

STREETBEAT YOUTH PROJECT



THE LOCKDOWN SURVEY: THE RESULTS

MAY 2020



INTRODUCTION

Streetbeat Youth Project is a registered charity based in North Belfast which offers young people a safe place to learn, grow and be challenged in their values and behaviour. We seek to help young people fulfil their potential and inspire them to do greater things. Streetbeat Youth Project provides a range of services to young people including group work programmes, a counselling service, one to one mentoring, life coaching, drop-in, residential, schools work and volunteering opportunities.

As a part of the response to the lockdown caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, Streetbeat Youth Project moved to an online service in March 2020 maintaining connections with 22 groups of young people and continuing to provide one to one mentoring and counselling online. In order to gain an understanding of what would best meet the needs of young people during the pandemic, Streetbeat Youth Project conducted a survey¹ to provide a snapshot of how young people have been dealing with the first weeks of restrictions and what supports could be put in place. Results from the survey will be used to inform Streetbeat Youth Project's work in a future in which social distancing and extended homeschooling seem likely.

BACKGROUND

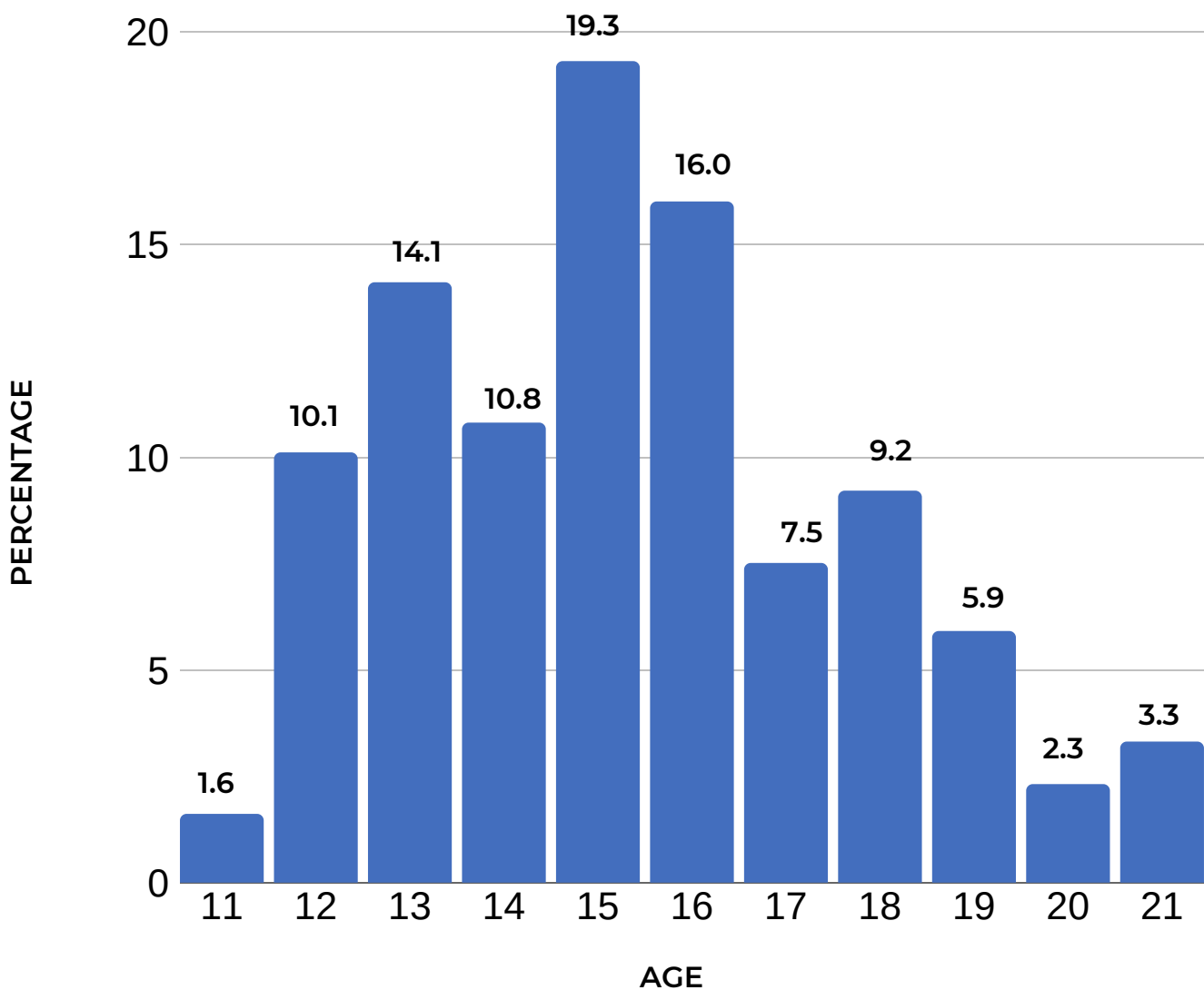
Young people were asked to complete a short anonymous survey about their early experiences of lockdown and how they could be better supported at this time. The term 'the lockdown' was used in the survey to mean the time since schools, colleges and universities have closed and everyone apart from key workers have been required to stay home and apart from other households. The survey was accessible online only due to the current restrictions and was available during April 2020. Participants were recruited through Streetbeat Youth Project's existing networks of young people and was promoted by both the Belfast Model School for Girls and Belfast Boys' Model School.

