘Because I couldn’t go out and see family and friends

‘because I couldn’t see all my friends and I was stuck at home for most of the time’

‘No social life miss my family, tearing us apart’

‘Social distancing, as I can’t have a normal friendship with people locally and elsewhere’

‘Feel isolated, not able to be at the place I feel most at home’

‘Not really able to see my friends and girlfriend’

ii. Effect on mental and physical health - 42 comments

‘Because it has caused a lot of stress for me and my autism and anxiety’

‘I have been suicidal. And I still am slightly. My mental health has been affected greatly’

‘Trapped at home. Anxious about the pandemic. Finding I have more time to exercise (I ended up doing ‘too much’)

‘I feel depressed most days most days I don’t have any friends to about it and I am struggling to get out of bed to do work’

‘Gyms closing when I use this as a positive coping mechanism to support my mental health and training outside in winter is a lot harder’

‘Constantly bored all the time and conscious about the weight I have put on’

'No distinct location changes for work and home - difficult to relax/destress. Unable to see friends apart from on-line and unable to see family. Easily fluctuating emotions'

'Developed severe anxiety'

'Brought up possible adhd which makes school work hard which makes me anxious'

'eating disorder'

iii. Loss of freedoms/restrictions - 16 comments

'Because it's the unknown and we have no control'

'constantly changing goalposts, rules and regulations'

'No routine'

'Because I can't do things I normally do'

'Being stuck inside'

'Lack of structure as well as feeling isolated'

'being locked in all the time'

'boredom'

iv. Educational reasons - 8 comments

'Exams and education uncertainty and the possibility of exams with minimal change are very stressful. The fact that exams might still go ahead in some form which is unclear is very stressful'

'difficult at school'

'my exams are cancelled'

'big change to lifestyle, school day and everyday activities'

v. Home environment - 5 comments

'my household is emotionally abusive and being at home all the time in lockdown means I get no respite from that'

'lockdown was rough staying inside a broken home'

'continued elevated stress and arguments within family'

'My fathers business had to shut down so it has been a tough time'

Responses show the impact social isolation, loss of freedom and changes and uncertainty in their education has had on the young people. It shows the ways in which this has impacted on their mental and physical health and for some how difficult this time has been due to their situation at home.

Comments about the positive impact of Covid-19

i. Changes during the pandemic having a positive impact - 23 comments

'I had time to focus on myself and I didn't have the stress from school'

'Before the lockdown my major stress was school and classwork, and exams but during the lockdown all of that was cancelled. It was like my prayers had been answered. I know a lot of people died and are still in danger but my stress regarding school was relieved'

'I've had time to work on myself, and before this I would never had this amount of time where I could just focus on me'

'I had lots of time in lockdown to focus on my mental health and lots less stress'

'I didn't have to socialise'

'I was able to do more exercise over lockdown'

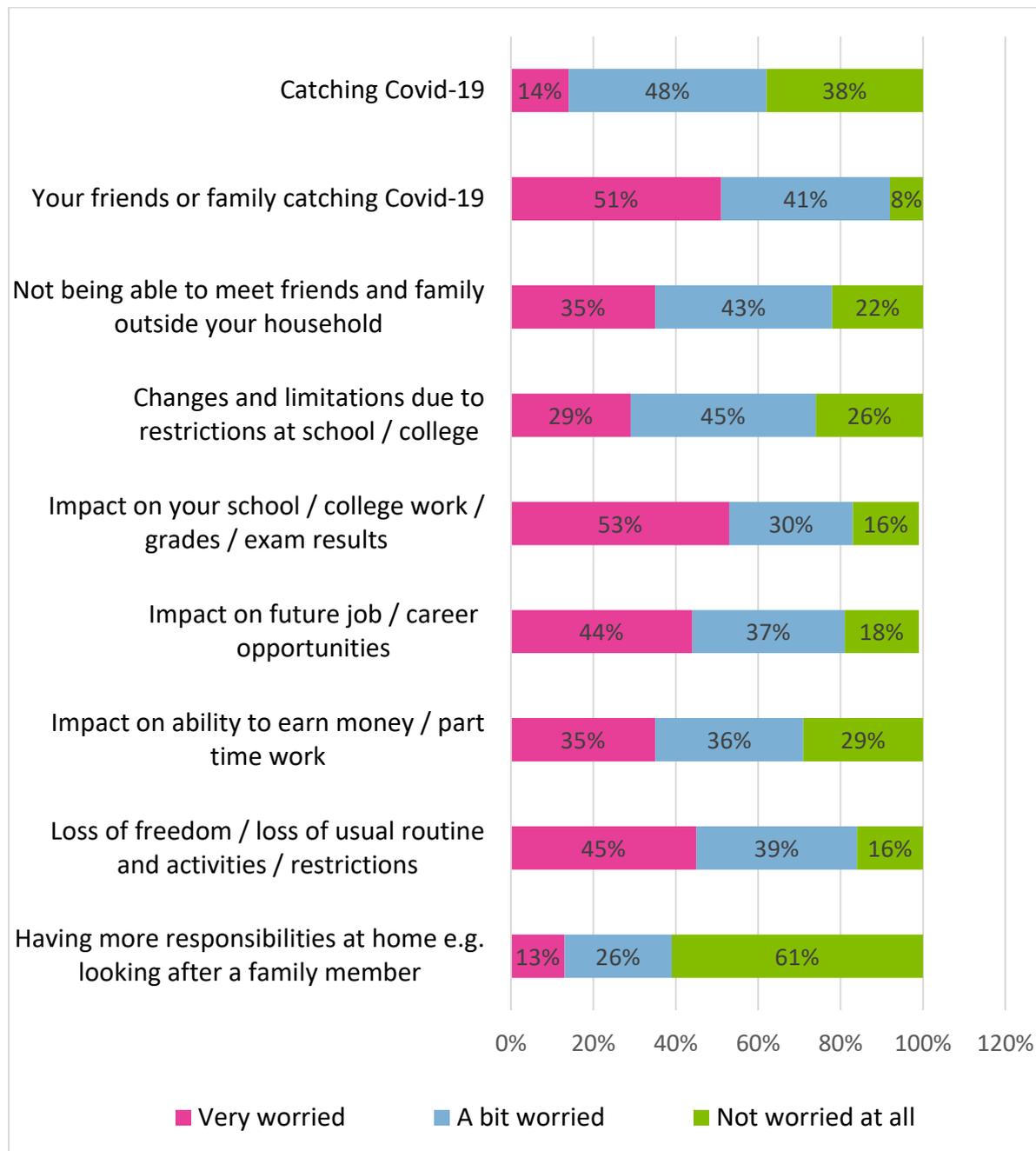
'I didn't have the pressure working at home that I did at school and I wasn't so stressed out. I was able to focus more on myself and being more healthy and having a daily routine at home helped me to better myself mentally and exercising everyday made me feel a lot happier'

'I had time for myself and I was able to take a step back and reflect on my life. My mental health drastically improved after a break from school'

The comments relating to the positive impact of the pandemic on emotional wellbeing show that some young people found not going to school and having time for themselves reduced pressure and stress.

3. Issues worrying young people during Covid-19

3.1 How worried do you feel about the following?



3.2 Ranking of top 4 issues rated as either 'a bit' or 'very worried'

1. Friends or family catching Covid-19 (92%)
2. Loss of freedom / usual routine and activities (84%)
3. Impact of Covid-19 on school / college work / grades / exam results (83%)
4. Impact on future job / career opportunities (81%)

3.3 Ranking of top 4 issues rated as ‘very worried’

1. Impact of Covid-19 on school / college work / grades / exam results (53%)
2. Friends or family catching Covid-19 (51%)
3. Loss of freedom / usual routine and activities (45%)
4. Impact on future job / career opportunities (44%)

The responses show the high numbers of young people worrying about friends and family catching Covid-19, loss of freedom and routine, impact on their school or college work and the potential impact on their future job and career opportunities. Over 80% of the young people were worried about each of these issues to some extent.

