

# Agenda

## Children and young people scrutiny committee

Date: **Tuesday 28 July 2020**

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Time: **1.00 pm**

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Place: **Online meeting only**

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Notes: Watch this meeting live on the Herefordshire Council YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/HerefordshireCouncil>

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# **Agenda for the meeting of the Children and young people scrutiny committee**

## **Membership**

**Chairperson**            **Councillor Carole Gandy**  
**Vice-Chairperson**   **Councillor Diana Toynbee**

**Councillor Graham Andrews**  
**Councillor Paul Andrews**  
**Councillor Kath Hey**  
**Councillor Phillip Howells**  
**Councillor Mike Jones**

**Co-optees**            **Pat Burbidge**            **Church Representative - Archdiocese of Cardiff**  
**Andy James**           **Parent Governor Representative – SEND Sector**  
**Sam Pratley**           **Church Representative – Diocese of Hereford**

## Agenda

		Pages
1.	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b></p> <p>To receive apologies for absence</p>	
2.	<p><b>NAMED SUBSTITUTES</b></p> <p>To receive details of members nominated to attend the meeting in place of a member of the committee.</p>	
3.	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>To receive declarations of interest in respect of Schedule 1, Schedule 2 or Other Interests from members of the committee in respect of items on the agenda.</p>	
4.	<p><b>MINUTES</b></p> <p>To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting on 2 June 2020.</p>	5 - 14
5.	<p><b>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC</b></p> <p>To receive any written questions from members of the public.  <i>Deadline for receipt of questions is 5:00pm on Wednesday 22 July 2020.            Accepted questions and answers will be published as a supplement prior to the meeting. Please submit questions to:  <a href="mailto:councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk">councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk</a>.</i></p>	
6.	<p><b>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</b></p> <p>To receive any written questions from members of the council.  <i>Deadline for receipt of questions is 5:00pm on Wednesday 22 July 2020.            Accepted questions and answers will be published as a supplement prior to the meeting. Please submit questions to:  <a href="mailto:councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk">councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk</a>.</i></p>	
7.	<p><b>SCHOOLS UPDATE</b></p> <p>To receive an update on the reopening of schools.</p>	15 - 68
8.	<p><b>CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY 2020-2023</b></p> <p>To consider the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020-2023, the Care Leavers covenant and fostering and adoption annual reports.</p>	69 - 90
9.	<p><b>WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW</b></p> <p>To review the attached work programme for 2020/21.</p>	91 - 106
10.	<p><b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b></p> <p>The next meeting of the committee will be on 15 September 2020.</p>	



## Minutes of the meeting of Children and young people scrutiny committee held at Online meeting only on Tuesday 2 June 2020 at 1.00 pm

**Present:** Councillor Carole Gandy (chairperson)  
Councillor Diana Toynbee (vice-chairperson)

**Councillors:** Graham Andrews, Jennie Hewitt, Kath Hey, Phillip Howells and Mike Jones

**Co-optees:** Mr Pat Burbidge and Mr Andy James

**In attendance:** Councillors: David Hitchiner, Leader, Herefordshire Council, Felicity Norman, Cabinet Member for Children and Families

**Officers:** Director Children and Families (DCF); Assistant Director Education Development and Skills; Assistant Director Safeguarding and Family Support (ADS&FS); interim Head of Legal Services; Head of Learning and Achievement; Statutory Scrutiny Officer

### 48. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Paul Andrews and Mr Sam Pratley.

### 49. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor Jennie Hewitt acted as a substitute for Councillor Paul Andrews.

### 50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 51. MINUTES

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting on 16 March be agreed as a correct record and signed by the chairperson.

### 52. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 9 - 10)

A copy of the public question received and the response provided is attached to the minutes at appendix 1.

*The committee was advised that no supplementary question had been received. It is right to acknowledge that the public questioner had indicated a desire to ask a supplementary question. However a supplementary question had not arrived at the time when supplementary questions were considered by the committee because of the late acceptance of the question.*

### 53. REVIEW OF PEER ON PEER ABUSE CASES

The committee considered a report by the assistant director education, development and skills concerning a review of historic peer on peer abuse cases that had been referred to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

The Director Children and Families made a statement at the start of the item. It was confirmed that the review and report was commissioned by the chief executive following agreement for the review between the leader and the chief executive. The report was not from the executive or the Leader and was not endorsed by the executive or leader. Comments from scrutiny could be built into the report before being shared with the executive. The sharing of the report was not viewed as satisfactory and officers have not been clear about the process of the report coming to scrutineer with the executive. The report had contributions from a number of officers and as such had become more wordy than intended. The director apologised for that and points can be clarified once scrutiny has had input. The report indicates that recording is something that can be improved, it has been and it is still an area of focus, as is the way the council works with schools and partners. Herefordshire was in a much improved position now and going forward. The report would benefit from referencing wider context, lessons learned and action taken over the years, including the Spotlight Review and recognising that the council's approach could have been strengthened further by sharing a draft risk assessment tool at the same time as the council shared other tools with school representatives. Also that the approach could have been strengthened in the past by providing written guidance rather than presentations and briefings

The Chairperson of the committee referred to the independent review of April 2017 into a case of peer on peer abuse at a Herefordshire school and the pro forma risk assessment arising from the review. The review had not been shared with the scrutiny committee or the spotlight review of peer on peer abuse in schools and was not referred to in the report before the scrutiny committee. The report stated that 8 cases of peer on peer abuse referred to the MASH between January 2017 – October 2018 were before the introduction of national guidance. However the outcomes and recommendations of the April 2017 review, providing guidance on the handling of peer on peer abuse cases, would be of relevance to the 8 cases. The lack of a reference in the report to the review was a gap which needed addressing together with greater detail on the cases reviewed including whether they involved rape or sexual assault and how many were substantiated and how many were unsubstantiated. It was explained that as the report currently stood there was not sufficient information for the committee to undertake effective scrutiny. Without sight of the April 2017 review and the pro forma risk assessment the committee would not be able to make a judgement on what guidance was available at the time of cases between January 2017 – October 2018.

The Chairperson proposed the deferral of consideration of the report until the next meeting of the committee on 28 July to enable detail of the April 2017 review to be included in the report. It was requested that a copy of the review, with necessary redactions, was appended to the report with the pro forma risk assessment.

In addition members were encouraged to write to the clerk of the committee to outline any gaps they felt were evident in the report which would be collated and sent to the report author for attention.

The proposed deferral and arrangements for the resubmitted report were seconded by Councillor Diana Toynbee.

The cabinet member children and families commented that it was important that the scrutiny committee had all relevant information contained in the report to consider.

The committee approved the deferral and arrangements for the resubmission of the report unanimously.

**RESOLVED - That the committee agrees the deferral of the report to the next meeting on 28 July to allow for the inclusion of the 2017 review and risk assessment pro forma and clarification of gaps identified in the information provided.**

**54. REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS AGAINST THE SAFEGUARDING AND FAMILY SUPPORT IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2019/2020**

The committee considered a report by the assistant director for safeguarding and family support (ADS&FS) which provided an update on performance in quarter 4 of 2020/21 against the safeguarding and family support improvement plan.

The ADS&FS introduced the report which included the points below:

- There was a need to improve the response of MASH to referrals within 24 hours and work was ongoing to facilitate the handling of less serious referrals by early help services. Work was also continuing to attempt to address the high level of referrals received from the police;
- There had been a decrease in the number of children on child protection plans. An audit was in progress in an attempt to understand the cause of this trend with a report available in June or July 2020;
- The completion of special guardianship orders and the rescinding of care orders might be impacted by the closure of courts during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- The roll-out of signs of safety had been affected by COVID-19 which had delayed the programme of briefings;
- Improvements that had been achieved in quarter 4 included: timeliness of visits; supervision; and the completion of assessments within timescales.

There was a brief adjournment at 1.51 p.m. to allow Councillor Jennie Hewitt to reconnect with the virtual meeting. The meeting reconvened at 1.55 p.m.

In the discussion that followed the principal points below were raised:

- It was proposed that when the new arrangements for the improvement report were considered that thought be given to prioritising the actions contained in the improvement plan. The invitation of all members of the committee to performance challenge sessions was also proposed as a recommendation. *The DCF explained that work was ongoing on making changes to the improvement plan including smarter actions/timescales and to be clearer about the priority areas. The ADS&FS explained that it was difficult to prioritise elements in the plan as all actions were essential for improvement.*
- There was concern that the improvements realised would be undermined by the COVID-19 pandemic and if there was sufficient resource in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to cope with an increase in referrals during the easing of the lockdown. *The ADS&FS explained that mechanisms had been put in place at the start of the lockdown to ensure that meetings and visits could continue virtually where appropriate. Where necessary face to face visits were continuing and keeping in touch meetings were taking place virtually to ensure that contact was maintained with children. Work was ongoing with partners to ensure that there would be sufficient staff resource in the MASH to handle any potential increase in the level of referrals following the return of schools and proactive conversations were taking place with schools to monitor the return of children on child protection plans. Social workers from the assessment team*

*were being trained to undertake work in the MASH if an increase in referrals required additional resource.*

- It was queried if the involvement of third sector organisations had been considered to support the actions contained in the improvement plan and it was proposed that work with the voluntary sector was explored. *The ADS&FS explained that a lot of work had taken place to facilitate partner agencies, in frontline contact with children, to complete early help assessments. The DCF explained that the talk community initiative was playing an increasing role in the county and the intention was that this would continue to develop an approach which was focused directly on the benefits for children through family based work and utilised community strengths.*
- The increase in the number of looked after children over the previous six years was queried and when the rate in Herefordshire would begin to fall into line with neighbouring local authorities. *The ADS&FS explained that the focus of the looked after children reduction strategy was to reduce the number of children entering care and enable children to leave care. The work of the edge of care service would assist in preventing children becoming looked after and the use of pre-proceedings allowed for plans for children and families to be put in place at an early stage before care arrangements became necessary. Membership of the regional adoption agency would help provide more options for adoption with greater opportunities for arrangements such as foster-to-adopt.*
- The reference in the report to the lack of triaging of domestic abuse referrals was queried and what risk this presented. *The ADS&FS explained that a domestic abuse hub had been established which ensured that any level 4 domestic abuse notification received in the MASH was taken directly to a strategy discussion. It was confirmed that all domestic abuse notifications were now triaged daily.*
- There was concern expressed regarding the delay to the work on the transition pathway for vulnerable young people and it was proposed that the committee recommend closer working between the children's and adults' directorate to establish the pathway.

The cabinet member children and families commented that it was encouraging to see progress but it was acknowledged that there was still improvement to be achieved. The appointment of the new assistant director, quality and improvement, had been positive and would help realise improvement. The issue of transition between childhood and adulthood was work that was ongoing and greater interaction with adults' services was required. The attendance of committee members to the performance challenge sessions was encouraged.

The committee voted on recommendations proposed during the debate including: arrangements for the improvement plan report in future; resourcing third sector organisations; joint work between directorates on the transition pathway; member attendance at performance challenge sessions; and the outcome of the audit of the child protection plans. The recommendations were agreed.

**RESOLVED: The committee agrees that:**

- **consideration is given to how future versions of the report could provide details of the prioritisation of actions in the improvement plan;**
- **consideration is given to how third sector organisations could be resourced to support actions in the improvement plan;**
- **the children and families directorate works with the adults wellbeing directorate to undertake joint work on establishing a clear transition pathway for vulnerable young people;**



- **all members of the committee should be invited to attend performance challenge sessions; and**
- **the outcomes of the audit of the reduction in child protection plans to be made available to the committee.**

## **55. CHILD EXPLOITATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP - OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The committee considered a report by the chairperson of the child exploitation task and finish group which provided the outcomes and recommendations of the task and finish group.

The chairperson of the task and finish group introduced the report and advised of the purpose of the group, the meetings that had taken place and the witnesses that had been engaged. It was intended that the annual summit that was proposed in the recommendations should include town and parish councils.

In the discussion that followed the principal points below were raised:

- If the child exploitation team had attended parish and town council meetings which was an intention outlined in the report. *The ADS&FS explained that an update on attendance at parish and town council meetings would be provided.*
- It was queried whether the task and finish group had received details of 'cuckooing' in Herefordshire and the extent of trafficking locally. *The chairperson of the task and finish group explained that the representative of West Mercia Police had briefed the group on cuckooing. Evidence suggested that child exploitation was not a significant problem in Herefordshire compared to other areas in the West Midlands. The ADS&FS explained that a prevent and disrupt group was in operation locally which would be able to provide detail of cuckooing and trafficking locally. A report from the group could be arranged for the committee to consider.*
- A briefing note was requested with figures of the current risk of child exploitation to vulnerable young people in Herefordshire.

Councillor Graham Andrews left the meeting at 3.01 p.m.

The cabinet member children and families explained that she was keen to involve parish councils and the wider communities and the notion of a parish summit to focus on child exploitation was a good idea. Work on transition from childhood to adulthood was recognised as a priority and was being taken forward.

The committee voted on the recommendations from the task and finish group in the published report and on recommendations proposed during the debate to: add an item to the work programme for a report from the prevent and disrupt group; and a briefing note on the current risk of child exploitation in Herefordshire. The recommendations and proposals were agreed.

**RESOLVED: That the committee agrees:**

- **The report and recommendations of the child exploitation task and finish group be submitted to the executive;**
- **The addition of a report from the prevent and disrupt group to the work programme of the committee; and**
- **The circulation of a briefing note on the current risk of child exploitation in Herefordshire.**

## **56. WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW**

The committee considered the work programme 2020-21 and received an update from the DCF regarding the gradual reopening of schools in Herefordshire.

The items below were proposed for inclusion in the work programme:

- It was proposed that a report be presented to the next meeting of the committee on 28 July providing an update on the reopening of schools. The report should include detail of the number of children who had returned to school and the known situation of the mental health impact and educational deficit experienced by pupils during the lockdown. It was also requested that detail was made available of how schools would continue to support those children who had not returned to school. An assessment of the mental health effects of social distancing on young children and how schools were seeking to mitigate this impact was requested within the report.
- It was proposed that a report was added to the 15 September meeting of the committee concerning how the council was intending to address the impact on school leavers and care leavers of the potential economic downturn and reduced employment opportunities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Childhood obesity had been shown to increase risks associated with COVID-19 and it was proposed that in 2021 the committee consider a report into the issue. It was proposed that the report provide detail as to how the council was taking forward the work presented to the spotlight review concerning childhood obesity in 2018.
- Concern about the financial viability of children's care companies, caring for looked after children from Herefordshire, was raised as a potential item for the work programme. *It was confirmed that a briefing note would be circulated to all members and a decision could be taken at a later meeting as to whether a fuller report would be required.*
- It was proposed that the committee consider Public Health England's modernisation of the healthy child programme through the best start in life (BSIL) programme. It was agreed that a briefing note would be circulated.