1. A special thanks to Dr. Donna Kernaghan for data analysis and writing this research report and to Clarisse Burnett for design

DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 308 young people aged between 11 and 21 years old participated in the survey as shown in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: AGE RANGE OF PARTICIPANTS



As can be typical with survey participation, more females (79.9%) than males (20.1%) took part in this survey.

RESULTS

COPING STRATEGIES IN LOCKDOWN

To explore the coping strategies young people have used during the first few weeks of the lockdown, young people were asked about the ways in which they have been trying to relax at this time. Overall, most young people reported that they used TV/Films (55.4%) and being with family (54.4%) as the main ways to relax. Results show that females and males are using a range of different methods to cope with life during lockdown. While both enjoy using films/TV and music to relax, most girls chose being with family to relax (57.1%) while the majority of boys preferred gaming (80.0%) in the first instance.



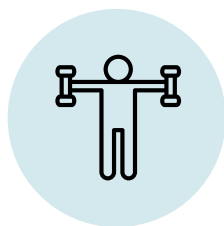
55.4%
use
TV and films



54.4%
spend time
with family



50.5%
listen to
music



47.2%
exercise



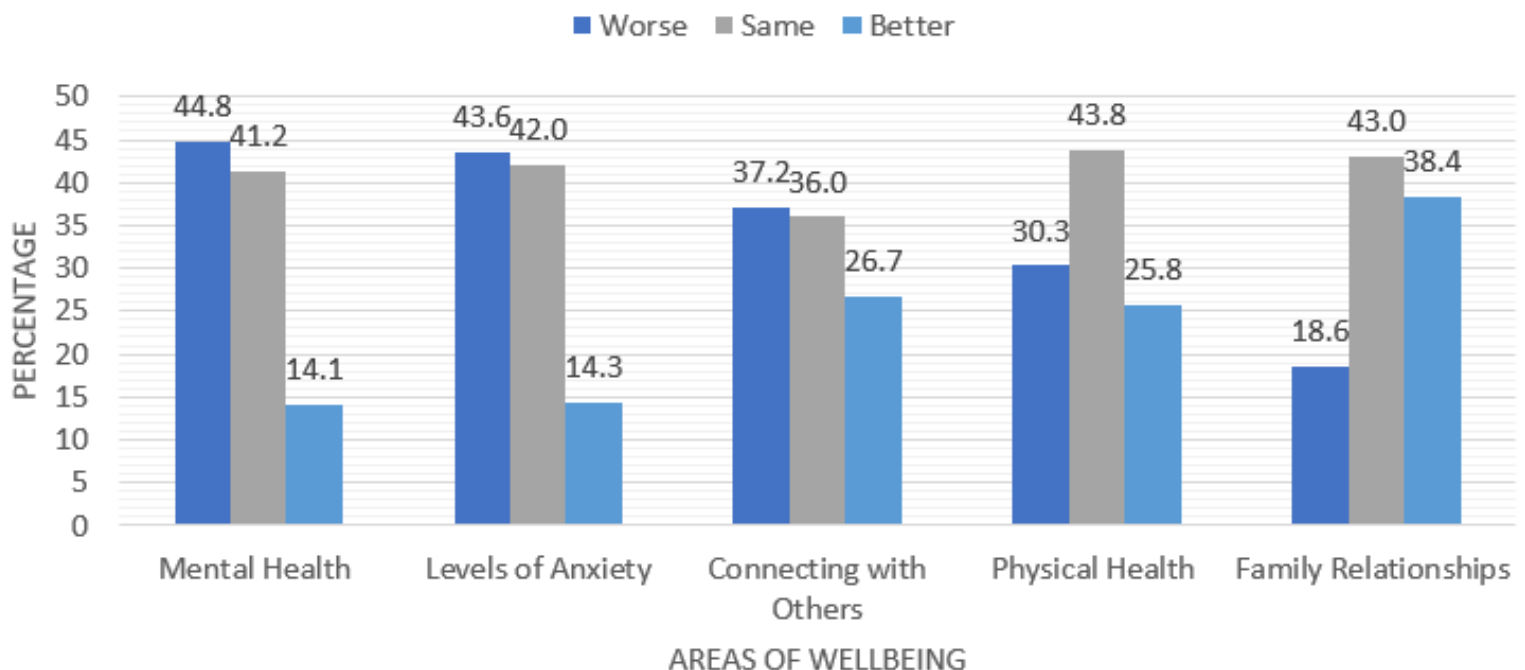
44.3%
connect with
others online

Young people also reported exercise and connecting with others online as ways to relax. Very few young people used breathing techniques as a way to reduce stress (2.3%).

YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING IN LOCKDOWN