Findings also suggests that during the time the survey was running the number of young people worrying about not being able to meet with others increased from 75% in December to 87% in January. There was also an increase in those worried about the impact on their future careers from 80% in December to 86% in January and a slight increase the number worried about the impact on their education from 82% in December to 84% in January. This coincides with the return to lockdown in January and that schools and colleges were closed, except for vulnerable children and children of critical workers.

Responses also suggest that young people were more worried about others catching Covid-19, than catching it themselves. Only 62% were worried about catching Covid-19 themselves, whereas 92% were worried about family or friends catching it.

39% of respondents said that they were worried about having more responsibilities at home, such as looking after a family member and of these 13% (33 young people) said they were very worried about this.

3.4 Comments about issues worrying young people

46 additional comments were given about issues that were worrying young people in relation to Covid-19.

i. Education issues - 13 comments

‘already touched upon but absolute travesty that is the governments approach to A level grading’

‘If things will ever go back to normal and how I should talk to my teachers about how difficult I find live lessons’

‘Trying to do school work at home as it is a completely different environment and also I was very stressed the first time’

'exams and affecting my future. We've missed so much and wondering if year 10 will get help when exams come too, if not I feel I will struggle a lot and be worried about outcome and results more than I would of before'

'How schools and the education system have handled it. They just seem to care about us achieving grades that make them look good, instead of making sure we, as students, are coping well'

ii. Uncertainty about the future/return to normality - 9 comments

'That things will never get to normal - restrictions will always be in place to some extent'

'How long it will go on for'

Covid- 19 is awful and I keep getting worried that this will leave a scar on society and morph politics into a more aggressive and stagnated thing in the next 5 or so years (next parliamentary session)'

'When will I be able to live normally again'

iii. Transmission of Covid-19 and death - 8 comments

'my little sisters catching it as they are still at school'

'People not following the rules and the scary numbers of deaths and people with it. There does not seem to be an end'

'The surroundings - having to stay 2metre apart from everyone, like I feel scared because I always think I'm too close or I'm not staying 2metre apart'

'That the cases are going to go straight back up again after lockdown 2 ended. It is also scary coming over out lockdown two because I have to re-adjust to everything again'

iv. Mental health - 6 comments

'I won't get the mental health support I need'

'Mummy cries'

'My therapy being put on hold and changing to on-line sessions when face to face is crucial in my being able to break my barriers down. Gyms closing meaning I have lost my only healthy coping mechanism and not being able to see people who support me in an indoor environment when winter is drawing in'

'Yes my sister as her mental health is bad and she doesn't want to open up'

v. Social interaction - 5 comments

'Losing my chances of social interaction and relationships in my last year of sixth-form

'I haven't been able to see my grandad who is very ill and not well mentally either, which is worrying me'

'It makes it hard to see my girlfriend who is in another tier and 4 hours away'

'Not seeing my family member for a long time - I don't want people in my family to get covid'

Other comments included:

'money'

'Losing my job, my son has not been able to attend his last few months of pre-school'

'Seeing people who support lockdown use this as an excuse to hate others who don't. very puritan attitude'

The comments made by young people about the issues worrying them again reflects concerns about the impact on their education and the uncertainty they feel about what is going to happen, both in relation to education, such as their exams, falling behind and returning to school, but more widely about how and when their lives will be able to return to normality.

Comments also reflect how young people are worried about transmission of Covid-19 and the wider impact of the pandemic on their own mental health and the wellbeing of family members. Some of the comments about restrictions on social interaction show that young people are not only aware of the immediate difficulties of not seeing friends and family, but that they are missing out on a key experiences and stage of their lives and the lives of others.

4. Understanding restrictions

How well do you feel you understand current social distancing rules?

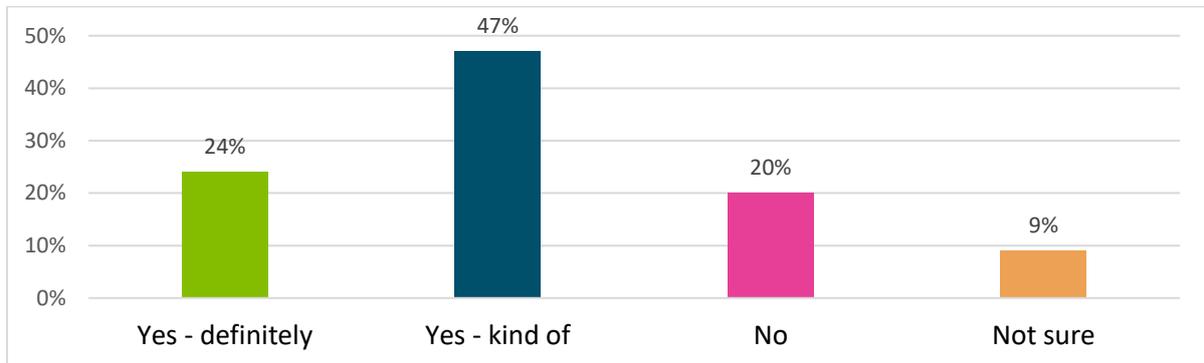
- Really well - 47.5%
- OK - 47.5%
- Not very well - 4%
- Not at all - 1%

Responses suggest that generally young people think they understand social distancing rules.

The proportion of young people saying they felt they understood rules really well increased from 44% in December to 50% in January, with no one feeling they did not understand them at all in January. This potentially reflects the change to lockdown and greater restrictions. However, it still suggests that half of young people do not have a complete understanding of the rules they should be following at a time when restrictions were at their strictness and most consistent across the country.

5. Talking about worries and concerns

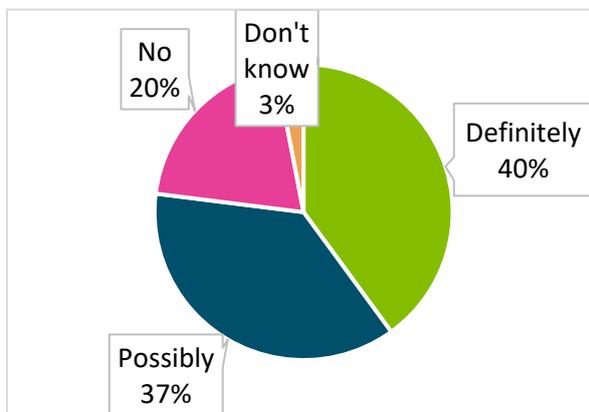
5.1 Have you been able to talk to someone about any worries / concerns you have had related to Covid-19 / during the pandemic?



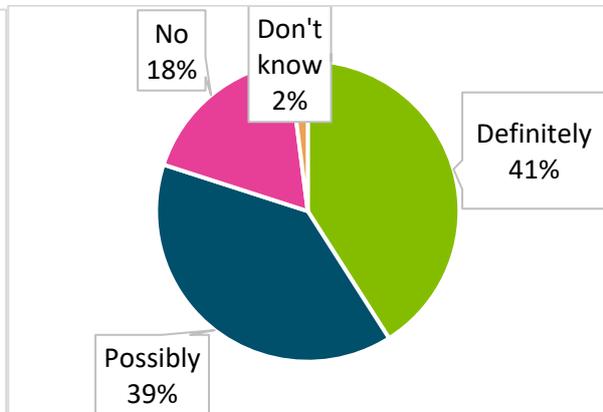
Although the majority of young people felt had someone to speak to about concerns related to Covid-19, only 24% thought they definitely did and the 20% response of 'no' shows that 51 young people did not feel they had anyone they could talk to.