**RESOLVED: The committee agrees that:**

- **A report is added to the work programme of the committee for the meeting on 28 July concerning the reopening of schools, covering the details outlined above;**
- **A report is added to the work programme of the committee for the meeting on 15 September regarding the potential economic downturn and the impact on opportunities for school leavers and care leavers;**
- **A report is added to a meeting of the committee in 2021 concerning work to address childhood obesity;**
- **A briefing note is circulated concerning the financial viability of children's care companies caring for looked after children from Herefordshire; and**
- **A briefing note is circulated concerning the Public Health England's BSIL programme.**

The committee received the response of the executive to the report and recommendations of the spotlight review concerning peer on peer abuse in schools. It was noted that recommendation (ix), concerning a resource pool for schools to access

when addressing complex cases of peer on peer abuse, had been partially agreed and it was queried whether the nature of the resources proposed by the recommendation had been understood. The resources proposed concerned support beyond financial means and included advice, guidance and tools available from schools and the council. It was requested that an update on the response to the recommendation be provided to the next meeting of the committee.

The meeting ended at 3.40 pm

**Chairperson**



Supplement – schedule of questions received for meeting of children and young people scrutiny committee – 2 June 2020

Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from members of the public

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Name and address supplied	<p>While I was a student at a school in Herefordshire I was the subject of the most serious form of peer-on-peer sexual abuse. I reported the incident to the police at the time. However my school expected me to return to classes with my abuser. This was wrong.</p> <p>I wanted lessons to be learnt so that no other child should have to face their abuser in school. My parents raised these concerns on my behalf with the Council.</p> <p>In April 2017, the Council commissioned and funded an investigation into the handling of my case, which produced a report containing clear recommendations about shielding a victim from their abuser and a pro-forma risk assessment to help schools keep victims safe.</p> <p>The recommendations - if implemented - would have prevented other children being put back into school with their abusers.</p> <p>But the Council didn't share the recommendations or risk assessment with Scrutiny or schools and has just produced a report which fails to mention the clear guidance received in April 2017. Why?"</p>	Chairperson of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

**Response:**

I accept it would have strengthened our approach in supporting schools if we had shared the risk assessment form with all schools and this was a missed opportunity. The council did not produce a specific policy at that time but undertook briefing sessions that included a focus on peer on peer abuse. This included the promotion of the use of the Brook Traffic Light Tool that supports professionals to assess and work with presenting sexual behaviours of children and also the NSPCC preventing abuse “Let’s Talk Pants Campaign”.

The Council did brief chairs of governors and schools in the May 2017 briefings on peer on peer abuse, including reflecting on learning and continued to do so in regular briefings thereafter. Scrutiny was not advised of the report because it was not a matter identified by officers or members as a piece of work requiring further investigation for the scrutiny work programme.

The MASH audit report benchmarks the advice given to schools against the national guidance as that is what the council has worked to. The council did reflect on the 2017 report to inform our advice to schools regarding peer on peer abuse, and continued to advise schools on peer on peer abuse at chairs of governors briefings, head teacher briefings and designated safeguarding leads briefings.





<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Children and young people scrutiny committee</b>
<b>Meeting date:</b>	<b>Tuesday 28 July 2020</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Schools Update</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Assistant Director Education, Development and Skills</b>

## Classification

Open

## Decision type

This is not an executive decision

## Wards affected

(All Wards);

## Purpose

To provide an update on the reopening of schools following lockdown due to COVID-19, including detail of the number of children who have returned to school and how schools will continue to support children who have not returned. The report details the known situation of the mental health impact and educational deficit experienced by pupils during the lockdown.

## Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) **The committee reviews the update and determines any recommendations it wishes to make to the executive**

## Alternative options

1. There are no alternative options to the above recommendation; it is a function of the committee to review action taken with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive and make reports or recommendations to the executive.

## Key considerations

2. At the children and young people scrutiny committee on 2 June 2020 the committee requested an update from the Assistant director education, development and skills in respect of the reopening of schools and what the council is doing to support those children who have not yet returned to school; including what is known about the mental health impact and educational deficit experiences by pupils during the COVID-19 lockdown.
3. Schools were closed to all but children of key workers and vulnerable pupils from 23 March 2020. However, almost all offered some on-line support alongside face-to-face teaching. Due to low pupil numbers a number of schools choose to work together from a local hub school, so the offer was maintained but for some pupils this was on a different site; almost all schools offered some on line support alongside face to face teaching. Some compressed to a local hub so the offer was maintained but on different sites; this meant that a number of schools all came together
4. On 1 June 2020 primary schools were given the option of opening to Year Reception, Year One and Year Six. Many opened to smaller groups (typically around half of each class or fewer). Secondary schools were invited to open on 15 June for Year 10 and Year 12; the special schools stayed open on a demand-led basis throughout.
5. Attendance has increased gradually but consistently.
6. The update attached at appendix 1 provides an overview of the school attendance; including the attendance of vulnerable pupils. In addition it outlines the support that is being provided to the pupils who are not currently attending school. The update also provides an overview of what we currently know about the impact on mental health and the educational deficit for pupils during lockdown (appendix 2 and 3).

## Community impact

7. The approach to educational provision during the COVID 19 lockdown for children and families in Herefordshire is an important integral part of the provision of safeguarding, education, health and care services for children and their families throughout the county. The continued involvement of vulnerable children in education has been a national and local area of focus and concern. Specific actions have taken place in Herefordshire to support vulnerable children attending education where it is safe to do so. For many the choice to do so has been down to parents/carers but early years settings and schools have be open to take vulnerable children, supporting them in Herefordshire's aim to keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life. This contributes to fulfilling the aims of the Herefordshire Children and Young People's Partnership Plan 2019-2024 and the council's county plan 2020-2024.

## Equality duty

8. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;



- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
9. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. This is a factual report highlighting the schools provision during the COVID-19 lockdown for vulnerable children and families throughout Herefordshire. There has been specific action taken to focus on pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and also other vulnerable groups to enable them to engage with education virtually and also in schools and settings. There has also been work to enable access to free school meals during lockdown for those who are eligible and to address access to the internet and to ICT kit.

## **Resource implications**

10. There are no additional cost implications in respect of this report.

## **Legal implications**

11. There are no legal implications of this update report.

## **Risk management**

12. There are no risks associated with agreeing the content of this report which provides information regarding the review of historic cases of peer on peer abuse and indicate how the work is being taken forward.

## **Consultees**

13. None

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Schools Update

Appendix 2 - Youngminds-survey-with-parents-and-carers-summary-of-results

Appendix 3 - Children and Young People Mental Health Report during COVID 19 with summary

## **Background papers**

None identified



**Appendix 1: Schools Update  
Scrutiny July 2020**

**At the June 2020 Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Meeting officers were asked to give an update on the following areas given the country has been in a significant period of lockdown due to COVID19:**

- Attendance levels
  - Support for those not attending
  - What we know about the impact on mental health and educational deficit experienced by pupils during lockdown.
1. The context: schools were technically closed but asked to stay open for specific cohorts (schools were asked to open for key worker children and vulnerable children) from 23<sup>rd</sup> March. In reality many stayed open throughout for small numbers of pupils (some key worker children and vulnerable pupils) and almost all offered some on line support alongside face to face teaching. Some compressed to a local hub so the offer was maintained but on different sites. At this stage families had the option to send their pupils in or not if they felt it not safe to do so.
  2. On June 01<sup>st</sup> Primary schools were given the option of opening to YR, Y1 and Y6. Many did - but to smaller groups (typically around half of each class or fewer). Some more opened on 08<sup>th</sup> and the remainder (including secondary schools) on the 15<sup>th</sup>. The special schools stayed open on a demand led basis with occasional closures - usually due to staffing issues.
  3. Attendance has increased gradually but consistently.

Date	% of those phase of schools open
01 <sup>st</sup> June 2020	Specials - 100% Primary - 55% Secondary - closed but open to key worker and vulnerable pupils
08 <sup>th</sup> June	Specials - 100% Primary 60% Secondary – closed but open to key worker and vulnerable pupils
15 <sup>th</sup> June	Specials - 100% Primary - 100% Secondary 100% (but to Y10 or Y12 only as directed and to key worker and vulnerable pupils) Colleges were asked to open for Y12

22 <sup>nd</sup>	2m distancing relaxed and DFE announce they expect all schools to open fully from September 01 <sup>st</sup> - but no expectation for any summer offer.
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**4. Early Years:**

In more normal times there are around 170 early years settings open. These are a blend of school run nurseries and much private provision. This has proved to a hugely challenging time for the sector. Initially many private settings were furloughed early in the lockdown period - this meant they were closed and staff could not engage with any work. The early years team spent a huge effort in trying to maintain provision where needed. This was successful and families who could not find suitable some local provision were few in number.

By June the number open was down to around 70 although this is growing gradually now. We merged some settings and technically opened two new settings with the regulatory work involved being managed with the help of Ofsted and DfE. This was a significant effort and helped maintain provision in key areas. Similarly the council helped fund a local out of school club where alternatives were limited.

As the system opens up the situation for the private settings is complex. They are having to open but for unknown numbers and in a complex world for safety. Some are actively considering permanent closure as their business model no longer works and they are deciding how to navigate the autumn term. We have provided business support for them via webinars and are considering how best to maintain capacity whilst the gradual economic opening up takes place. There is a cost for families in attending, it is not statutory and what level of demand will be evident in September is unknown. We are researching this.

**5. Attendance patterns throughout the pandemic?**

- Herefordshire has experienced a comparatively greater level of attendance of pupils than some other local authority areas in the West Midlands and against the national proportion of children attending school.
- Attendance for vulnerable pupils has increased and peaked around 20%. This has been above national levels throughout but still low.
- Friday has seen a consistently lower attendance rate than for the rest of the week.
- As at 22nd June we had just over 5200 pupils attending (from a usual total of around 23500). This is around 23% which is above national levels. We expect this to continue to climb as the economy opens more widely but we do not expect to get close to full attendance before the end of the summer term - this will be capped by distancing measures in secondary schools and colleges, bubbles in primary classrooms and family anxieties who we expect to wait until September.

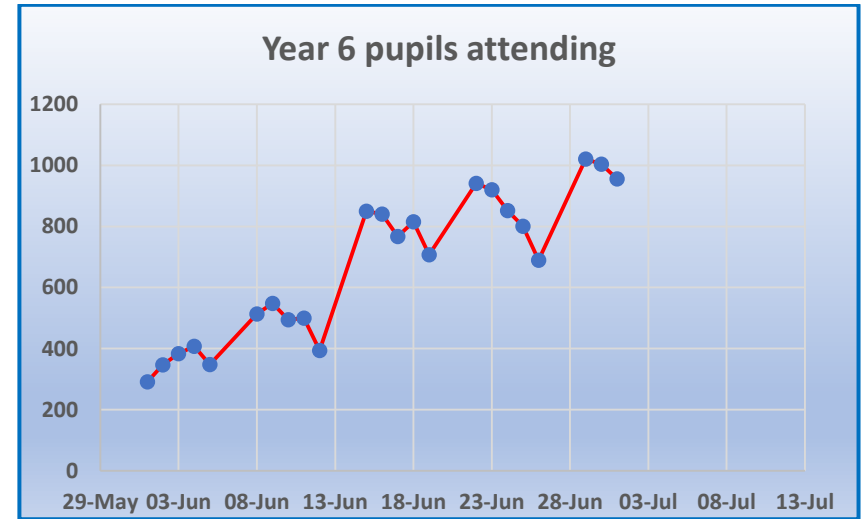
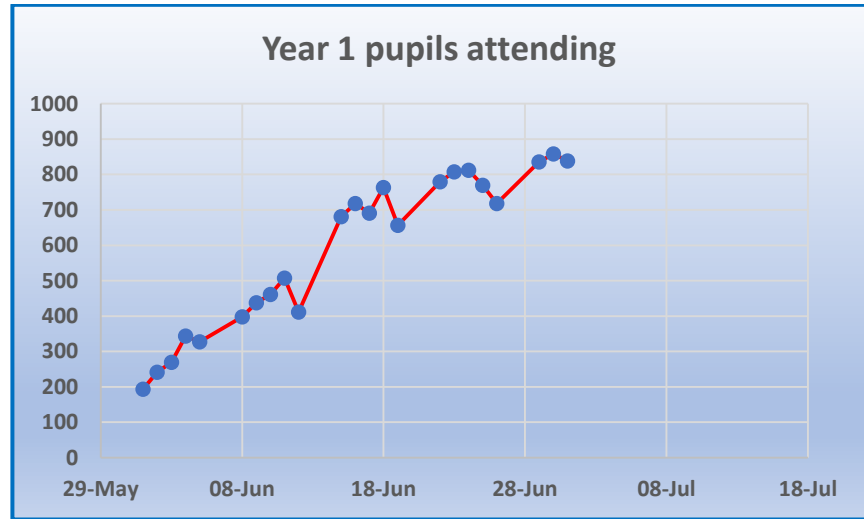
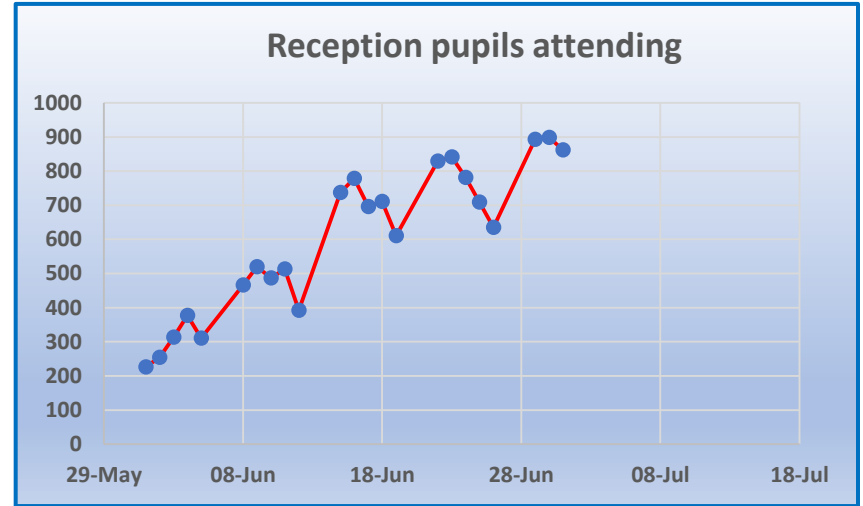
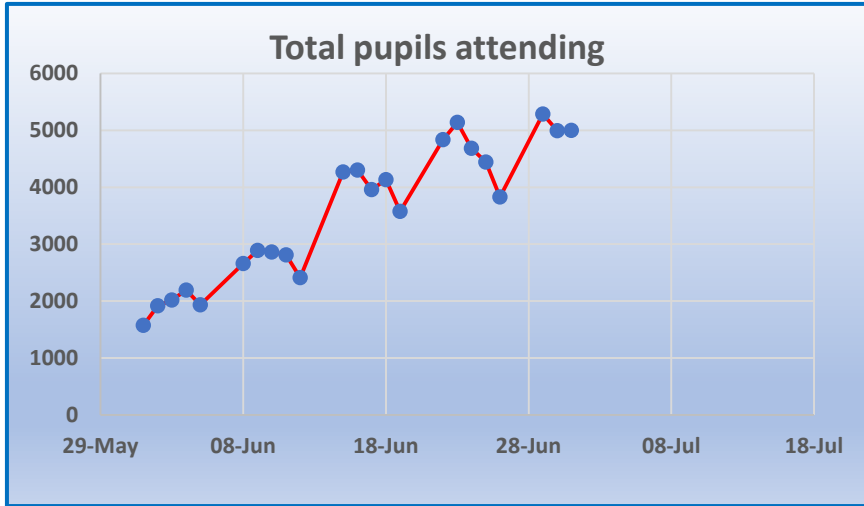
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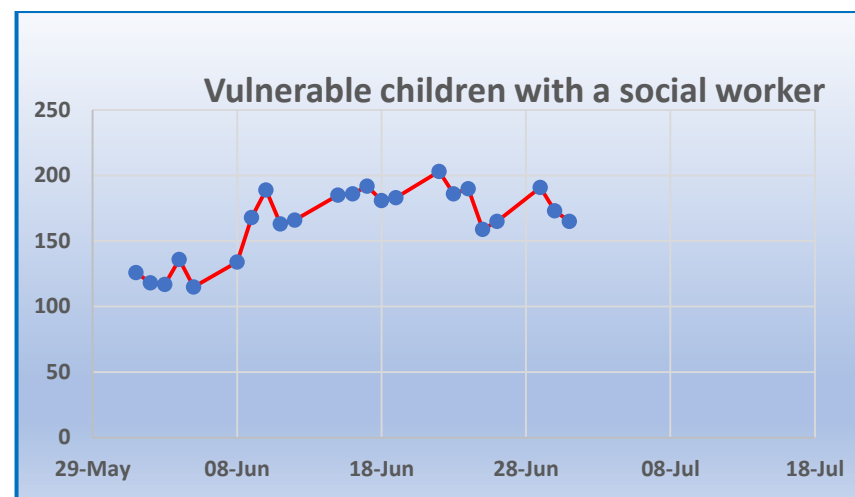
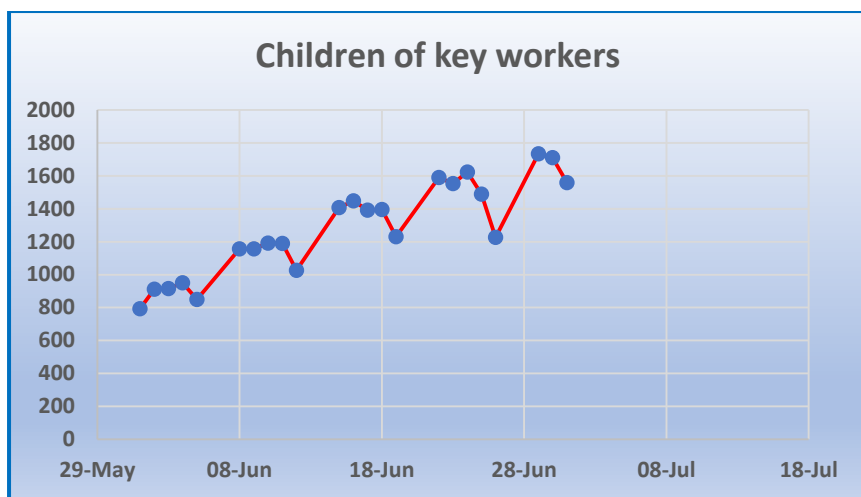
LA	Pupils attending establishment	% attending
Coventry	7056	12.3%
Herefordshire	5287	22.4%
Sandwell	6267	10.3%
Shropshire	7741	19.6%
Solihull	7400	18.5%
Stoke-on-Trent	6256	15.4%