Results show that many young people say that both their mental health (44.8%) and levels of anxiety (43.6%) are worse after the lockdown began. Many also reported that connecting with others was worse since the lockdown (37.2%). Views were mixed regarding physical health with 43.8% reporting it has remained the same, 30.3% saying it was worse and 25.8% reporting better physical health after the lockdown as shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2. COMPARISON OF BEFORE AND AFTER LOCKDOWN OF KEY AREAS OF WELLBEING



YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING IN LOCKDOWN

The majority of young people reported that their family relationships were the same (43.0%) or better (38.4%) which may be seen as positive in the current circumstances which restrict most people to the home. A further 18.6% reported family relationships were worse since the lockdown.

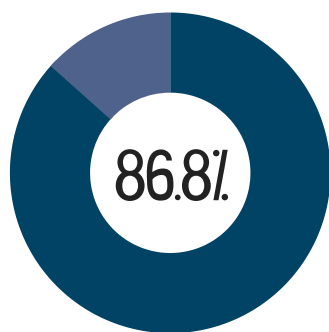
Analysis by gender suggests that females are significantly more likely to report that their mental health (47.5%) is worse since the lockdown compared to males (33.9%). Similarly, a higher proportion of girls (46.9%) report worse levels of anxiety since the lockdown compared to males (30.7%) as shown in Table 1. Half of males (50.0%) reported that their connections with others were worse compared to a third of females (33.9%) experiencing this. Males were also more likely to report that their physical health (48.4%) was worse since the lockdown compared to females (25.8%).

TABLE 1: GENDER COMPARISON OF AREAS OF WELLBEING BEFORE AND AFTER LOCKDOWN

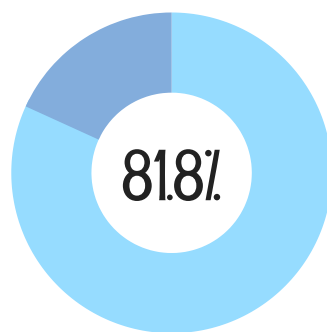
Area of Wellbeing	Worse %			Same %			Better %		
	Av	F	M	Av	F	M	Av	F	M
Mental Health	44.8	47.5	33.9	41.2	38.1	53.2	14.1	14.4	12.9
Levels of Anxiety	43.6	46.9	30.7	42.0	30.4	56.5	14.3	14.7	12.9
Connecting with Others	37.2	33.9	50.0	36.0	38.4	27.4	26.7	27.7	22.6
Physical Health	30.3	25.8	48.4	43.8	46.3	33.9	25.8	27.9	17.7
Family Relationships	18.6	17.9	21.0	43.0	43.3	41.9	38.4	38.7	37.1