5.2 Who would you talk to / have you talked to about worries or feeling unhappy?

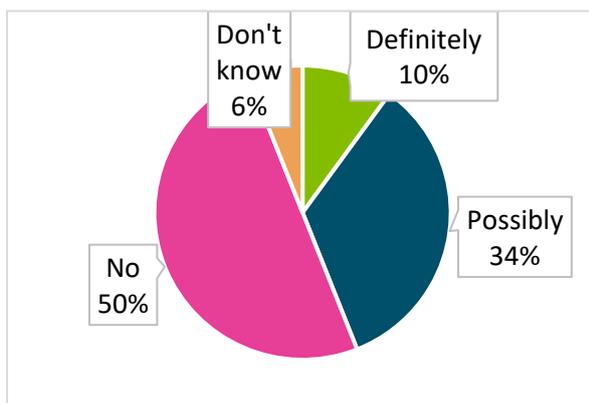
Family:



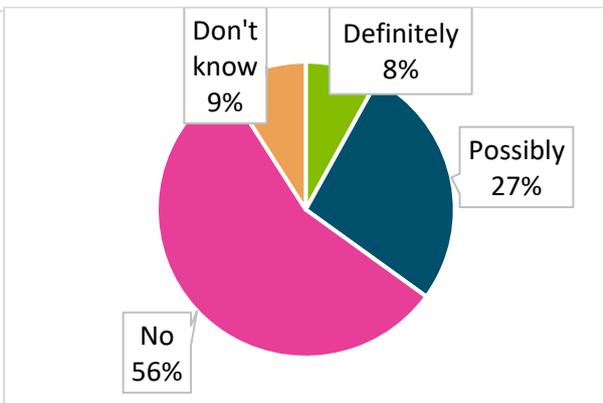
Friends:



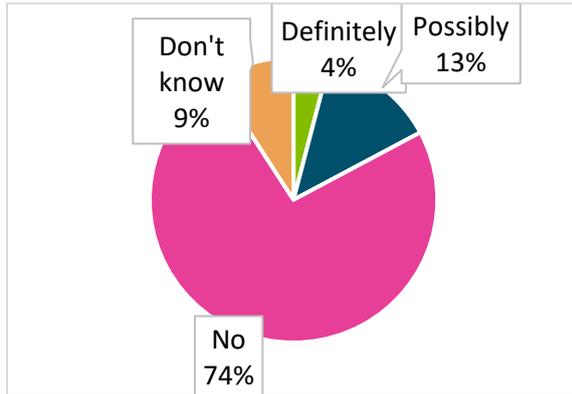
Teachers at school / college:



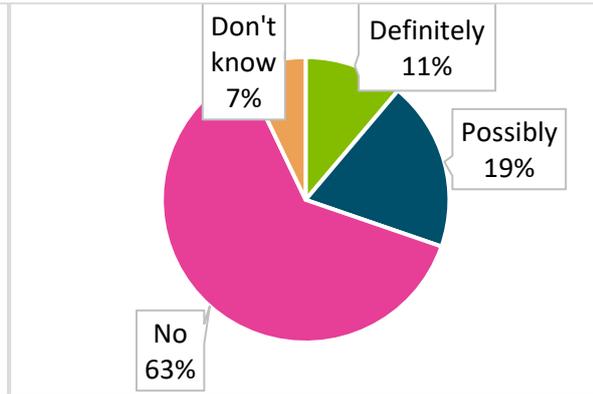
Support staff at school / college:



School Nurse:



Doctor or nurse at GP Practice:



Other people that young people said they would feel able to talk to included:

- Psychologist / CAMHS worker - 5 people
- Counsellor - 4 people
- Youth Worker - 3 people

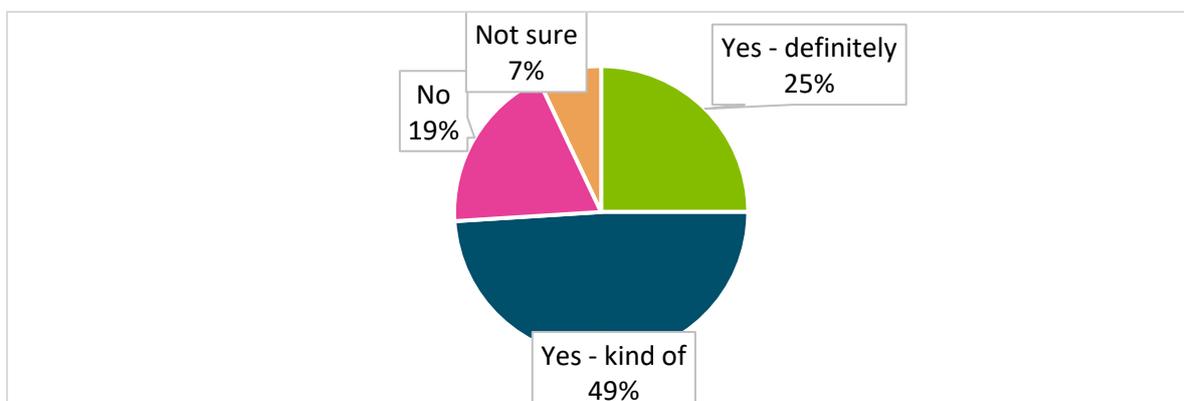
Other people mentioned by an individual were: Family Support Worker, Outreach Worker, Foster carer and the Police.

Responses suggest that young people would feel more able to talk to family and friends about worries and concerns than professionals, either at school or health professionals. 56% of respondents did not feel able to talk to support staff at school, 63% did not feel able to talk to their GP and 74% did not feel able to talk to a School Nurse.

However, 20% of the young people told us they would not feel able to talk to their families about their worries or feeling unhappy.

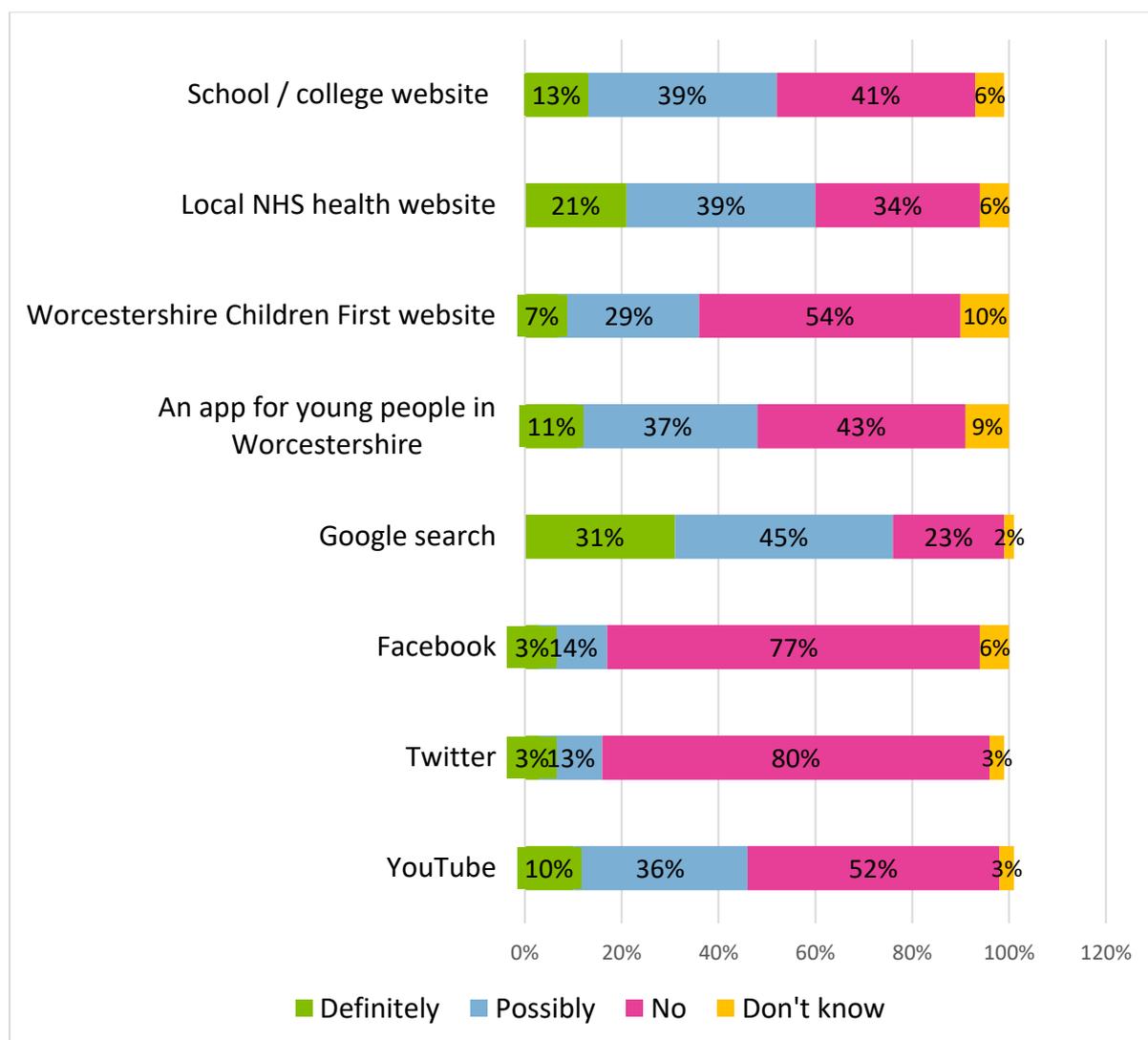
6. Information about emotional wellbeing