On 01 July we also had some national attendance figures. These only go to 25 June but at that time the **proportion of children attending school was 15.6%** - significantly below Herefordshire at **22.4%**.

**Attendance in Herefordshire educational establishments since 1 June**

	Date	Pupils attending establishment	Nursery pupils attending	Reception pupils attending	Year 1 pupils attending	Year 6 pupils attending	Year 10 pupils attending	Year 12 pupils attending	Children of key workers	Vulnerable children on an EHCP	Vulnerable children with a social worker	Other vul'nable children
Mon	01-Jun	1573	94	226	193	291			793	191	126	235
Tues	02-Jun	1917	106	254	241	347			911	134	118	178
Wed	03-Jun	2018	98	313	269	383			915	126	117	182
Thurs	04-Jun	2194	125	377	344	408			951	102	136	213
Fri	05-Jun	1931	120	311	327	348			849	66	115	200
Mon	08-Jun	2659	158	466	398	513			1157	83	134	245
Tues	09-Jun	2890	162	520	438	548			1157	211	168	357
Wed	10-Jun	2860	154	487	461	495			1191	220	189	341
Thurs	11-Jun	2813	174	513	507	500			1189	183	163	333
Fri	12-Jun	2413	146	392	411	394			1026	142	166	260
Mon	15-Jun	4267	216	737	681	850	196	169	1408	255	185	371
Tues	16-Jun	4300	208	779	718	841	183	103	1448	158	186	310
Wed	17-Jun	3959	190	696	691	767	187	32	1391	203	192	341
Thurs	18-Jun	4136	190	711	763	815	152	93	1395	160	181	320
Fri	19-Jun	3579	171	611	657	707	108	96	1230	172	183	370
Mon	22-Jun	4837	244	829	780	941	276	19	1590	212	203	317
Tues	23-Jun	5142	251	841	808	920	176	36	1553	196	186	345
Wed	24-Jun	4687	227	781	812	852	171	25	1623	181	190	351
Thurs	25-Jun	4442	223	709	770	801	255	30	1488	154	159	324
Fri	26-Jun	3830	191	635	718	690	139	38	1226	161	165	292
Mon	29-Jun	5287	279	893	836	1021	250	18	1733	201	191	341
Tues	30-Jun	4997	266	899	858	1004	226	32	1710	173	173	357
Wed	01-Jul	5001	225	862	838	956	224	42	1558	170	165	335





Preliminary data from other local authorities in the West Midlands shows the proportion of Herefordshire pupils in school exceeds those elsewhere in the region.

## 6. Support for those not attending

- We have two seconded HMI who have carried out a local survey of the support on offer for us. A summary of their report is attached - in essence this support has been a blend of online provision, home visits and contact via phone and / or social media. Practice has varied from school to school but has in some cases been innovative and successful. One of our special schools for example (Brookfield) has maintained weekly distancing visits with food parcels and a doorstep conversation with family and pupils. They now have almost 100% attendance. Others have maintained a healthy online curriculum. This whole process was new to schools and they should be congratulated in what they have done at short notice and in an unfamiliar world. This was done alongside opening and closing schools, adapting for safety, responding to national guidance, staying open for holiday periods, sorting out meal vouchers and offering closer contact with families. However, despite some exceptional practice provision has been variable and ultimately engagement is optional for pupils at home in some schools. Families have faced significant challenges in some cases - access to reliable internet access and equipment in particular. There is now a growing awareness that if blended learning is to stay - families need support in juggling expectations at home and support from schools in what is expected and how to home school. Engagement levels are more closely monitored in secondary schools and colleges than in primary (in general).



- The immediate support offer provided by the local authority once lockdown was imposed was an online curriculum support licence which meant that all schools had something they could use. The one selected was a tailored Key Stage 1 to 3 offer (ie across primary and secondary) which enabled schools to offer all subjects for every year group with the option for home study included. Some of our schools use this - others use their own or an alternative. Take up has been good but variable.
- Schools report an increased level of contact with families via social media and telephone and most have taken to making weekly or fortnightly calls - which includes speaking with the pupils. Anecdotally some have also reported that some pupils for whom actual attendance was difficult have responded well to the remote contacts. These contacts have all helped.
- Pupils have done well themselves during the lockdown and engaged with learning. Many have attended, found it to be a positive experience, worked within the guidance of schools and responded well to expectations. This must have been a very different experience for them. We have examples of virtual assemblies and choirs, homework being completed even more diligently than usual and some moving experiences of young children meeting and waving at their friends across the internet before settling to work. Most pupils at home have actively engaged with e-learning, and done their best to work through this. For those that would have taken public examinations this is a challenging time which has much uncertainty. GCSE cohorts for example, know with far less confidence what their grades will be and decisions about their futures will be made in a much more uncertain world. School leavers will face similar uncertainty - especially those for who leaving school to go to employment was the option - but in fact for all of them. Primary schools report that the absence of Key Stage 2 assessments has meant transition arrangements are more worrying for them.
- As lockdown continues however - and for many pupils it will be as long as six months - the support becomes more variable - although levels of online engagement have been maintained and we have well over 5000 pupils now attending, it is likely that for some pupils their mental well-being has suffered. The national survey (see attached) shows some data around this and we have no reason to believe that the situation in Herefordshire will be significantly different. Public Health have also conducted a local survey which echoes this.
- We have shared the supporting guidance on how to support pupils with schools several times over the lockdown. They have been well received. We are also aware that the longer the lockdown went on the harder families found it to maintain the initial enthusiasm.
- As schools prepare to open more normally we are expecting a rise in the need for mental health support on behalf of pupils. Schools have guidance already in readiness for this about what they could do. However, we also know that, as pupils have returned, their anxieties do quickly dissipate. This term has seen a 'welcome back approach' which pupils have enjoyed.
- Social Work Heads of Service have been contacting schools and then subsequently contacting families to ensure regular contact is maintained for no attendees. This closer contact has been mirrored right across Children and Families Directorate, including Early Years and for pupils with SEND. The work of our virtual school has been especially praised by the families. The level of family contact within the Early Help service has been consistently high (at around 550 contacts a week) and of high quality.

- Schools have been contacting the non-attende families weekly (usually via phone or virtually)

### **What we know about the impact on mental health and the educational deficit for pupils during lockdown?**

- This is an emerging picture rather than hard data (both nationally and locally). We do know that not all pupils have equal access to the online and digital support in place and as a consequence provision is variable. We also know that a few pupils will have engaged in a limited way with online offers (and not always by choice) and we also know that this provision is variable across the county in terms of how extensive the offer is. We do know however that locally this is a success story and schools and settings are to be congratulated on their efforts here. They commonly report that for a significant proportion of pupils, the on line offer has been welcomed by the pupils themselves. It is worthy of future research to establish which local cohorts this has worked for.
- The most explicit research on the potential deficit has been undertaken by Education Endowment Foundation. This is published and available on [educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk](http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)
- They suggest that the possible impact on the gap in performance between disadvantaged pupils and their peers could widen by as much as 36%. They also suggest that there will not be one single catch up strategy that will work - it will require many. They differentiate between 'recovering learning' and 'learning lost' - this is where gains could be recovered quickly or others where recovery is long term. The evidence is that if pupils miss the first term in an academic year they lose more than if they miss the final term of an academic year - in this case many will have missed both terms. Their recovery will be longer.
- With regard to online learning their evidence is that the quality of the learning is more important than the access to resources - in short - it is unlikely that providing access to digital resources without support will improve learning. This will require both on line tutors and catch up sessions for the 2020-21 academic year.
- There is some evidence that some cohorts of pupils have coped well with lockdown and have engaged with the virtual learning model better than expected and have expressed some satisfaction that they can work from home. This is anecdotal via the schools - we do not yet have hard data.
- Attached to this report is the local online report summary, the local mental health survey and the national mental well-being survey. An attachment is provided to each.
- Schools are reporting that pupils adapt well to the new normal and quickly assimilate to different routines.

**Young Minds survey** - the impact of COVID19 on children and young people's mental health: the results of a survey with parents and carers. This is a national survey and is not local - but we can assume that the findings would be similar. This survey was however conducted in April and May. The survey sample size was 1854 respondents.

Key findings include:

- 67% agreed that they were concerned about the long-term impact of the virus on mental health
- Amongst parents and carers who had children in receipt of mental health support 77% were concerned about the long-term impact
- 24% said they did not know where to go for support
- 29% said there was not enough support
- Only 4% said they were receiving the same level of support as pre COVID19
- 63% said their child was receiving support but remotely - this was welcomed
- 66% of parents and carers said they would welcome more support

**Respondents asked for:**

- ❖ Better communication with their school (eg a weekly call)
- ❖ Clarity around expectations and less pressure from schools
- ❖ Mental health advice from school
- ❖ Access to laptop or better internet connections
- ❖ Advice on transitions back to school
- ❖ Adding arts and well-being to their school curriculum
- ❖ Clarity around exams.

**Respondents expressed the following concerns:**

- ❖ Not having enough time to help
- ❖ Not feeling qualified
- ❖ Unrealistic demands from school
- ❖ Focussing on mental health
- ❖ Young people giving up studying as it won't affect their grades.

## What have we done in Herefordshire?

- We have provided free licences for online material to be available in the run up to lockdown - this was provided by Hamilton Education (costs for annual licence for all schools was £5000) - to ensure every school could offer something. In the event, although many did use Hamilton, a wide range of material was available - and at some point a national scheme was made available (The Oak Academy)
- We have sourced and distributed around 380 laptops and digital devices to be used by our most vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils. These were provided at free to the council by DfE (although there were associated costs to the council of around £3900 to make them classroom ready).
- We have issued guidance on how best to set and respond to online learning. This was issued early but supplemented by national guidance later in lockdown. This included help to families. However, the response was variable to this and we are not clear to what extent it has actually helped.
- Schools have shared good practice with each other via on line tutorials and videos etc.
- We have supported schools in their communications with parents in how best to support children at home.
- To support the mental well-being of families during lockdown we have issued much guidance via our newsletters (they come out weekly - or occasionally more frequently than that) - this includes drop in visits by school teachers (distant door step visits, food parcels and gifts, etc). Some schools have ensured weekly contact with children they have concerns about. In one example, one school maintained weekly visits to homes and dropped parcels for vulnerable pupils - they have had one of the highest attendance rates since wider reopening took place on June 01<sup>st</sup>. (Brookfield)
- Kooth was launched during the pandemic in Herefordshire – this is an initiative which is an on line confidential counselling service. It is a highly regarded national service which was launched in Herefordshire during lockdown.

The following are a summary of some of the successful activity carried out by SEND and Early Help teams

- The SEND Team and Educational Psychologists (EPs) have adapted well to the lockdown and after initial concerns that the statutory assessment process would be greatly disrupted by the virus restrictions, it quickly became apparent that they were able to continue the process for the vast majority of cases. Those cases where there has been an unavoidable delay have been informed. Otherwise, performance to statutory timescales continues to be strong.
- The Brookfield School and HPRS (PRU) have had high numbers of pupils returning to school compared to the national picture for SEMH provision. This means many vulnerable learners were being seen on a very regular basis.