CHALLENGES OF THE LOCKDOWN

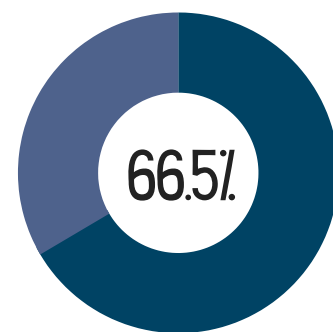
Young people were asked how challenging they found a number of aspects of life in lockdown as shown in Figure 3. On average, most young people reported that they always or often missed seeing friends and family (86.8%) and missed socialising like sports/cinema/youth clubs (81.8%). Interestingly, a higher proportion of males reported missing socialising (89.6%) compared to females (79.8%). A higher proportion of females reported missing friends and family (88.6%) compared to males (79.3%).



Miss seeing family
and friends



Miss socialising
e.g sport/
cinema /youth club



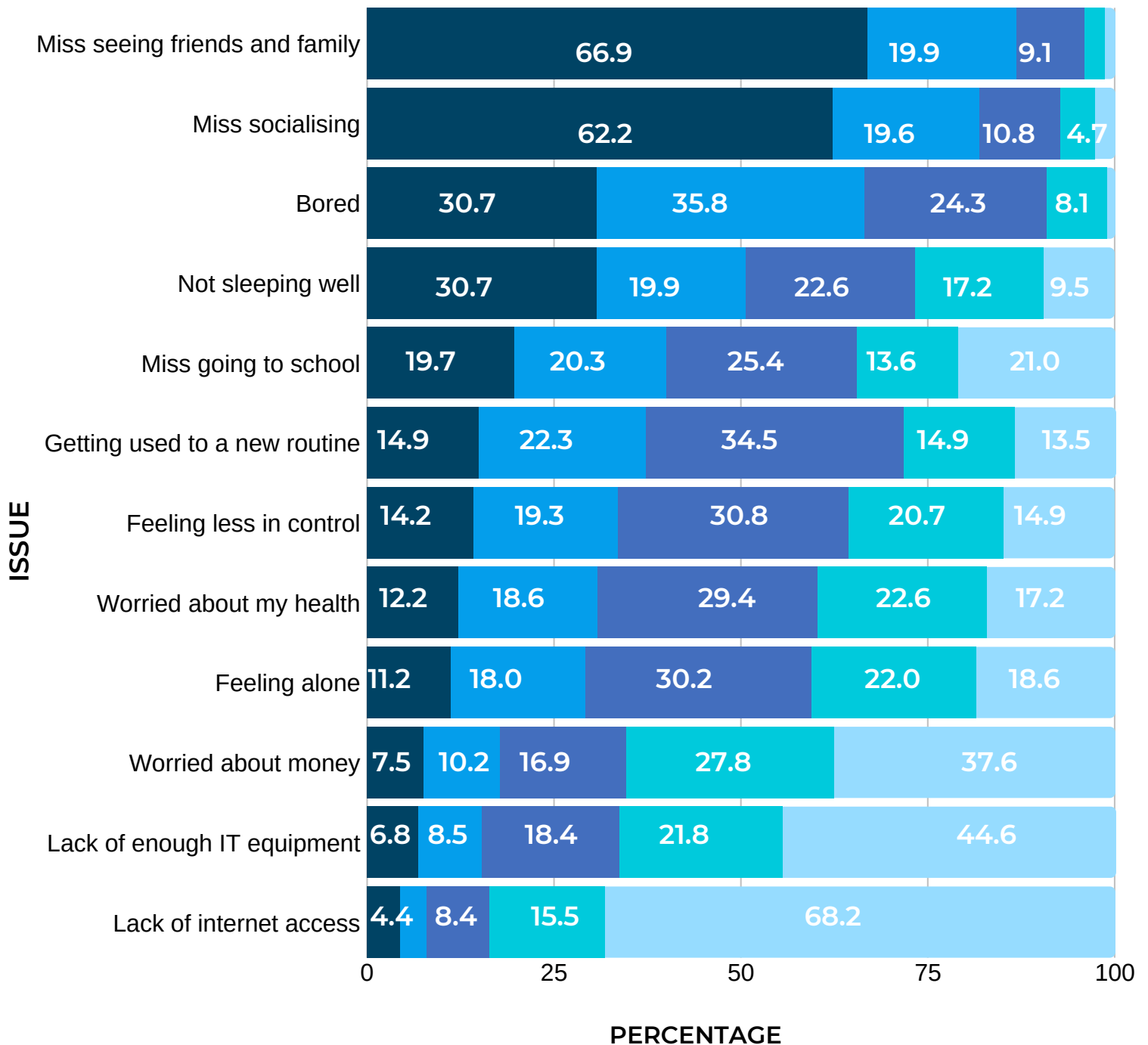
Feeling bored
in lockdown

After missing friends, family and socialising, young people often or always felt bored in lockdown (66.5%) with half reporting not sleeping well (50.6%). It should be noted that as the survey was only available online young people in this group reported that internet access or access to IT equipment was never or rarely problematic. Further research is needed in this area.

CHALLENGES OF THE LOCKDOWN

FIGURE 3: CHALLENGES OF LOCKDOWN DURING APRIL 2020²

ALWAYS OFTEN SOMETIMES RARELY NEVER



2. Percentages lower than 3.8% have not been labelled in Figure 3

CHALLENGES OF THE LOCKDOWN

Three main themes emerged when we asked young people to describe in their own words what was the biggest challenges they experienced during this period:



1. MISSING FRIENDS AND FAMILY

**DEALING WITH NOT ABLE TO TALK
TO MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY IN
PERSON AND NOT BEING ABLE TO
HAVE FUN AND MESS ABOUT
WITH THEM.**