6.1 Do you think you have enough information about looking after your emotional wellbeing / mental health and who you could talk to if you need to?



Only a quarter of the young people definitely felt they had enough information about looking after their emotional wellbeing.

6.2 Would you use any of the following to find information about looking after your emotional wellbeing and how to find support if you wanted it?



Other sources of information young people mentioned they would use were - Instagram, Headspace App, Heads above the Wave website and Tiktok.

Responses suggest that the top 5 ranked places young people would definitely or possibly look for information about emotional wellbeing are -

1. Google search (76%)
2. Local health website e.g. Worcestershire's NHS Healthy Minds (60%)
3. School / college website or shared online area (52%)
4. An app for young people in Worcestershire about health and wellbeing (48%)
5. YouTube (46%)

Responses suggest that young people are most likely to find information via a web search and trusted websites. 76% told us they would use a Google search to find information about emotional wellbeing, 60% would use a local health website, such

as Healthy Minds and just over half (52%) would look on the school or college website or shared online area.

However, there is still quite a large number of young people who said they would not use or were not sure if they would use key websites and information sources: 64% would not use or are not sure about using Worcestershire Children First; 47% would not use or were not sure about using the school or college website or online resources; and 40% would not use or were not sure about using a local health website.

Nearly half of respondents - 48% told us they would potentially use an app specifically for young people in Worcestershire. The responses also show that of the social media options given, young people were more likely to look at YouTube (46%) than Facebook (16%) or Twitter (15%).

6.3 Is there any information in particular you would find or have found helpful?

We received 14 comments in response to this question, which are themed below:

i. Information about accessing support - 5 people

‘How to cope when you have issues at home, but can’t leave the house’
‘I would have found helpful knowing how to anonymously talk to someone without parents knowing from home’
‘I know the number for Childline and know I could use it if I needed to talk to someone’

ii. Information about managing emotional wellbeing - 5 people

‘Healthy ways to relax / take your mind off your worries’
‘Coping with a change in routine, when routine is what you need to feel a sense of control, when the world is out of control’
‘Small videos about managing your mental health’

iii. Information about school / education - 4 people

‘I would’ve liked to have remained updated more often about course changes / how decisions would affect me’
‘School being safe’

Comments suggest that young people would find it helpful to have more information about how to access support and manage their own emotional wellbeing and more information in relation to school, such as decisions about examinations and the changes being implemented in school due to Covid-19.

6.4 Is there any information you have wanted but been unable to find?

We received 13 comments in response to this question, which are themed below:

i. Information about accessing support - 4 people

‘Who to turn to’

‘Difficult to find private psychologist in the area’

ii. Covid-19 related information - 4 people

‘If / when the vaccine would be made public’

‘A clear, user-friendly guide on how societal rules have changed i.e. procedure for entering shops, getting trains etc.’

iii. Information about school / education - 3 people

‘What will happen with BTEC exams, this course is always left out in decisions’

‘Will we still have a prom?’

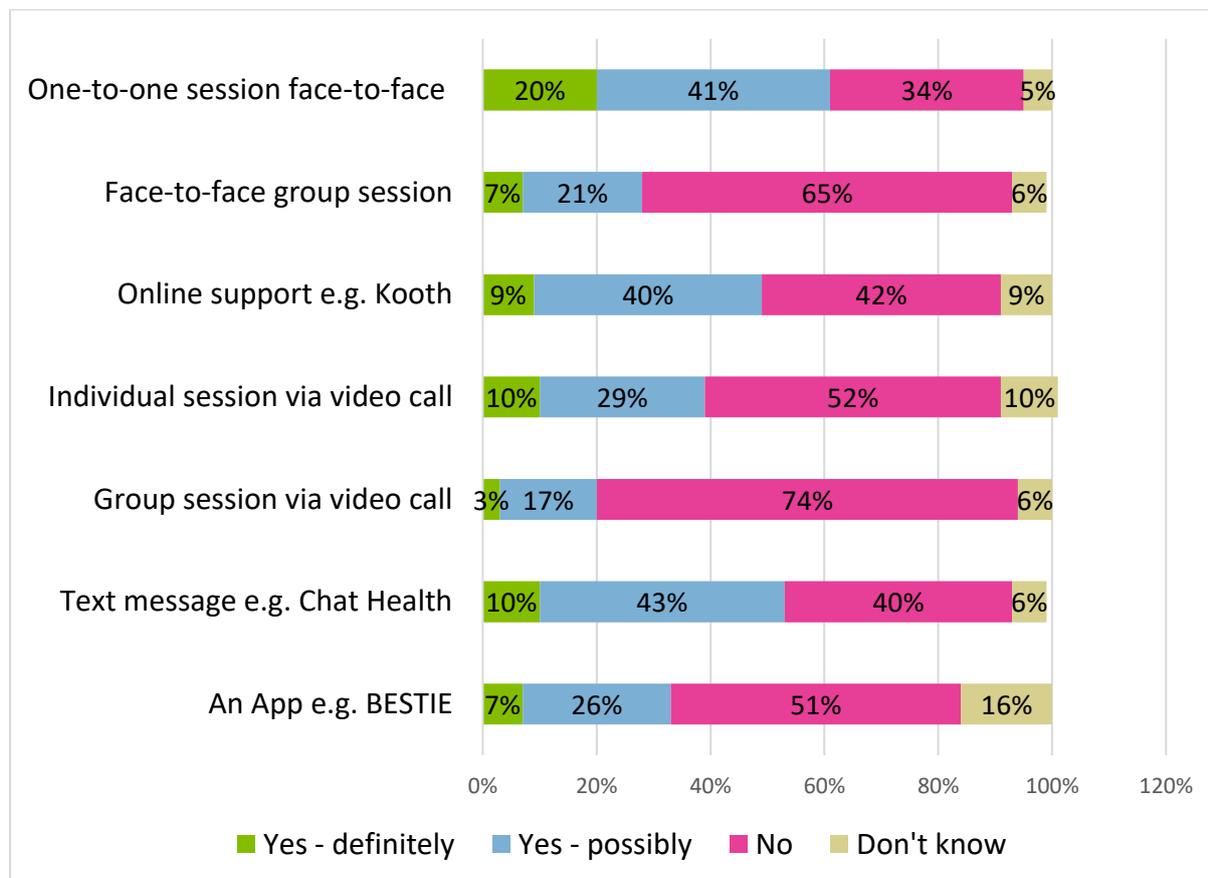
iv. Information about managing emotional wellbeing - 2 people

‘places in Worcestershire that are created to aid in helping children’s mental health that doesn’t just focus on ‘do stuff you like’

These comments suggest that some young people have found it difficult to find information about accessing support, changes at school and how to manage their emotional wellbeing. Some have also found it difficult to find and understand information about Covid-19 and social distancing rules.