- Peripatetic staff (Specialist Teachers and EPs) have been conducting virtual work up until this point. They are now starting to make visits to schools and garden visits to families where this can be arranged safely.
- Early Help Family Support have continued to work with families through Covid-19 completing over 600 contacts on average each week, including working with families in their outside space or home if safe to do so.
- Children’s Centre Services have adapted their work to support families by producing videos of some of their evidence based programmes to use with families.
- Virtual Early Help Family Network Meetings have been taking place for the 8 areas in the county with very positive attendance.
- The Virtual school has also been supporting pupils with high needs. They have hosted 158 online reviews of education plans during lockdown, ensured all children in care have received a DFE or local laptop – in fact they had organised much of this immediately before the DFE offer. Attendance of LAC has improved from 10% at the start of lockdown to 46% now. Free on line material is available and The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller team has continued with site visits and contact.

### **What next - some discussion prompts?**

- We await the details of the national /catch up programme’ which appears to be based on providing tutors.
- There has been some refreshed Return to Ofsted guidance released on July 06<sup>th</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-plans-from-september-2020>
- To what extent should we take the opportunity to refresh the sustainability agenda within the models of education we provide - for example, outdoor education, travel plans.
- A new normal - should we be looking at extending the curriculum variety and offer by keeping the blended learning model and using the various offers being made (for example, primary school PE, post 16 learning support, access to blended learning).





## **Impact of COVID-19 on children and young people's mental health: results of survey with parents and carers**

YoungMinds carried out a survey with 1,854 parents or carers between Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> April and Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May. The survey was hosted on surveygizmo.eu and promoted through social media and charity mailing lists. [1]

The parents and carers who responded to the survey were more likely than the general population to have a child with existing mental health needs: 745 respondents said that their children had received some form of mental health support (including from the NHS, charities, schools or helplines) in the previous three months.

### **1. Most respondents were concerned about the long-term impact of the coronavirus on their child's mental health**

Most parents and carers who responded to the survey were concerned about the long-term impact of the coronavirus, and the restrictions on movement, on their child's mental health.

Overall, **67% of parents agreed that they were concerned about the long-term impact of the coronavirus on their child's mental health.** 14% disagreed.

Among parents and carers whose children had received mental health support in the last three months **77% agreed they were concerned about the long-term impact on their child's mental health;** 8% disagreed.

Respondents reported a range of ways in which the crisis had impacted the children and young people in their care, including:

- Increased anxiety and depression
- Increased sense of loss and fear (e.g. about going out for exercise, or uncertainty about what would happen next)
- Increased mood swings or children becoming more emotional
- Lack of structure and routine having a negative impact
- Children and young people finding it difficult to sleep or having nightmares
- Children either becoming more attached to their parents, or becoming more introverted/isolated within the house

- Children missing face to face contact with friends – technology is only doing so much to help them feel connected.

## **2. Mental health, education and safety are among top concerns for parents and carers**

When asked what the top concerns were for the children in their care, the most common answers included:

- Effect on their immediate mental health and recovery from existing mental health conditions, or long term impact on their mental health
- Impact on their education
- Impact on their future work prospects and finances
- Transitioning back into ‘normality’
- Children, or parents, becoming ill with the coronavirus
- Adapting to lockdown and change in their lives
- Impact of social isolation and not seeing friends
- Impact on physical health
- Access to services during and after the lockdown

## **3. Many respondents do not know where to turn for support for their child’s mental health**

**24% of respondents said that they would not know where to turn for advice and information** on supporting their child’s mental health during this time.

Among those who had accessed mental health support in the last three months, 22% said that they would not know where to turn for advice and information.

**29% of respondents disagreed that there is enough support (information, helplines and resources) available** to help them and their child get through this time.

Among those whose children had accessed mental health support in the last three months, 33% disagreed that there was enough support available.

## **4. A quarter of respondents whose children had been receiving mental health support in the run-up to the crisis said that their child was no longer accessing it**

Respondents whose children had received mental health support in the previous three months (from the NHS, private providers, school counsellors, helplines or charities) were asked what level of mental health support their child was currently able to access.

- 4% said their child was receiving the same level of support in the same way



- 63% said their child was receiving the same level of support in a different way (e.g. remotely) or reduced support
- 25% said their child was no longer able to access mental health support, but still needed it.
- 9% said their child was no longer accessing mental health support, and no longer need it

These answers correlate with the [previous survey](#) YoungMinds carried out with young people with mental health needs; in that survey, 26% of respondents who had been receiving mental health support in the run-up to the crisis said that they were no longer accessing mental health support. This was either because the services were no longer available or because they faced barriers to accessing remote support that had been offered.

## 5. Respondents believe that music, TV, family time and video calls have helped children to cope

When asked what, if anything, had been most helpful for their child’s mental health during the COVID-19 crisis, the answers that respondents were most likely to agree with were:

- |                                   |                                       |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| - Listening to / playing music    | 84% agreed that this had been helpful |
| - Watching TV/films               | 82% agreed that this had been helpful |
| - Exercise                        | 82% agreed that this had been helpful |
| - Spending time with family       | 80% agreed that this had been helpful |
| - Face-to-face calls with friends | 74% agreed that this had been helpful |
| - Face-to-face calls with family  | 71% agreed that this had been helpful |

Learning new skills (58%), gaming (57%), reading books (56%), and school / university work (48%) were also thought to have been helpful by many parents.

The least helpful activity listed was reading or watching the news: only 14% believed that this had been helpful, while 55% believed that it had been unhelpful.

## 6. Parents and carers need more support

Respondents were asked what support would be most helpful for them during this time, in terms of their child’s mental health and wellbeing. Common answers included:

*Support for their child’s mental health and wellbeing*

Many parents – including those whose children had existing mental health needs – wanted more support for their child’s wellbeing or mental health.

Respondents said that the following would be helpful:

- Check-ins from mental health professionals or other trusted adults who were previously supporting their child
- Information on where to get mental health support
- Online counselling services, live-chat services, or access to a school counsellor
- Increased mental health support for their child – for example, full-length counselling sessions rather than quick catch-ups
- Advice on coping strategies
- Age-appropriate mindfulness activities
- Resources for young people from school or online to help with their mental wellbeing.

#### *More support for parents and carers*

66% of respondents said that the coronavirus crisis had had an impact on their own mental health.

Many respondents indicated that they would welcome support for themselves, including practical help, financial help, better access to amenities such as supermarkets, or more support for them in helping their child to adjust to situation.

#### *Improved communication with their child's school*

Although some respondents indicated they had good communication with their school, many felt that they lacked enough contact on an individual basis or wanted more clarity around the school work that their children were being asked to complete.

Respondents told us that they wanted:

- Better communication with the school - e.g. a weekly call with parents or regular check-ins with their children
- Clarity around expectations in regards to school work, and less pressure from the school in regard to completing work
- Mental health advice from school
- Access to computers for their children, or better internet connection
- Advice on transitions back into school
- Adding arts and wellbeing to their school curriculum
- Clarity around exams including GCSEs and A Levels

#### *Advice on coronavirus*

A number of respondents believed that there needed to be clearer guidelines from the Government on the restrictions and particularly aimed at young people. Respondents said that the following would be helpful:

- Clarity on timelines for lockdown
- Advice for vulnerable people as restrictions change
- A personal address from Government to young people
- Guidance aimed at children and young people about COVID-19 and the rules around lockdown

## **7. Many parents and carers expressed concerns about supporting their child's schooling**

Many respondents expressed concerns about their ability to support their child with their education. This was for a number of reasons:

### *Not having time to help*

Parents often mentioned not having time to help – either because of juggling a job with supporting their child or because they had more than one child in their care. This was exacerbated when one child, or more than one, had SEND or mental health needs.

### *Not feeling qualified to help*

Many respondents stated that they did not feel qualified to help the young people in their care with school work. Reasons mentioned included not feeling they had the level of education to be able to help, not knowing the content that was being studied, or having no access to materials to be able to help. Some parents responded that this had led them to feel 'overwhelmed' or 'way out of my depth'.

### *Unrealistic demands from school*

Parents mentioned schools setting too much work, work that was too hard to complete without a teacher, or too hard to complete outside of a classroom setting. Several parents believed that they didn't have the temperament to help.

### *Focusing on mental health*

Some parents said that they were prioritising mental health instead of school work. The main reasons cited for this were to promote family harmony, because they believed that arguments would ensue if schoolwork was pushed too hard.

### *Young people in exam years giving up studying as it won't affect their grades*

Some parents with children in exam years mentioned that their children had stopped studying as they knew their work will not affect the outcome of their grades. Most parents who reported this were accepting of this.

[1] 91% of respondents lived in England; 4% in Scotland; 4% in Wales and 1% in Northern Ireland.

13% of respondents had children aged 0-5; 34% had children aged 6-10; 44% had children aged 11-14; 49% had children aged 15-18; 19% had children aged 19-22; 6% had children aged 22-25.



# Children and Young People's experiences of Mental Health & Anxiety during Covid-19

## Introduction

Worcestershire County Council, Herefordshire Council and Worcestershire Health & Care NHS Trust were keen to find out about experiences of mental health and anxiety in children and young people during the Covid outbreak: aiming to gather information that helps to understand what worked well for children and young people and their families and to learn lessons and put measures in place to improve the mental health services for children and young adults in the future.

This questionnaire was aimed at children and young people but could also be filled in by parents and guardians on behalf of their child. The questionnaire was live from 18<sup>th</sup> May to 22<sup>nd</sup> June and overall 966 respondents completed the questionnaire.

## Summary of findings

The small number of respondents who had been using mental health services prior to the Covid pandemic had mixed views on how helpful any continued support via telephone and video calls had been. 33% (17 people) found this not at all helpful; they had received no/next to no support or found talking on the telephone challenging.

59% of Worcestershire respondents and 48% of Herefordshire respondents say their mental health and wellbeing has got worse since the start of the coronavirus outbreak: the main reasons being:

- Missing family/friends; loneliness; isolation; lack of social interaction
- School work: working remotely; pace; volume; lack of support; missed exams; grades; deadlines; lack of mental stimulation; parent pressure on CYP to complete
- Anxious/stressed; anxiety attacks; needs more reassurance; worries; scared
- Disruption to routine; lack of structure; miss school; change

However, 15% of respondents say their mental health and wellbeing has improved as they prefer home schooling (due to working at own pace; no distractions; less pressure; less work; being away from teachers; improved behaviour); have reduced stress with fewer demands on time; have more time with family/at home and/or more time for hobbies and interests.

Around three quarters of all respondents were somewhat or very worried about friends or family catching the coronavirus, fewer worried about catching it themselves (46%).

In general, older teenagers were more likely than younger children to be worried about issues such as school work, a lack of freedom or loss of routine and not being able to talk face-to-face about problems.

When asked about activities to improve mental health and wellbeing, most respondents found direct time with parents and/or other household members somewhat or very helpful; particularly true for younger children. Face to face calls with family and friends were also viewed as helpful as were activities such as exercise, learning new skills and entertainment (TV/films, reading books, gaming; particularly for boys). The free text comments supported these findings, exercise being the most

common theme, followed by cooking and baking, and creative pursuits. General time outdoors was mentioned by a significant number of people and pets had been helpful for many.

Overall, 13% of respondents had felt the need to seek support or information on mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus outbreak, more girls than boys, and more older teenagers than young children.

59% of people who tried to get information on mental health and wellbeing felt they successfully got this; 53% of those who tried to get support on mental health and wellbeing were successful. The main reasons given for being unable to get information or support were concerns about the effectiveness and accessibility of telephone support and general reluctance to talk about mental health.

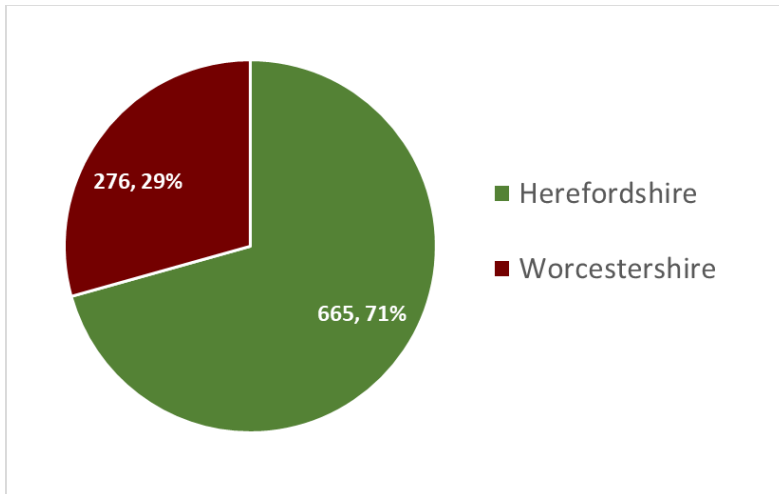
Of those who found information and/or support, nearly 60% found the information very or quite useful, and over 50% found very or quite useful support for their mental health and wellbeing. Free text comments generally indicated that information found was helpful and that it was reassuring to find others in their situation.

Overall the findings of the questionnaire highlight the importance of spending time with family and friends (physically or via video calls), exercise, fresh air and creative activities to improve mental health and wellbeing; these should continue to be promoted to children and young people.

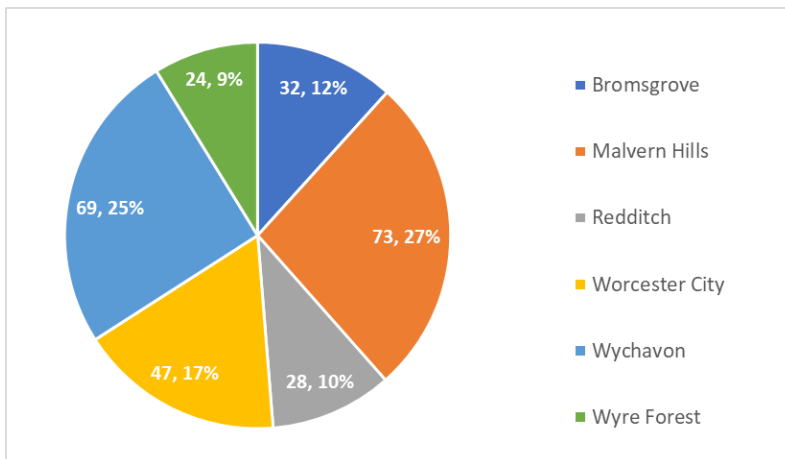
Where mental health support services are required, people recognise the constraints arising from the Covid pandemic, but many find these services difficult to use via telephone where non-verbal information is missing. Every effort should be made to offer in person support if at all possible, and where it is not an option people will need reassurance as to the benefits of the remotely delivered service.