This emerged as the largest challenge with young people missing seeing their extended family such as parents and siblings who live in different house and grandparents. Young people expressed that they also acutely missed seeing their friends face to face.

“NOT BEING ABLE TO MEET UP WITH OTHERS, SEE MY FAMILY AND GIVE THEM A HUG AND JUST GENERALLY MY DAILY LIFE”

“NOT GETTING TO GO OUTWITH MY FRIENDS OR SEE MY FAMILY”

“NOT BEING ABLE TO GO OUT AND SOCIALISE AND NOT SEEING SOME OF MY FAMILY THAT DON'T LIVE NEAR ME OR JUST BECAUSE I'M NOT ALLOWED TO SEE THEM”



2. ISSUES WITH HOMESCHOOLING

This included understanding new work and adapting to online learning, being motivated to complete school work at home with limited teacher support and challenges with completing school work in a family environment.

“

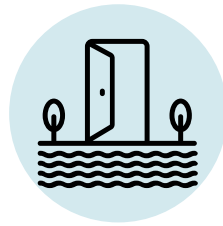
**GETTING UP TO GET READY
AND COMPLETING WORK BECAUSE
TEACHERS KEEP SETTING MORE AND MORE
I'M FINDING IT
HARD TO KEEP UP**

”

“TRYING TO WORK FROM HOME AS I SHOULD BEEN SITTING SOME EXAMS, LEARNING NEW THINGS AND BEING IN SCHOOL TO LEARN. IT IS HARD FOR ME BECAUSE MY LITTLE BROTHER IS AT HOME WITH ME SO I AM TRYING MY BEST TO HELP HIM IN EVERY WAY POSSIBLE”

“THE NEW WAY OF LEARNING SCHOOL AS WE'RE LEARNING NEW STUFF WE YET HAVEN'T WENT OVER SO I FIND IT A BIT MORE DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND”

CHALLENGES OF THE LOCKDOWN



3. LACK OF FREEDOM

Young people often described the lack of freedom as having to stay at home all the time and not being able to do the things they usually enjoy such as sports, youth clubs and meeting with others when they want to.