7. Accessing support for emotional wellbeing

7.1 If you needed to talk to someone about feeling unhappy or worried - which of the following would you be happy to use?



Ranking of types of support young people felt they would definitely or possibly be happy to use -

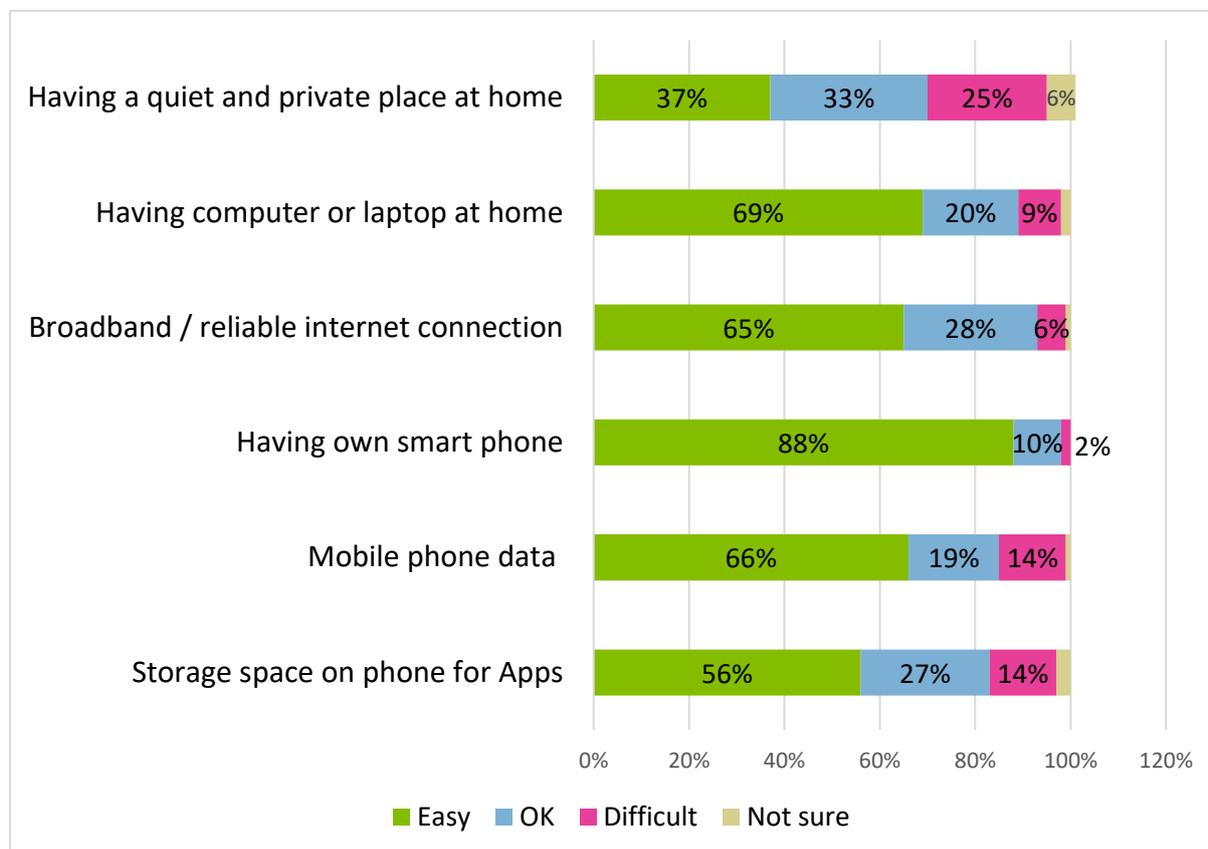
1. One-to-one session face to face (61%)
2. Text message e.g. Chat Health (53%)
3. Online support - using typed conversation e.g. Kooth (49%)
4. Individual session via video call (39%)
5. An app e.g. BESTIE (33%)
6. Face-to-face group session (28%)
7. Group session via video call (20%)

In addition, 3 people told us they would be happy to talk to someone by phone and 3 people said they would talk to family or friends.

Our findings show that the highest number of young people (61%) would be happy to access one-to-one support face to face. Generally young people seem happier with the idea of accessing support on an individual rather than group basis. Only 28% told us they would be happy to access a group session face to face and 20% a group session online.

Responses also suggest that remote support methods, using text messaging or typing were more popular than using video calls. 53% told us they would use text support, such as Chat Health and 49% said they would use online typed conversation, such as Kooth, However, only 39% of young people said they would be happy to have one-to-one support via a video call.

7.2 How easy would you find these issues when accessing support?



Additional comments

- Issues around privacy - 3 people

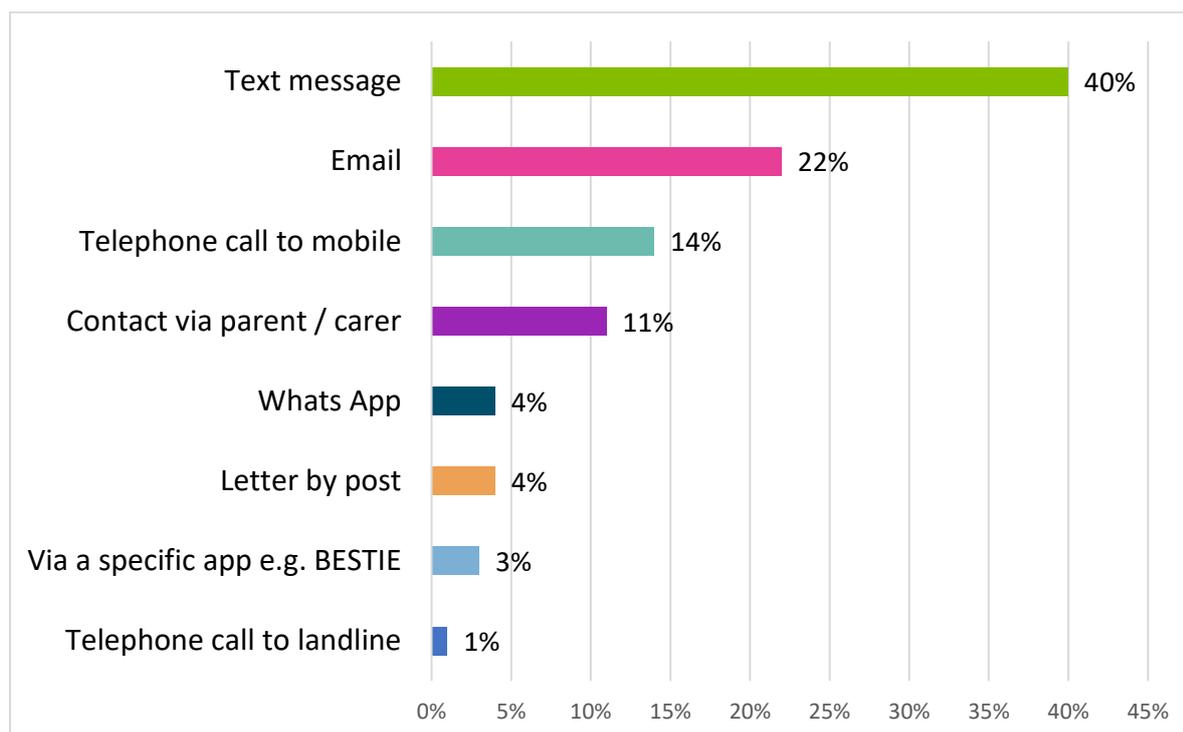
‘Difficult to maintain confidentiality with other people being in the house’

Other comments related to not having enough storage space on phone and having phone or laptop confiscated.