## The respondents

Herefordshire residents make up 71% of the responses, 29% from Worcestershire, and within Worcestershire the greatest number of responses were from Malvern Hills and Wychavon.



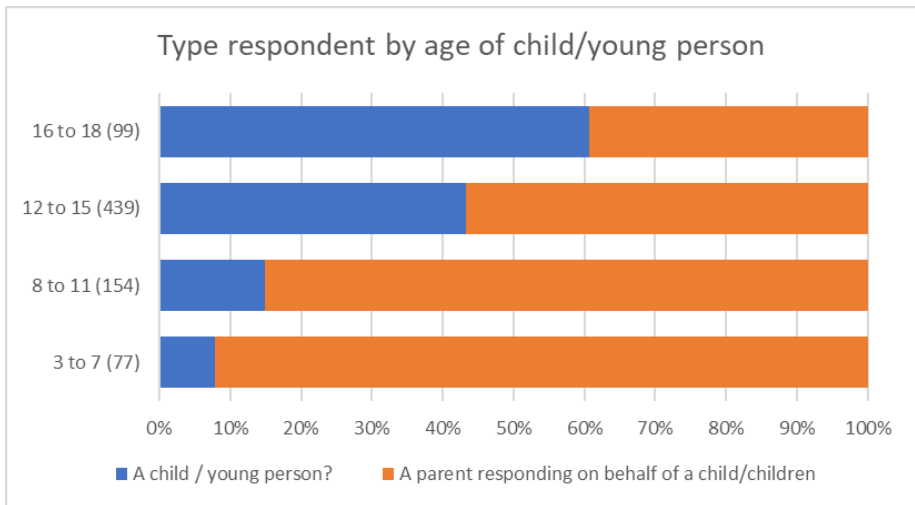
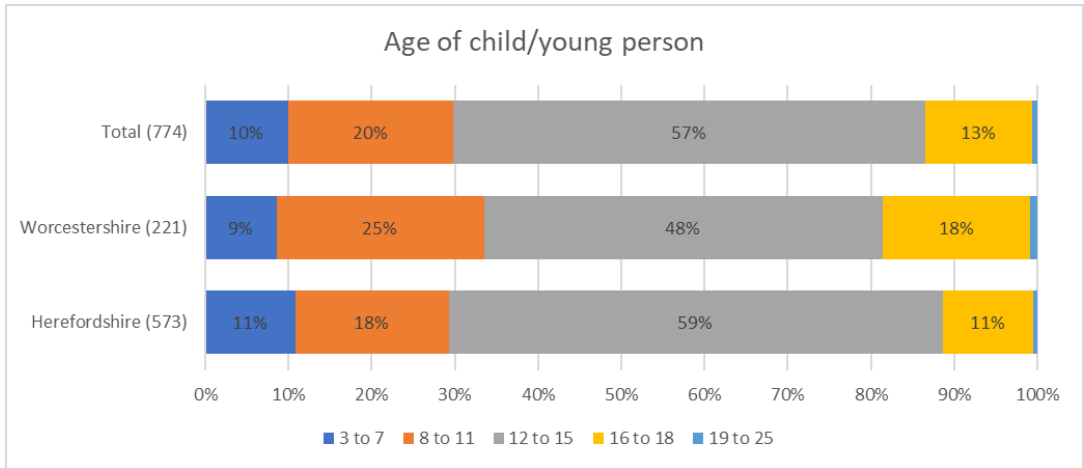
Base: 941 responses



Base: 273 responses

Parents responding on behalf of a child or young person were asked to give the age and gender of the child rather than themselves, however, in some cases the age given was clearly that of the parent and these demographics have been excluded below.

The age breakdown of the children and young people is shown in the chart below, a wide range of ages is covered in both counties. As you would expect, responses from younger children were more likely to be made by parents/guardians on their behalf.



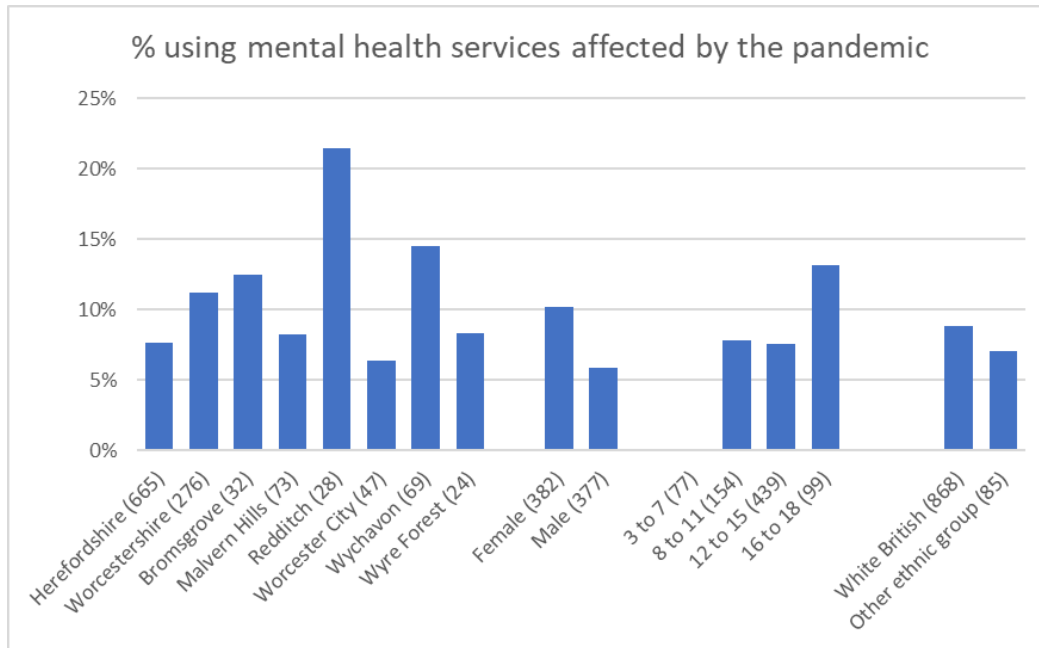
Considering the gender of children and young people (excluding parent respondents apparently giving their own age and gender), 49% were female, 49% male with a small number preferring not to say or self-describe.

Overall 91% of the respondents were from a White British ethnic background, 3% another white background, 3% from mixed or multiple ethnic groups with very small numbers from Asian, Black, Arab or ethnic groups. Because of the small sample sizes any consideration of differences between ethnicities in the analysis that follows compares the White British respondents and all other groups.

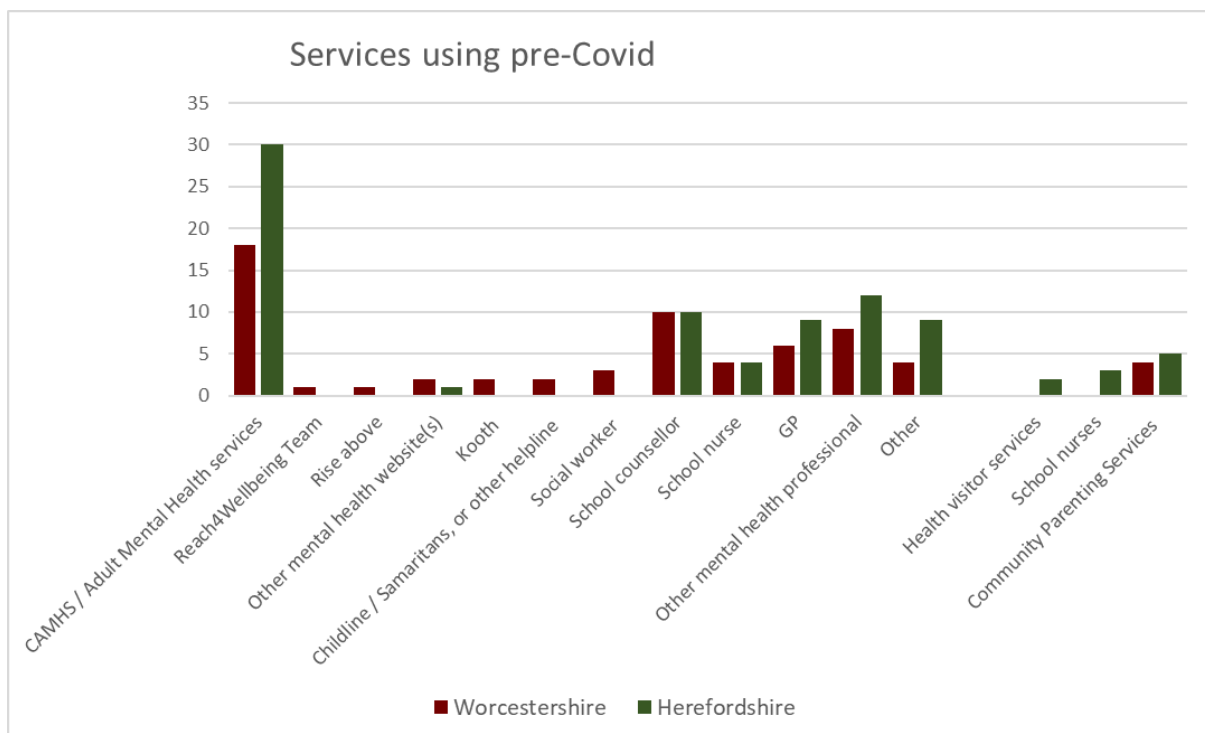


## Access to previously available Mental Health Services

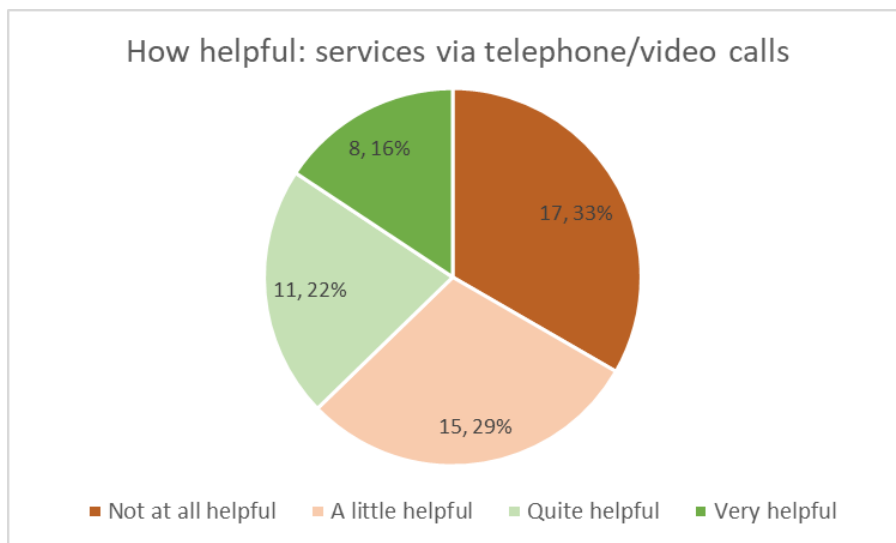
Overall 9% of respondents had previously been using mental health services either not being delivered or delivered differently during the coronavirus pandemic. A slightly higher proportion of Worcestershire residents had been using such services, and their use was more prevalent amongst older teenagers and female respondents.



The specific services used by children and by parents for respondents from the two counties are illustrated below.



Respondents who have been receiving support during the Covid outbreak via telephone and video calls were asked how helpful this has been. The number of responses is small, and response mixed with a third finding this not at all helpful, but almost 4 in 10 finding it quite or very helpful.



Base: 51 responses

46 respondents chose to comment further on why they had selected the response that they did. The table below shows a quantitative analysis of these comments, by grouping comments into categories.

(If you have been continuing to receive support during the Covid outbreak via telephone or video calls, how helpful has that been?) <b>Please can you tell us why you gave this response</b>	<b>Count</b>
Received no/next to no support; Support postponed	12
Challenging to talk/express feelings by telephone; Not the same as seeing someone	11
Contact was effective/reassuring	11
Unable to undertake physical checks/medication review by telephone	3
Different staff each call caused issues	2
Discharged if not use telephone appointment (threat/occurred)	2
Frequent/more frequent contact	2
Further support identified; Referral made	2
Infrequent/less frequent contact	2
Not as effective; better than nothing	2
Telephone support declined by young person/parent	2
Language barrier caused issues	1
Logistical issues - counsellors not having access to records, illness causing cancellations etc	1
Longer waiting times	1
Telephone support inappropriate - hearing issues	1

Those who found services via telephone/video calls not at all helpful were most likely to indicate that they received no/next to no support or that support was postponed (7) and that talking on the telephone was challenging or not the same as seeing someone (4). One parent of a child with ASD

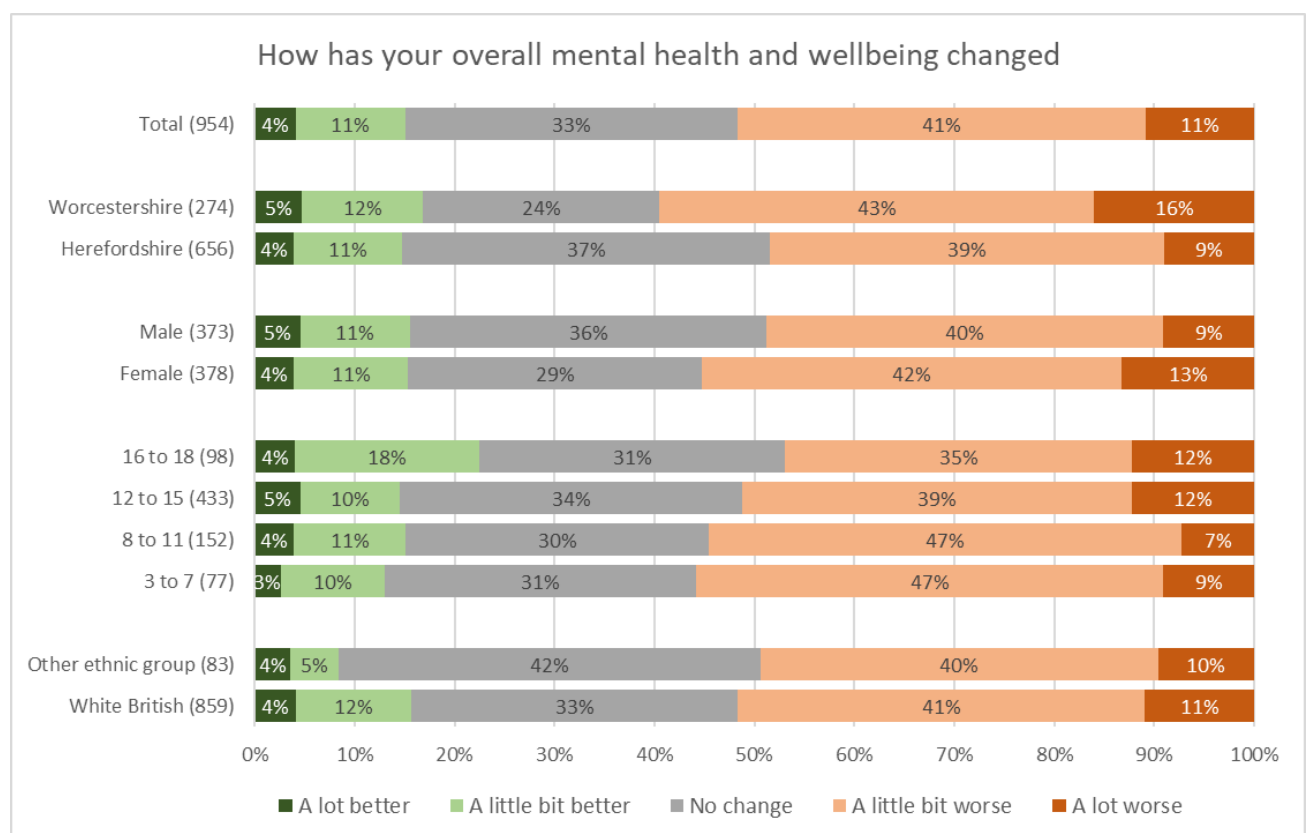
noted that the disorder meant their child found it difficult to communicate via telephone calls which had a negative effect on their mental health.