THE LACK OF CONTROL. NOT BEING ABLE TO DO WHAT I OTHERWISE WOULD HAVE BEEN.



“TO NOT GO OUT AT ALL. NOT TO THE SHOP, PLAYING OUT WITH FRIENDS, MEET UP AND GO TO PLACES LIKE THE CITY CENTRE”

“STAYING AWAY FROM WHAT I ENJOY DOING”

OTHER ISSUES



GETTING USED TO A NEW ROUTINE I'VE NEVER EXPERIENCED BEFORE



Other issues highlighted as challenges by young people included adjusting to a new routine including ways to keep busy and having problems with sleeping:

“PROBABLY GETTING USED TO NOT HAVING TO WAKE UP AT CERTAIN TIMES AND NOT HAVING A ROUTINE, ITS A WHOLE NEW FEELING”

“STAYIN UP TILL 8'9 O'CLOCK IN D MORNIN EN MY TEACHERS ARE EMAILING ME GOOD MORNING WEN I'M ABT D GO TO SLEEP”

BENEFITS OF THE LOCKDOWN



I FEEL THAT TIME HAS STOPPED. THERE IS LESS PRESSURE TO DO THIS AND THAT AND GO PLACES. I CAN JUST BE ME..



As with any time of change, opportunities can accompany challenges. We asked young people if they had found any benefits of the lockdown. Table 2 shows that the majority of young people said they always or often enjoyed having more free time as a result of the lockdown (69.0%).

TABLE 2: YOUNG PEOPLES' PERCEPTION OF BENEFITS OF LOCKDOWN

Benefits	Always/Often %	Sometimes %	Rarely/Never %
Free time	69.0	21.6	9.4
Family time	65.2	24.0	10.8
Learning to connect in new ways	33.5	38.7	27.9
Online learning	26.2	30.4	43.3
Change of routine	20.6	41.8	37.6

Young people said they were using this change of pace to try new things, spend more time on hobbies they enjoy or relax including getting more sleep.

BENEFITS OF THE LOCKDOWN

A significant percentage of young people also reported that they now always or often enjoying spending more time with their family (65.2%). Young people described enjoying spending time with a range of family members including parents, siblings or their own children.

69.0%

ENJOY
HAVING
MORE FREE
TIME

“I’VE ENJOYED BEING ABLE TO INTERACT MORE WITH MY FAMILY”

“BEING ABLE TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH MY BABY BROTHER”

“GETTING TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH MY SISTERS AND MUM LIKE COOKING WATCHING MOVIES AND PLAYING GAMES”

“BEING WITH FAMILY, SPENDING MORE TIME WITH BABY 1-1”

65.2%

ARE
ENJOYING
MORE
FAMILY TIME

“JUST SPENDING MORE TIME WITH MY FAMILY WHO I LIVE WITH AND ALSO LEARNING THAT WHEN THIS IS OVER I’LL VALUE LIFE AND THE PEOPLE IN IT MORE”

“HAVING MORE TIME TO MYSELF, BEING ABLE TO DO THINGS WHEN I WANT TO DO THEM. I DON’T FEEL AS TRAPPED”

“HAVING MORE TIME TO EXERCISE AND BE OUTDOORS.”

“GETTING A LIE IN AND BEING ABLE TO PRACTICE DANCE MORE”

As shown in Table 2, fewer young people were less enthusiastic about always or often enjoying learning to connect with others in new ways (33.5%) or online learning (26.2%). Young people also gave mixed results about how beneficial the change of routine has been (20.6%).

SUPPORT SERVICES DURING THE LOCKDOWN

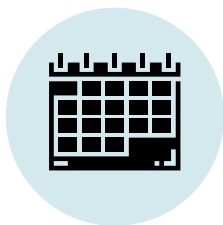
Young people were asked how helpful they would find a range of different support services during the lockdown. Results show that young people primarily want to maintain connections with their peers. Connecting with other young people either by group text chats (71.9%), online group activities (70.6%) and group video chats (64.5%) were considered by young people as the most helpful means of support as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3: SUPPORT PREFERENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE DURING LOCKDOWN