Responses show that the highest number of young people feel that having a quiet and private space at home to talk to someone via a video or telephone call would be difficult. Only 37% of the young people thought this would be easy, 25% said they would find this difficult and 6% were unsure.

Having storage space and mobile data were both factors that 14% of the young people rated as difficult. Although the majority of young people said they had their own smart phones and access to a laptop and broadband, some did say that these would be difficult for them.

7.3 How would you prefer health or support services contact you?



Responses suggest that text message is the most preferred method of communication, with 40% of young people selecting this, followed by email, selected by 22%.

The responses do also show that other methods, such as a phone call to a mobile would be preferred by some, as would involving parents and carers in communication. A small number would like to receive letters or Use What's App. Only 3% said they would like to use an app such as BESTIE, which may reflect the number of young people who have used it or be aware of it.

8. Experiences of support

8.1 Have you received any support for emotional wellbeing or mental health from NHS or other support services since March 2020?

- Yes - 31%
- No - I have not needed any support - 57%
- No - I have needed support but not been able to get it - 12%

12 gave further explanations about why they told us they had needed support but not been able to access it.

Comments from those who needed support, but were not able to access it

i. Lack of support available / previous negative experience - 4 people

‘My counselling ended in March and I didn’t have a positive experience with it so I didn’t seek any more help’

‘They said Kooth but it didn’t work and they said they would check up on me and still haven’t’

ii. Not tried or no point in trying to get support - 4 people

‘It’s not that I couldn’t get support, I just didn’t try to get any because I didn’t see the point’

iii. Previously receiving CAHMS support, which stopped due to lockdown - 2 people

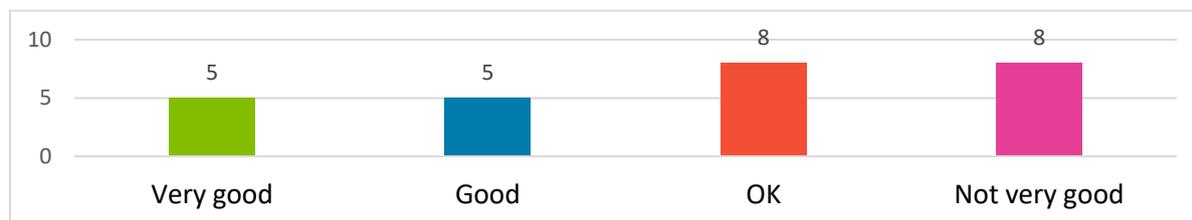
‘Lockdown and let go by CAMHS last year without consultation’

The other reasons given for not accessing support were thinking that there were other priorities and not knowing how to find support.

8.2 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

26 young people told us they had received support from CAMHS.

They rated the support they received as -



5 people gave additional comments -

‘Got rejected as I was 17’

‘Didn’t find helpful at all. Didn’t feel listened to by them’

‘Been on waiting list for 3 months’

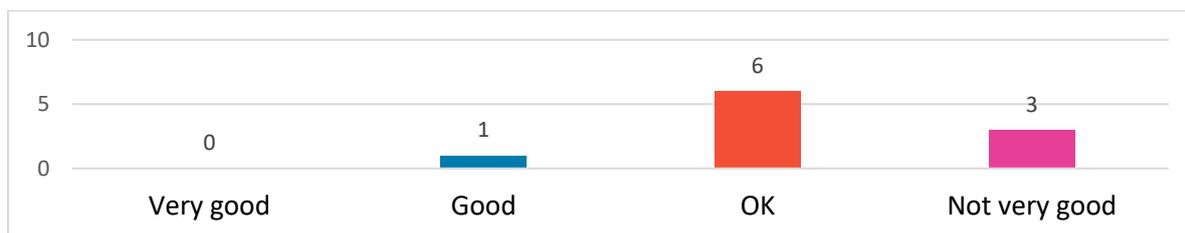
‘...only does phone calls... knows I prefer video...’

‘Long waiting lists. They tell you to have a cup of tea and do some colouring. When that’s not what’s needed’

8.3 Reach4Wellbeing

10 young people told us they had received support from Reach4Wellbeing group support.

They rated the support they received as -



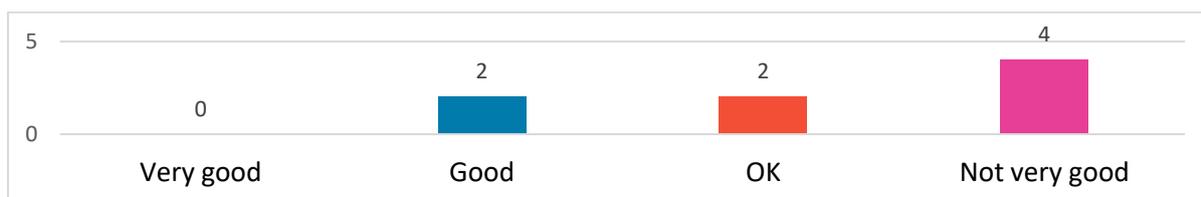
1 person gave an additional comment -

‘didn’t want to do group chat’

8.4 BESTIE App

8 young people told us they had received support using the BESTIE App.

They rated the support they received as -

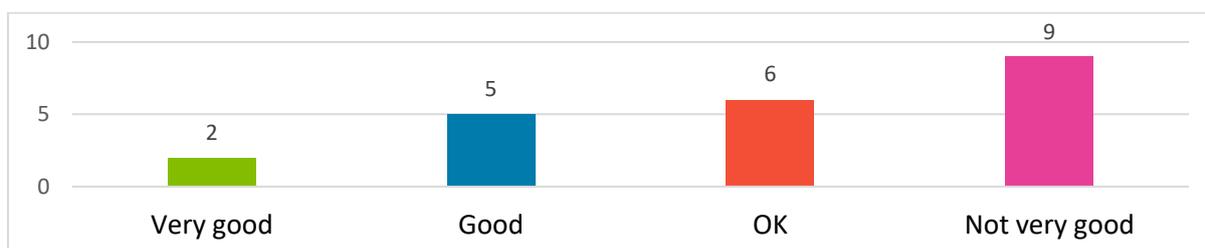


No additional comments

8.5 Kooth

22 young people told us they had received support from Kooth, online counselling.

They rated the support they received as -



2 people gave additional comments -

- 1 positive

‘They responded quick and were a lot of help’

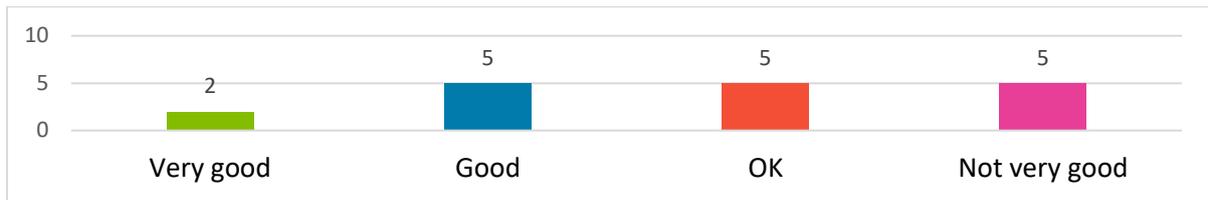
- 1 negative

‘I used it in 2019 but I was kicked off the website and every time I go to log in it kicks me off’

8.6 School Nurse

17 young people told us they had received support from a School Nurse.