Some of the reasons respondents noted that telephone calls were challenging was because children found them awkward, they weren't able to let their facial expressions communicate their feelings, they lacked concentration, and struggled to engage due to ASD.

## Covid-19 effect on mental health and wellbeing

When asked about their overall mental health and wellbeing, overall just 15% of respondents say this has got better since the start of the coronavirus outbreak, 52% say it has got worse.

Worcestershire respondents are more likely to say things have got worse, and more girls than boys have experienced a negative change. Older teenagers are the most likely to say that their mental health and wellbeing has got a little bit better.



Participants were invited to comment on why their mental health mental health and wellbeing had improved, worsened or remained consistent. The following three tables group these comments into categories.

The first table shows those comments where the respondent indicated the child or young person's mental health and wellbeing was a little or a lot better since the start of the outbreak. It is worth noting that both positive and negative comments were made from this group. Negative comments were generally balanced by positive comments. Negative comment categories are shown in red in the table below.

How has your overall mental health and wellbeing changed since the start of the coronavirus outbreak? <b>Response: A little bit better / A lot better</b>	Count
<b>Please can you tell us why you gave this response</b>	
Home-schooling preferable (due to working at own pace; no distractions; less pressure; less work; being away from teachers; improved behaviour); does not like school	58
No/less stress; less rushing; fewer demands on time; more relaxed	40
More time with family/at home	30
More time for: hobbies; interests; playing; exercise; improve oneself; reflection	20
Enjoy time on own; enjoy reduced social interactions	17
More time outdoors	13
Exams cancelled – relief; less pressure; no need to revise	9
Less tired; getting more sleep; getting better sleep; don't have to get up early	8
Break from normality; chance to look at things differently	2
<b>Home-schooling worse (change in routine/work hard) (negative)</b>	<b>2</b>
Less travel time; less time in the car	2
Miss friends, but still able to contact	2
Lockdown is now easing	1
<b>Miss taking part in activities (negative)</b>	<b>1</b>
Safe from the virus	1
Started medication	1
<b>Unable to socialise (negative)</b>	<b>1</b>

Those respondents that indicated the child or young person's mental health and wellbeing had not changed since the start of the outbreak gave both positive and negative comments. 24 of the 173 indicated that the reason for their response was because negative and positive impacts on their mental health and wellbeing were balanced, resulting in no overall change. Many respondents commented that they felt fine, and 'no change' was from a baseline of good mental health and wellbeing.

How has your overall mental health and wellbeing changed since the start of the coronavirus outbreak? <b>Response: No Change</b>	Count
<b>Please can you tell us why you gave this response</b>	
Fine; Seems fine; no change in mental health; Coronavirus not affected CYP much; Coping well	95
Enjoys more home/family/play/hobbies time; feels safe at home	25
Balanced <b>negatives</b> & positives; both ups & <b>downs</b>	21
Well supported by family	23
Happier without school; enjoying home-schooling; enjoying slower pace; not worried about exams; social anxiety improved	16
Keeping routine/busy; able to balance study, exercise and rest; coping with school work	16
Still able to contact friends/family remotely	16
<b>Miss friends/teachers</b>	<b>11</b>
Adapted; mitigated (e.g. with exercise/games etc)	9
<b>Bored at times</b>	<b>6</b>

Break from things don't enjoy; like a holiday	6
School work (i.e. home-schooling) currently causes stress	6
Limited understanding of situation (learning difficulties)	1
Miss taking part in activities	1
Relationships between other family members deteriorated	1
Sometimes feel sick	1

The most frequent comment (170) given by those whose mental health and wellbeing had worsened since the start of the outbreak was that this was due to social isolation. This was followed by concerns over school work and home-schooling. Comments were mixed; some gave the cause of the deterioration in their mental health and wellbeing and others described the feelings and behaviours in which this deterioration presented: anxiety; less regulated emotions; disrupted sleep; reduced motivation; frustration; depression; and boredom were the most frequent of these.

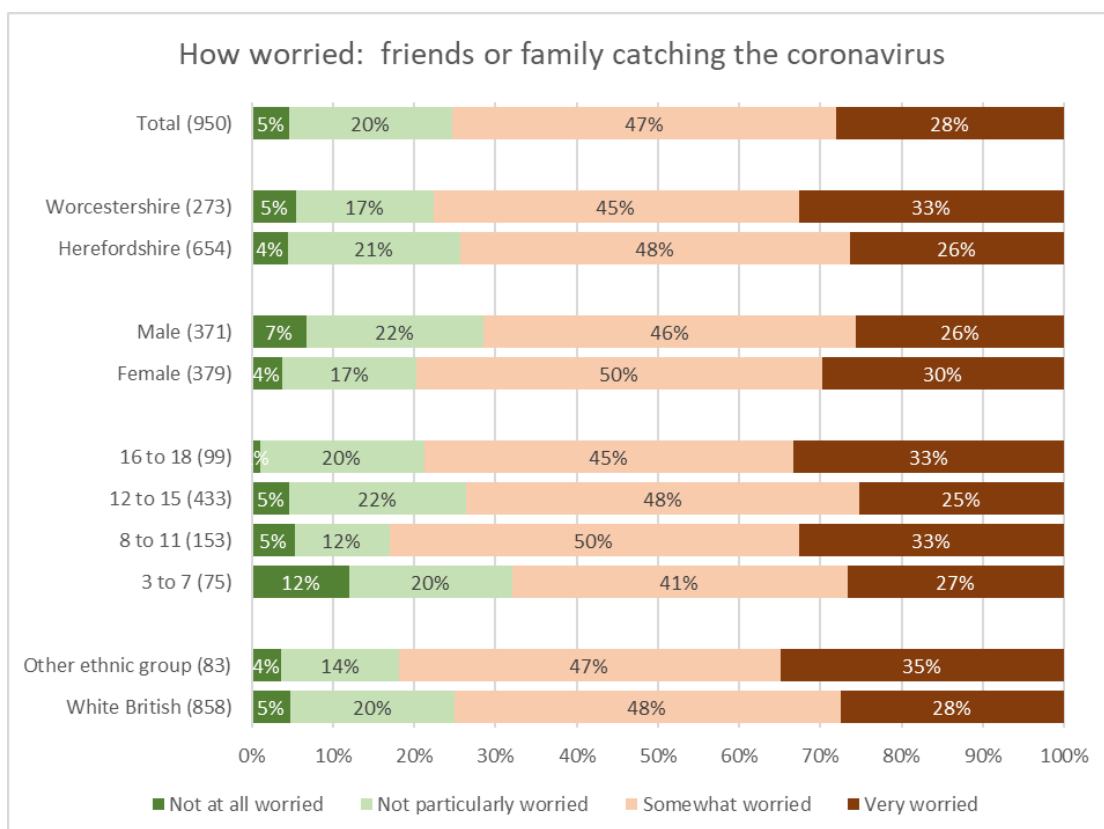
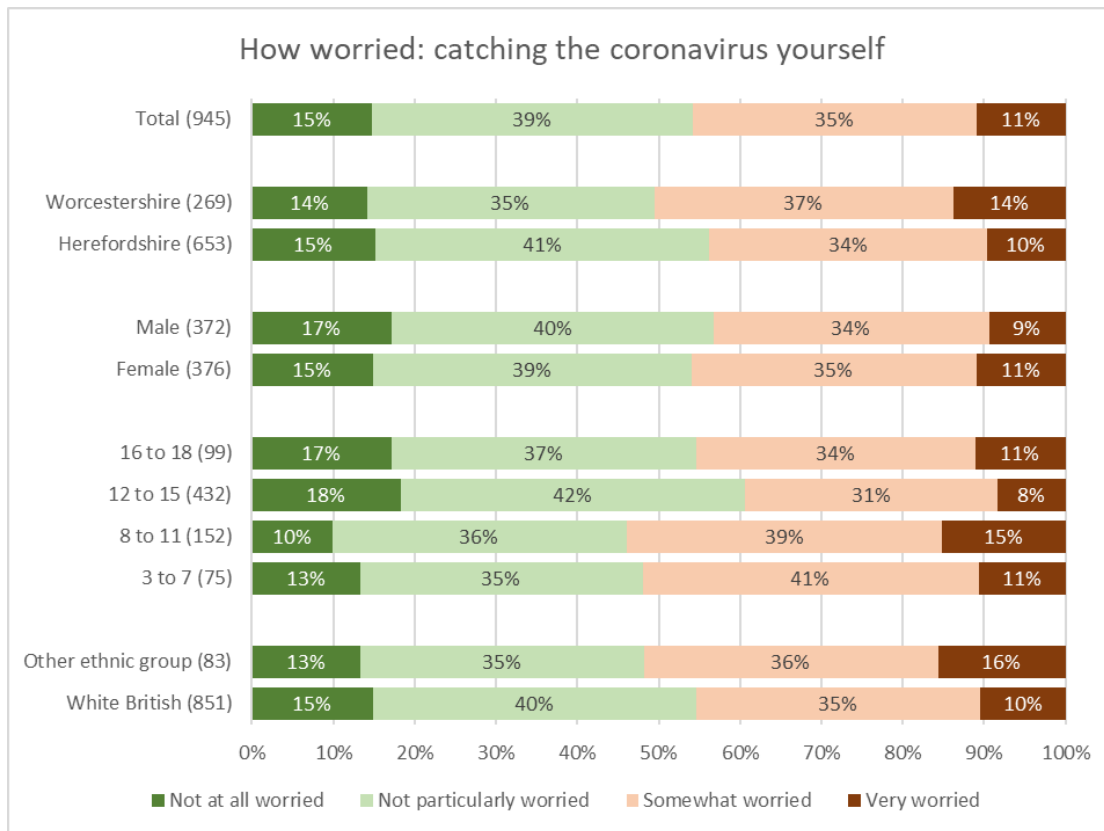
It is worth noting that both positive and negative comments were made from this group. Positive comments were generally balanced by negative comments. The two positive comment categories are shown in green in the table below.

How has your overall mental health and wellbeing changed since the start of the coronavirus outbreak? <b>Response: A little bit worse / A lot worse</b>	Count
<b>Please can you tell us why you gave this response</b>	
Missing family/friends; loneliness; isolation; lack of social interaction	170
School work: working remotely; pace; volume; lack of support; missed exams; grades; deadlines; lack of mental stimulation; parent pressure on CYP to complete	91
Anxious/stressed; anxiety attacks; needs more reassurance; worries; scared	72
Disruption to routine; lack of structure; miss school; change	68
Fear of contracting or spreading virus; worry about family/friends dying	39
Struggling with emotional self-regulation; mood swings; emotions higher; tearful; harder to cope; grumpy	39
Loss of freedom; Lack of variety in surroundings; feel trapped; unable to get away from family	37
Sleep difficult/disrupted; night terrors; more tired	34
Lack of motivation; lack of focus; lack of purpose; lethargic	33
Frustration; quick to anger; argumentative; tantrums	29
Missing out (e.g. holiday, activities); not enough exercise	26
Uncertainty in future; worried about future	21
Depressed; low mood; down	18
Fear of/unwilling to leave the house/socialise	18
Lack of support/care available (e.g. medication review, referral)	13
Less distractions; overthinking; more time with thoughts; questioning sexuality	11
Thought of returning to school; what school will be like	11
Bored; Fed up	10
Behavioural issues; disruptive; regressed	9
self-harming; diet restrictions; change in eating habits; developed tics	9
Retreated; become introverted; withdrawn; socially awkward	8

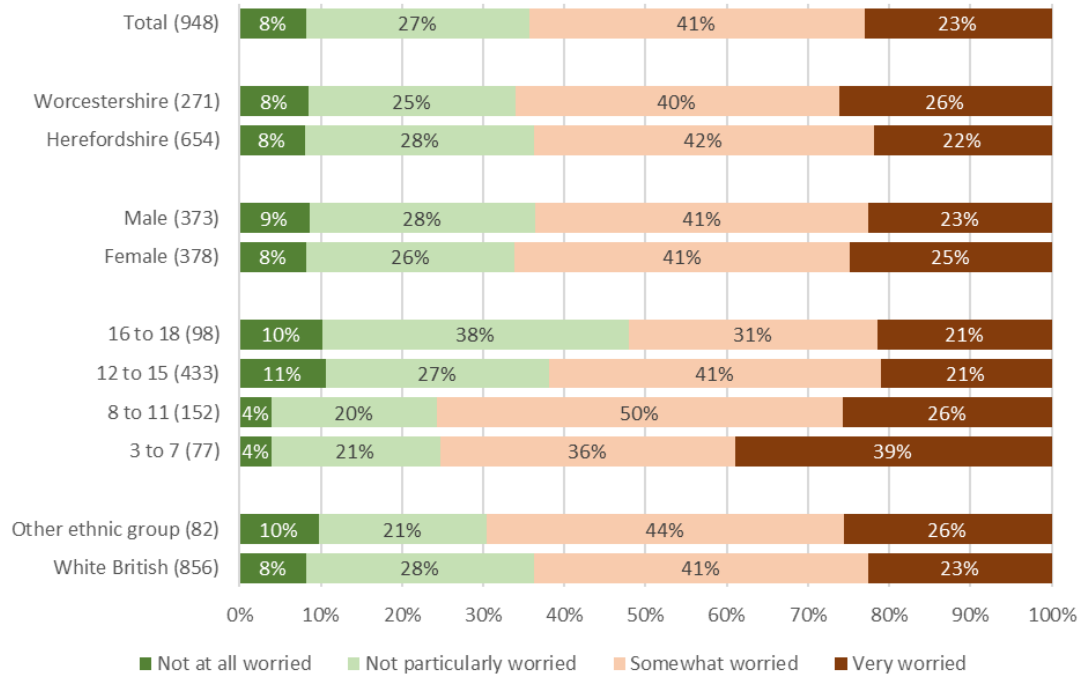
COVID rules/restrictions hard to understand	7
Family/friend/pet bereavement/extremely ill	5
Longevity of lockdown; monotony	5
Negativity; negative views	5
Eye issues from screen use; overuse of technology/screens	4
OCD intrusive thoughts; Suicidal thoughts	4
Helpful: being at home/remote schooling (pace, away from other children, time with family, feel safe)	3
Parents mental health suffering - affect child	3
Regular physical pain (e.g headaches, tummy aches)	3
Violent/Aggressive	3
Feel invisible/useless	1
Helpful: control over sleep routines	1
Struggling despite support	1

Parents of children diagnosed with conditions such as ASD, ADHD and Asperger Syndrome had differing experiences during lockdown, although more commonly the period had proved challenging for the child and family. One parent commented that their children with ADHD, autism/ASD, attachment disorder and sensory integration challenges have struggled to cope with the change in routine and their family have found this period challenging. However, another parent noted that their child with Severe Attachment Disorder, learning delay and mobility issues had found home-schooling preferable. Two parents of children with Autism said that their children either preferred being at home due to social anxiety at school, or was anxious at the thought of having to return to school. One parent of a child with Asperger Syndrome noted that their child's anxiety had reduced due to not having to go to school, whilst a teenager with Asperger Syndrome noted that the lack of routine had caused their mental health to deteriorate, including self-harming behaviour.