Support During Lockdown	Average %	Females %	Males %
Group text chats	71.9	73.7	64.9
Group activities online	70.6	70.3	71.9
Group video chats	64.5	64.8	63.2
Live classes online	56.6	55.9	59.7
Video tutorials	49.8	50.9	45.6
OCN training courses online	48.1	47.5	50.5
1-1 support from youth worker online	45.9	43.2	56.1
1-1 support from a counsellor online	38.7	37.3	43.9

SUPPORT SERVICES DURING THE LOCKDOWN

Secondly, the majority of young people reported they wanted activities such as live classes online, 'how to...?' video tutorials and OCN qualifications to keep them busy and provide opportunities to learn new things. Young people also suggested a range of creative activities that they would enjoy including:



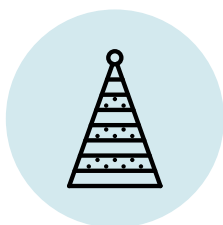
daily challenges



quizzes



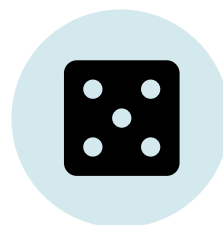
competitions



virtual party



online talent
show



games night

Thirdly, access to one to one support from adults such as youth workers and counsellors online when young people need to was also seen by many as a helpful support at this time. As shown in Table 3, a higher proportion of males preferred 1-1 support online from both a youth worker or a counsellor as being a helpful support service compared to females. This type of support could provide a safe way for young people to express frustration and share their feelings outside of the family home.

NEXT STEPS

For now, the Coronavirus pandemic has changed our way of life. Everyone across society is having to adapt to new ways of working, learning and connecting with others. At this time of change, Streetbeat Youth Project wanted to capture how young people were navigating their way during the early stages of the Coronavirus pandemic in order to understand their experiences and to develop a range of supports suitable to meet their needs.

Young people told us that they experienced multiple challenges during the first weeks of the lockdown. They missed face to face contact with their friends and family, were adapting to home schooling and were struggling with the sudden loss of their freedom outside of the home. Young people also described a deterioration in their overall wellbeing with increasing levels of anxiety and poorer mental and physical health for some compared to before the lockdown. However, there have been positive aspects to this experience for many. Young people reported that they felt they were benefitting from more free time and being able to spend more time with their family within the home. Results also showed that young people wanted to maintain their peer relationships and be able to access support from adults such as youth workers and counsellors for support when required.

Drawing from the findings of this survey and our practice knowledge, we have developed guiding principles for supporting young people at this time. These principles align with the core values of youth work. They encompass the importance of involving young people in the design and creation of online content, offering activities which suit their abilities and interests and providing age appropriate content for young people about ways to look after their wellbeing. As results showed, spending more time with family for the majority of young people was beneficial, a whole family approach through seeking to engage other family members where appropriate has been included. Key to providing help at this time is acknowledging young people have diverse preferences, needs and interests which may mean working in different ways for groups and individuals including developing strategies to maintain connections with young people with limited or no access to internet or IT equipment.

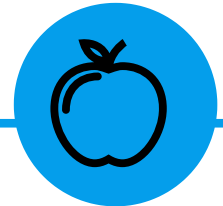
While the future shape of youth work remains uncertain during the Coronavirus pandemic, what is clear is that relationships and connections to others remain vital for young people. It is essential youth work services rise to these challenges and offer new and different ways to engage and support young people at this time.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR YOUTH WORKERS DURING THE PANDEMIC



PARTICIPATION

Involve young people in the design and creation of online content such as video tutorials, live classes and online group activities.



HEALTHY HABITS

Create or share appropriate information on health and wellbeing for young people with particular focus on exercise, eating well and the benefits of sleep.



ACTIVITIES

Offer young people activities and opportunities to learn new things and boost confidence which can be completed during the day.

WHOLE FAMILY APPROACH

Engage and communicate with parents/carers and other family members about how to support young people and the positive benefits young people feel about spending more family time together.



DIVERSITY

Acknowledge that young people have different preferences, needs and interests which may mean working in different ways for groups and individuals.



INCLUSION

Develop strategies to maintain connections with young people with limited or no access to internet or IT equipment.





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