They rated the support they received as -



3 people gave additional comments -

‘My class studies on a separate campus from the main campus, therefore healthcare support is currently inaccessible’

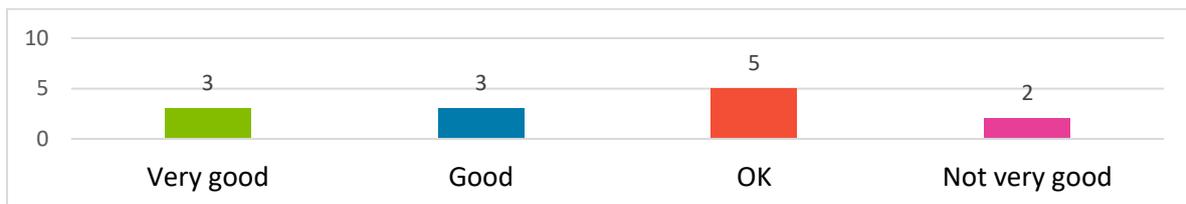
‘depending on the school nurse I had’

‘We don’t have one’

8.7 Chat Health - text service

13 young people told us they had received support from Chat Health.

They rated the support they received as -

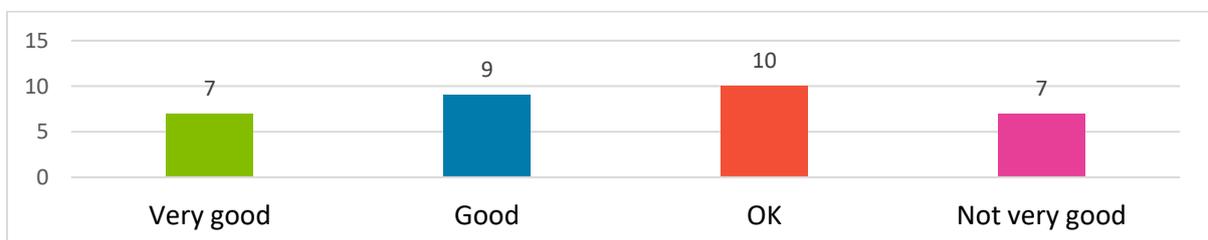


No additional comments

8.8 School / College Counsellor

33 young people told us they had received support from a school or college counsellor.

They rated the support as -



2 people gave additional comments -

- 1 positive

‘Very helpful and understanding’

- 1 negative

‘The school counsellor left in July 2019’

8.9 School / College wellbeing / support staff

36 young people told us they had received support from school or college wellbeing / support staff

They rated the support as -



1 person gave an additional comment -

'Very helpful and understand. Can always go and speak to college staff when needed'

8.10 Other support accessed

Other support that young people had accessed included - Mentor Link, Worcestershire Healthy Minds and a personal counsellor.

Summary of experiences of support

Responses show that the most frequently accessed support was through school or college and generally this was more highly rated than other types of support. 36 young people had received support from wellbeing or support staff at school or college and 21 of these thought it was good or very good, while 6 people rated it as not very good. 33 young people had accessed counselling at school or college and 16 thought this was good or very good, while 7 people rated it as not very good.

26 young people had received support from CAMHS. Ratings of this were varied, with less than half (10 people) rating it as good or very good and 8 people rating it as not very good. The comments received also suggest that some young people had experienced waits or difficulty accessing support, one not been able to have support in the way that they had wanted and another did not feel listened to.

22 young people had used Kooth. Of these 7 rated it as good or very good, while 9 rated it as not very good.

Other types of support had been used by less than 20 young people: School Nurse (17 people), Chat Health (13 people) Reach4Wellbeing (10 people) and the BESTIE app (8 people). All received mixed ratings about how good young people thought the support had been, with the School Nurse and Chat Health receiving a slightly higher proportion of positive ratings. Although the comments suggest that in some case access to a School Nurse may be difficult. Reach4Wellbeing only received one rating of good and BESTIE received 2. Neither were rated as very good.

The numbers of young people telling us that they had accessed the different types of support is fairly low, considering the impact they have reported of Covid-19 on their mental health and emotional wellbeing. Both Kooth and Chat Health are remote support, which have been available to young people to access directly without referral, throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. However only 8% of the young people told us they had used Kooth and 5% had used Chat Health.

9. Additional feedback relating to Covid-19 and emotional wellbeing

We received 8 additional comments from young people, including -

‘more funding for mental health services’

‘I feel that my school’s approach to the situation has not been done well’

‘I feel like during Covid-19 teens really weren’t looked at as much as everyone else was thought about, which made a lot of us feel quite lost and unimportant’

Section C

Conclusions and Recommendations

The following conclusions and recommendations have been made based on responses to Healthwatch Worcestershire's survey from 262 young people age 13 to 19.

Recommendations are made for (as applicable):

- NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust
- Worcestershire Children First
- Worcestershire County Council
- Schools and Colleges in Worcestershire

Covid-19: Young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health

Healthwatch Worcestershire's findings show that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the emotional wellbeing of young people. 74% of respondents told us that Covid-19 had made their emotional wellbeing and mental health worse, of these 30% said it was a lot worse. The negative impact has increased over the time frame of the survey, as the country went back into lockdown and schools and colleges were only open to vulnerable children and children of critical workers.

92% of young people were worried about family or friends catching Covid-19; 84% were worried about the loss of freedom, usual routine and activities; 83% were worried about the impact on their school or college work and grades or exam results; and 81% were worried about the impact on their future job or career opportunities.

Young people are struggling with uncertainty and the lack of social contact, routine and structure to their daily lives. Many are experiencing increased anxiety and depression and have concerns about the wellbeing of loved ones. They are reflecting on the long term impact of the pandemic for themselves and others and also the key social experiences of their lives they are missing out on as a result of Government restrictions.

For some young people this time has been especially difficult due to the environment and relationships at home, increased caring responsibilities and existing mental ill-health.

20% of the young people feel that they do not have anyone they can talk to about their worries and concerns. Many do not feel able to speak to professionals such as teachers and health professionals. Some feel that young people and the impact of Covid-19 on them has been overlooked.

The findings suggest that some of the issues identified in Healthwatch Worcestershire's 2019 Children and Young People's Mental Health Report, in relation to difficulties finding information and accessing support are still ongoing. Despite the action plans put in place by Worcestershire County Council, the Clinical Commissioning Groups and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust in response to our recommendations.

I. Information

Although 74% of young people felt they could access information about emotional wellbeing and who to talk to if they needed to, only 25% thought they definitely had enough information. They told us that they would like more information about managing their emotional wellbeing, how to access support and what will happen in relation to school, college and their exams. Although many young people told us they would use support such as Kooth and Chat Health, the numbers accessing this were fairly low and therefore further promotion of these types of support would be beneficial, especially emphasising that young people can initiate these types of support themselves, with no need for referral.

Less than half the young people (47.5%) felt they had a really good understanding of social distancing rules and some young people told us they had found it difficult to find information about Covid-19 that was clear and easy to understand.

Many of the respondents did not think they would use some of the key sources of local information to find out about emotional wellbeing. Only 60% would use a local NHS website, 52% a school or college website or online resources and 36% Worcestershire Children First or Worcestershire County Council websites. It would be helpful to increase awareness of these sources of information and the importance of using trusted sources.

76% of young people said they would use a web search to find information. This suggests that they are more likely to look for sources of information at the point they feel they need it. It is important therefore that key local websites, such as Worcestershire's Healthy Minds and Worcestershire Children First are easily found via web search and that navigation to the relevant pages is straight forward.

48% of respondents said they would be happy to use a local app to access information about emotional wellbeing, meaning that it may be useful to raise further awareness of the BESTIE app as a source of information.

YouTube was identified by 46% of the young people as somewhere they would use to find information, while less than 20% said they would use either Twitter or Facebook. Text message was the most preferred method of communication, so this could be used to send out key messages and links to information.