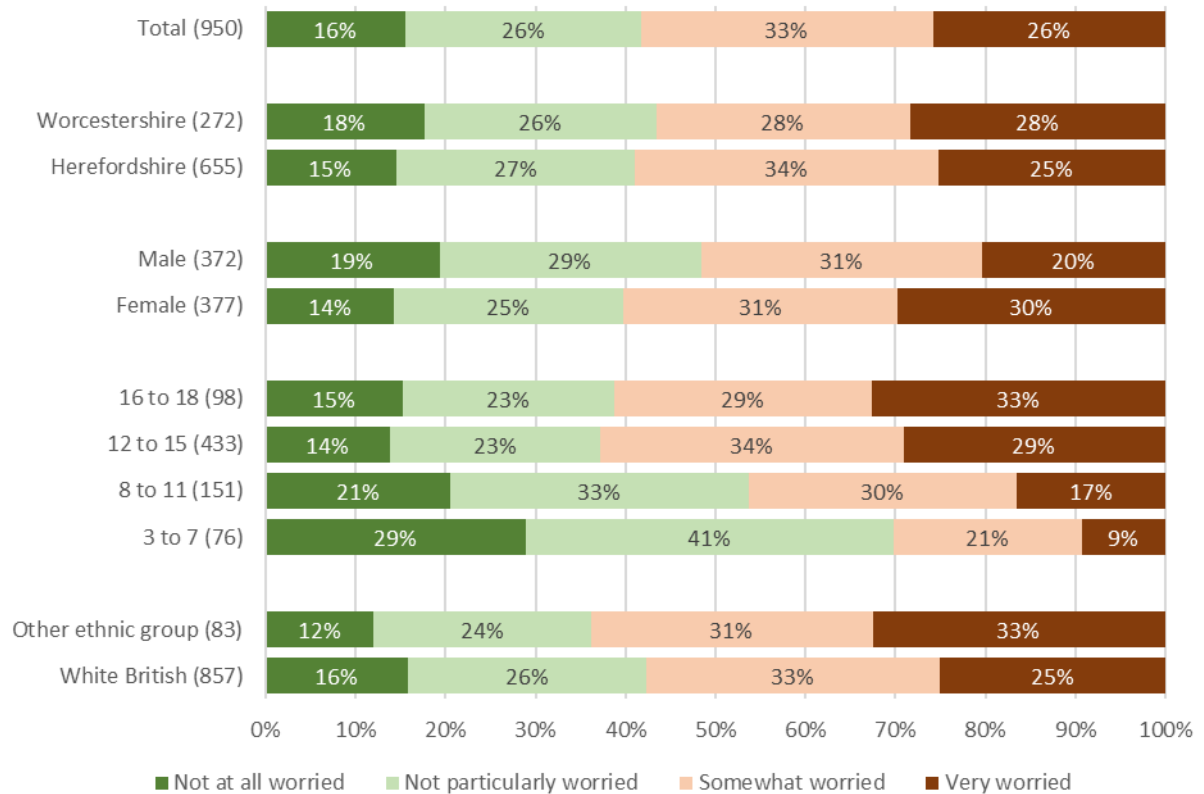
Respondents were asked a series of questions about how worried they were about certain aspects of their mental health and wellbeing, the charts below illustrate variation in responses across demographic and geographic groups.



### How worried: not meeting friends and family outside your household

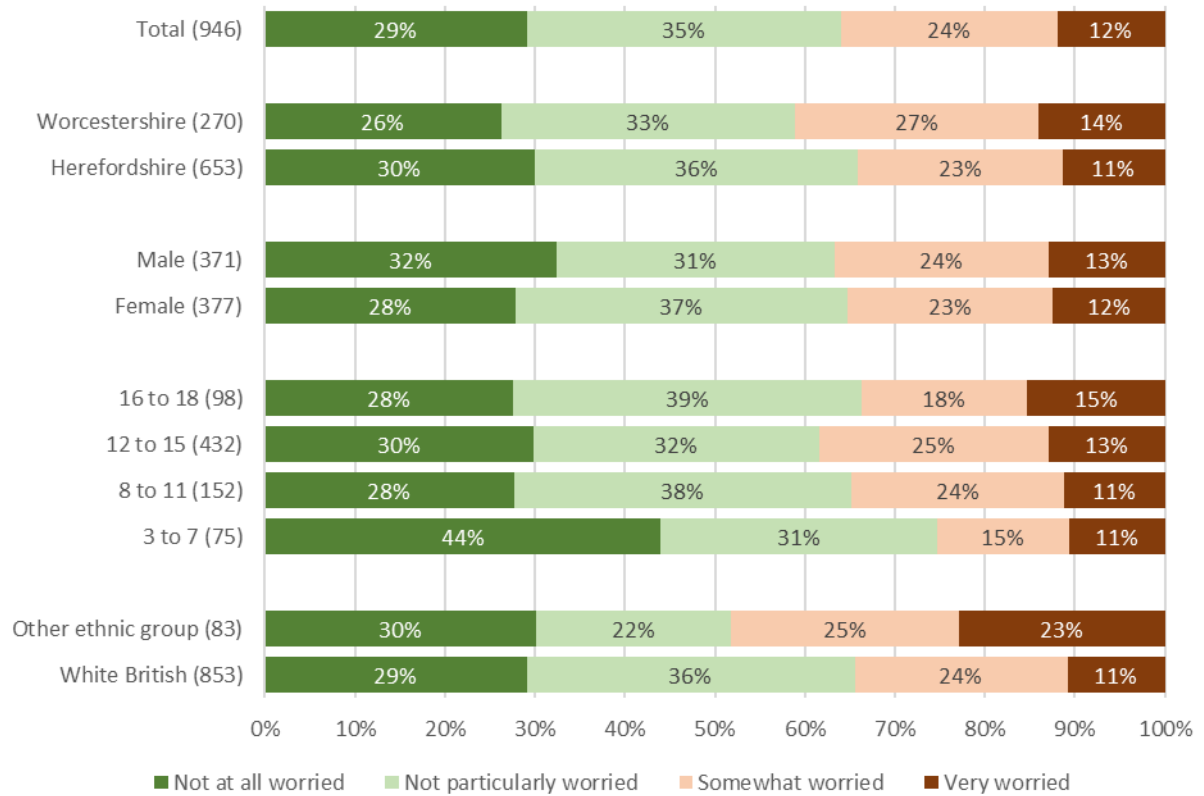


### How worried: school work / grades suffering

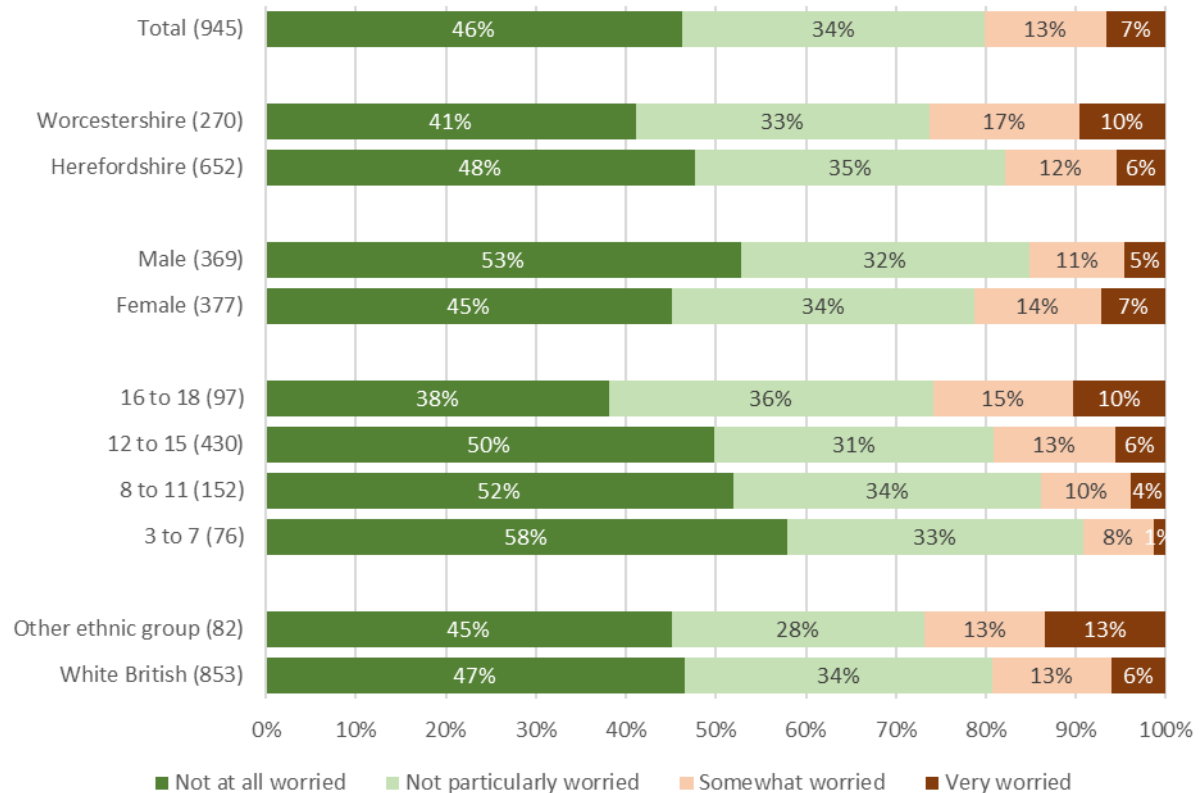




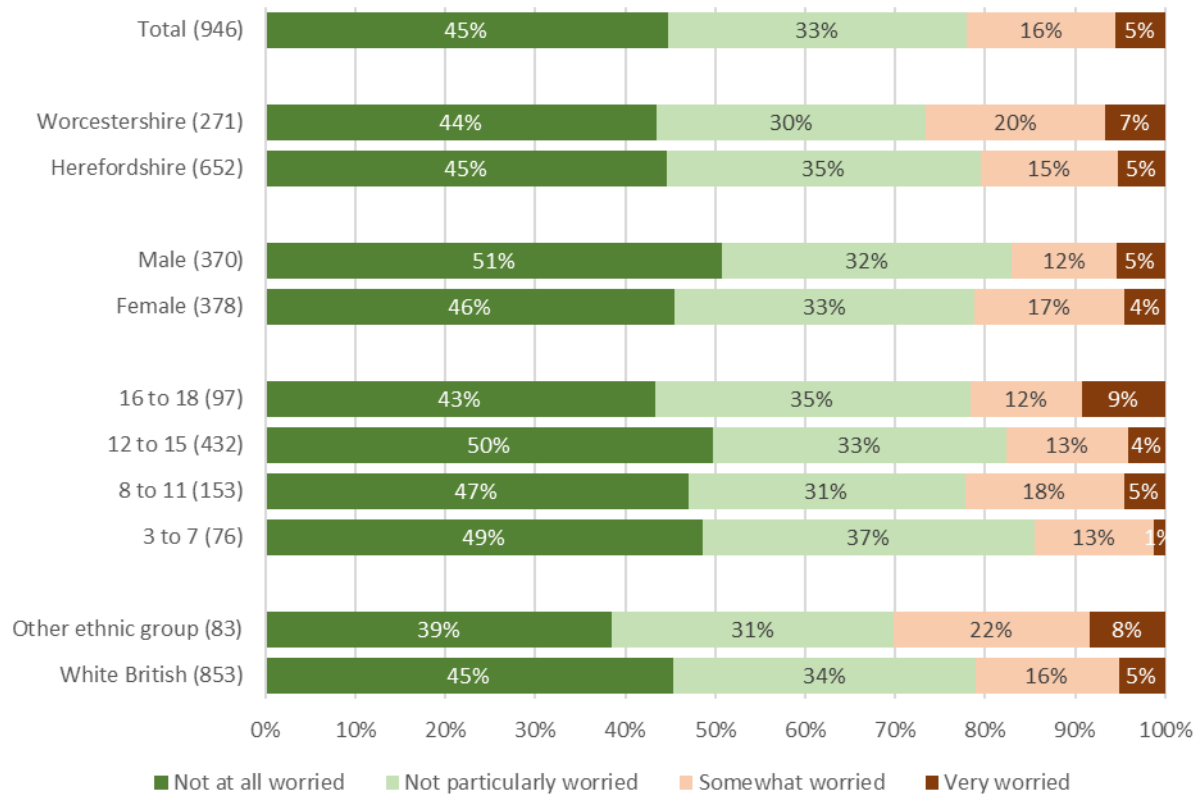
### How worried: lack of exercise / outdoor activities