The findings did show that, although the majority of young people had access to a smart phone, not everyone had reliable internet connection, storage space for apps and mobile data. Some young people said that they would prefer communication by email, post and via a parent or carer, so making information

available in a variety of formats and on a variety of platforms will help to increase awareness.

The findings suggest that overall, there is an ongoing need to ensure that information about emotional wellbeing and mental health is easily accessible to young people and that they are involved in coproducing information and the platforms such as websites and apps used to do this. Healthwatch Worcestershire will carry out further engagement to ask young people what would work best for them.

Recommendations - Information Sources

1. Ensure that the following websites are current, easy to find via web search, clear to navigate, provide links to other websites where appropriate and provide clear and consistent messages about emotional wellbeing and how to access support. Ensuring the involvement of young people in this process, for example by asking the Youth Board to carry out a review of current websites and information.

- [Worcestershire Healthy Minds](#)
- [Worcestershire Starting Well](#)
- [Worcestershire Children First](#)
- [Worcestershire County Council](#)
- School and College websites

2. Consider how to increase awareness of:

- i. Key local websites - Worcestershire Healthy Minds, Worcestershire Starting Well, Worcestershire Children First, Worcestershire County Council.
- ii. Support and information available via - Kooth, Chat Health, BESTIE app and Worcestershire Healthy Minds
- iii. Information for young people about how to manage your own emotional wellbeing
- iv. Information about Covid-19 and current Government guidance aimed at young people e.g. The Rona Hub

Via a variety of methods including:

- Email
- Text message
- YouTube and other social media platforms e.g. Instagram and TikTok
- Regular Student bulletins
- Printed materials e.g. posters, leaflets and letters

3. Consider how to promote key messages to young people, including:
 - i. Understanding of the impact of Covid-19 on young people and the issues that are worrying them
 - ii. They are not alone in finding the current situation difficult and others share their worries
 - iii. Others e.g. school and health professionals are there to listen /it's good to talk
 - iv. Balancing impact of negative news and encouraging resilience - e.g. Let's Take Back Our Lives campaign
 - v. Importance of following current government guidance around social distancing and ensuring that information is clear and easy to understand.

II. Accessing support

The feedback from young people about the impact of Covid-19 on their emotional wellbeing and the increase in feelings of anxiety and depression suggests that there will be an increase in the number of young people needing to access support.

Responses also suggests that some of the young people are experiencing difficult environments and situations at home, such as aggression, family members struggling with their emotional wellbeing and having increased caring responsibilities. It may be that they have not been identified as young people or families who may need some additional support.

12% of respondents told us they had needed support but not been able to access this. Reasons given included feeling that there wasn't any support, they did not know how to access it or that support had stopped due to Covid-19.

Overall support accessed via school or college was accessed more frequently and rated more highly than other types of support. This may reflect increased awareness of the support, existing relationships and understanding of the individual, the familiar environment and that when young people have been in school or college it has been available face-to-face and away from home. This suggests the increase in support available in schools via the Mental Health in Schools Teams will be valued by young people. Therefore it is important to ensure that there is consistency in the level and quality of support available to young people across the County, attending different schools and for those not in education or home educated.

Responses suggest that generally young people would prefer to access support on a one-to-one basis face to face. Overall remote support methods such as text or Kooth were rated more highly than video calls and one to one support more highly than group support. The number of young people who said they would definitely be happy to access support via video call, either one-to-one (39%) or in a group (20%) was very low.

However, the variance in responses suggests that different approaches may work best for different people. The numbers of young people who said they would not be happy to use the different types of support may indicate a reluctance to access support in general or a lack of awareness and understanding of what it would be like.

The main issue when accessing support remotely was having a quiet and private space at home to be able to hold a conversation, especially during lockdown with more people being at home. For some this was particularly an issue when the problems they need to talk about relate to home life.

Some young people told us that access to the internet and their own laptop was difficult and a small number said they did not have their own smart phones. As this survey was carried out mainly online, it may be that the number of young people without access to the internet or device is higher than reflected here.

Experiences of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) were mixed and some of the comments received suggest that some young people had experienced waits or difficulty accessing support from CAMHS. These were issues raised previously in Healthwatch Worcestershire's 2019 Children and Young People's Mental Health Report.

Overall, the findings show the importance of ensuring that young people's individual preferences and circumstances are taken into consideration when planning their support and that young people are involved in the development and monitoring of services on an ongoing basis.

Recommendations - Accessing Support

4. Provide reassurance that systems are in place to check on the wellbeing of young people who are known to be vulnerable and to identify any additional young people who may be at risk.

5. Ensure systems are in place in schools and colleges to check on the emotional wellbeing of young people.

6. Ensure systems are in place to check on the emotional wellbeing of young people who are not in education / home educated.

7. Ensure that young people across Worcestershire are able to consistently access support services. Including:

- Counselling and support services in all schools and colleges
- School Nursing Service available in all schools
- Plans for expansion of Mental Health in Schools Teams to cover all schools
- Availability of support for young people not in education / home educated

8. Provide information about current waiting times to access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and assurance that targets are being achieved.
9. Provide assurance of the planning in place to ensure that there is capacity within all services to meet the potential increase in demand for emotional wellbeing and mental health support due to Covid-19.
10. Ensure that support meets the needs of young people by:
 - Involving them in discussion and decisions about the best way for them to access support
 - Taking into consideration their individual preferences and circumstances.
11. Consider barriers to accessing support remotely, including privacy and lack of internet access and device, when planning future service delivery, including:
 - How and when support currently being carried out remotely due to Covid-19 restrictions can resume face-to-face
 - How support can be delivered face-to-face in the short term for those unable to engage with remote support.
12. Continue to gather feedback from children and young people about their experiences of emotional wellbeing and mental health support services.

III. Parents and Carers

The feedback provided by young people highlights a number of issues in relation to their parents and carers and also that some young people themselves are carrying out caring roles.

Our findings show that 20% of the young people did not feel able to talk to their parents or carers about worries and concerns they have related to Covid-19. Some told us that the home environment was difficult, due to family relationships, job loss and emotional wellbeing of family members.

39% of respondents to our survey said that they were worried about having more responsibilities at home, such as looking after a family member and of these 13% (33 young people) said they were very worried about this.

Many young people were not sure they had enough information about emotional wellbeing and support or knew where to find it. Some respondents said they would rather support services communicated via their parents or carers than with them directly.

Difficulty accessing clear information, in particular about to how to access support, is an issue that has been raised by parents and carers previously with Healthwatch Worcestershire. Recommendations were made in relation to this in our Children and Young People's Mental Health Report (2019) and our Autism

Spectrum Conditions Report (2018). We will continue to ask parents and carers for their feedback and experiences of this and what would work best for them when looking for information about emotional wellbeing for their children.

Recommendations - Parents and Carers

13. Consider how to raise awareness with parents and carers of the issues worrying young people in relation to Covid-19, the ways they may be able to discuss these with them and how to access support.

14. Consider how to raise awareness with parents and carers of how they can access support for their own emotional wellbeing or for other issues such as domestic violence.

15. Consider how to raise awareness with young people, parents and carers that young people with additional caring responsibilities may be able to access information and support for Young Carers.

16. Provide reassurance that systems are in place to check on the wellbeing of young people who are known to have caring responsibilities and to identify additional young people who may have caring responsibilities.

Worcestershire Young Carers provide assessment, signposting, one to one support and youth clubs for young people with a caring role at home. The caring role could be for a parent, a sibling or a grandparent due to illness, disability, physical or mental health difficulties or substance misuse.

More information - [Worcestershire Young Carers/Shropshire Young Carers | YSS](#)

Worcestershire Association for Carers provide information, advice and support to adult unpaid carers.

More information - [Worcestershire Association of Carers \(carersworcs.org.uk\)](#)