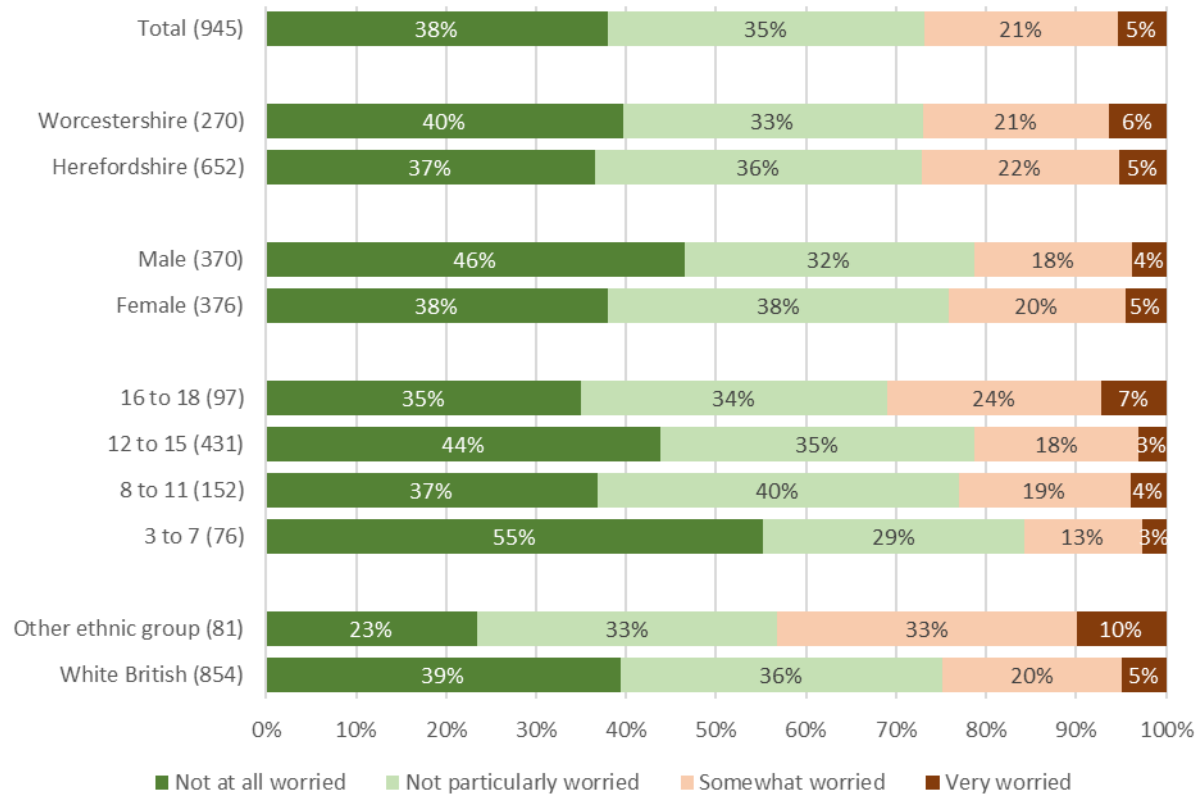
### How worried: lack of access to mental health support



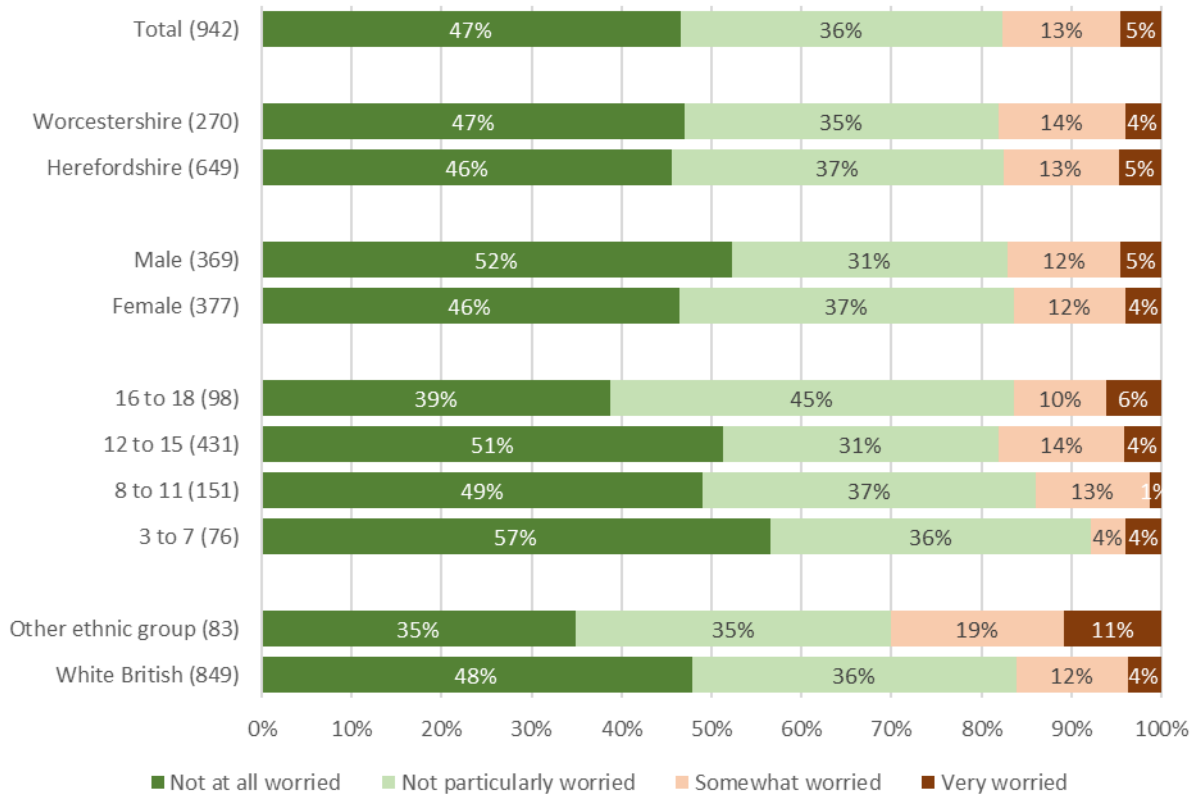
### How worried: lack of access to school pastoral support



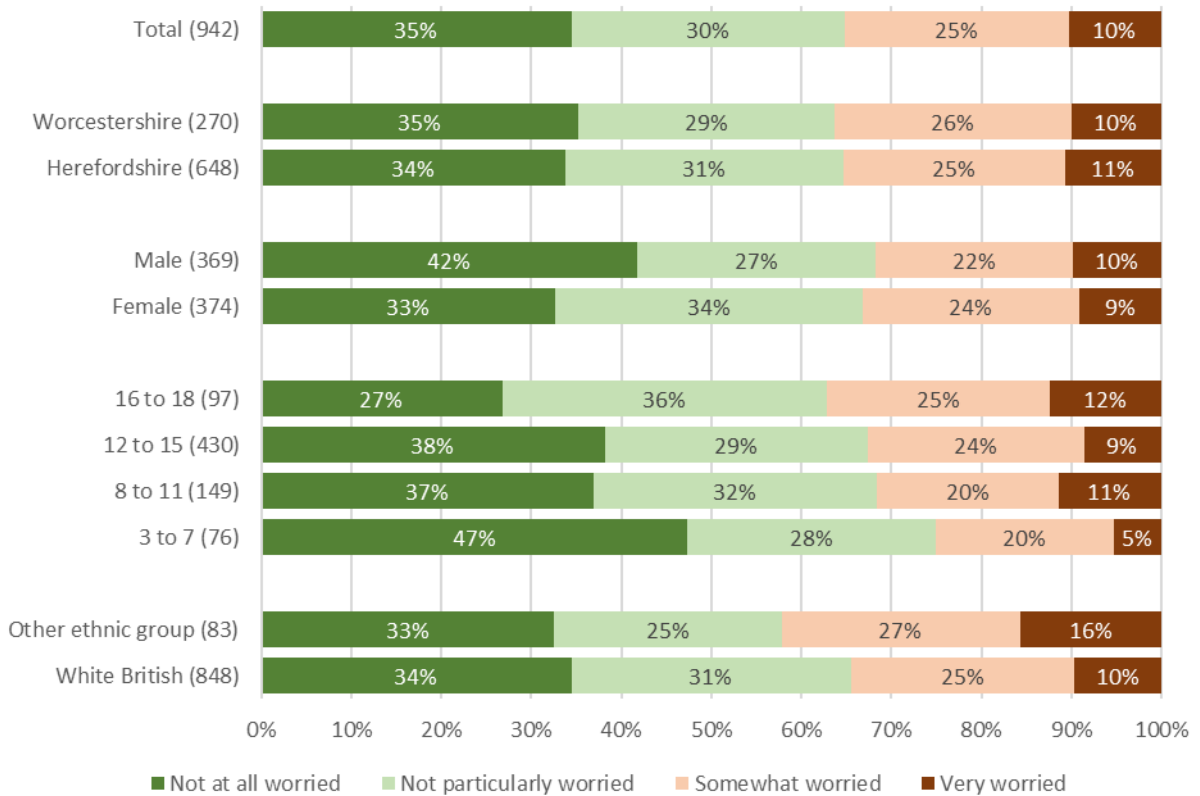
### How worried: lack of access to GP support



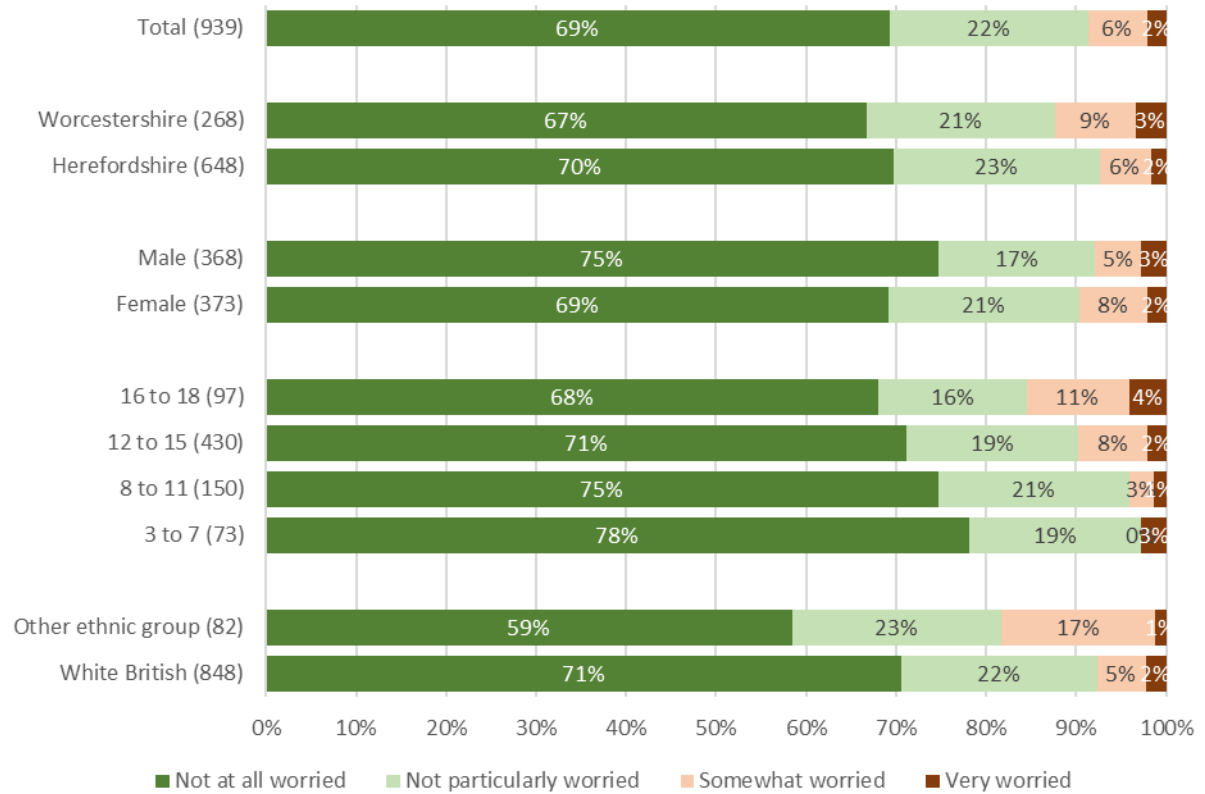
### How worried: lack of access to physical health support



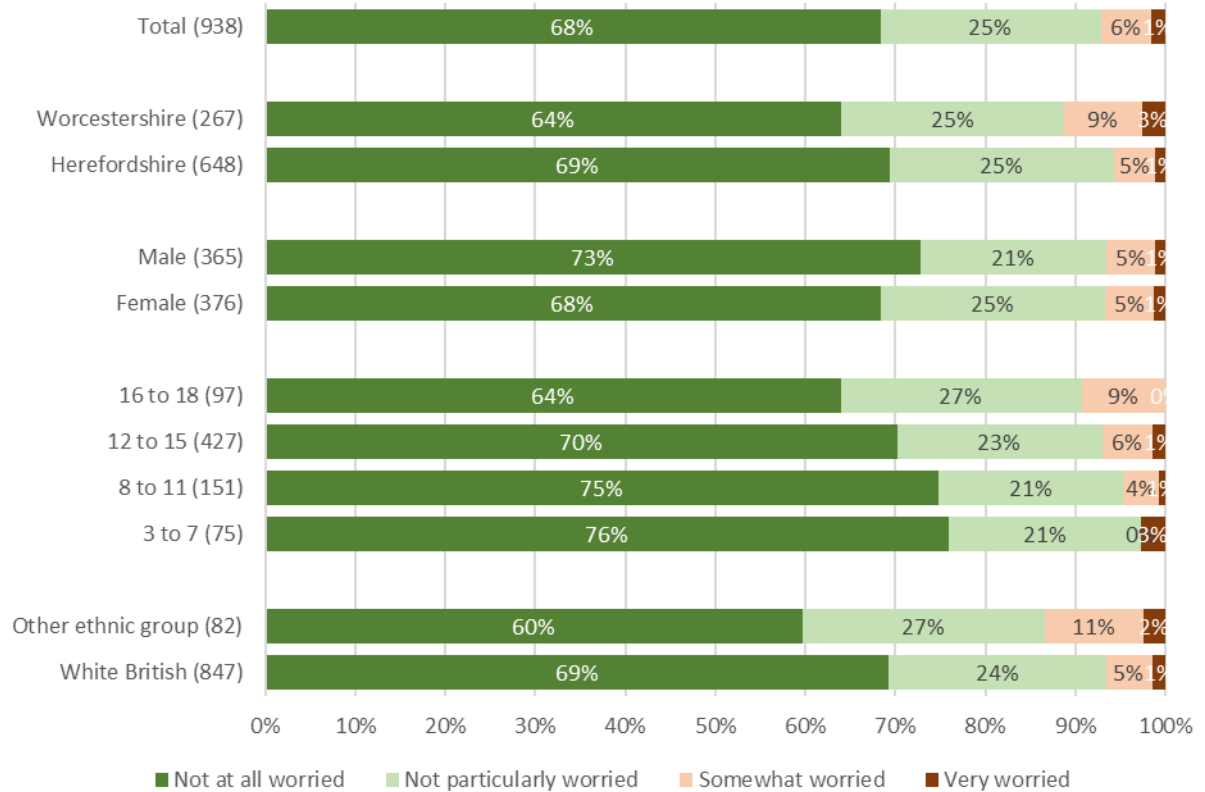
### How worried: loss or reduction of income



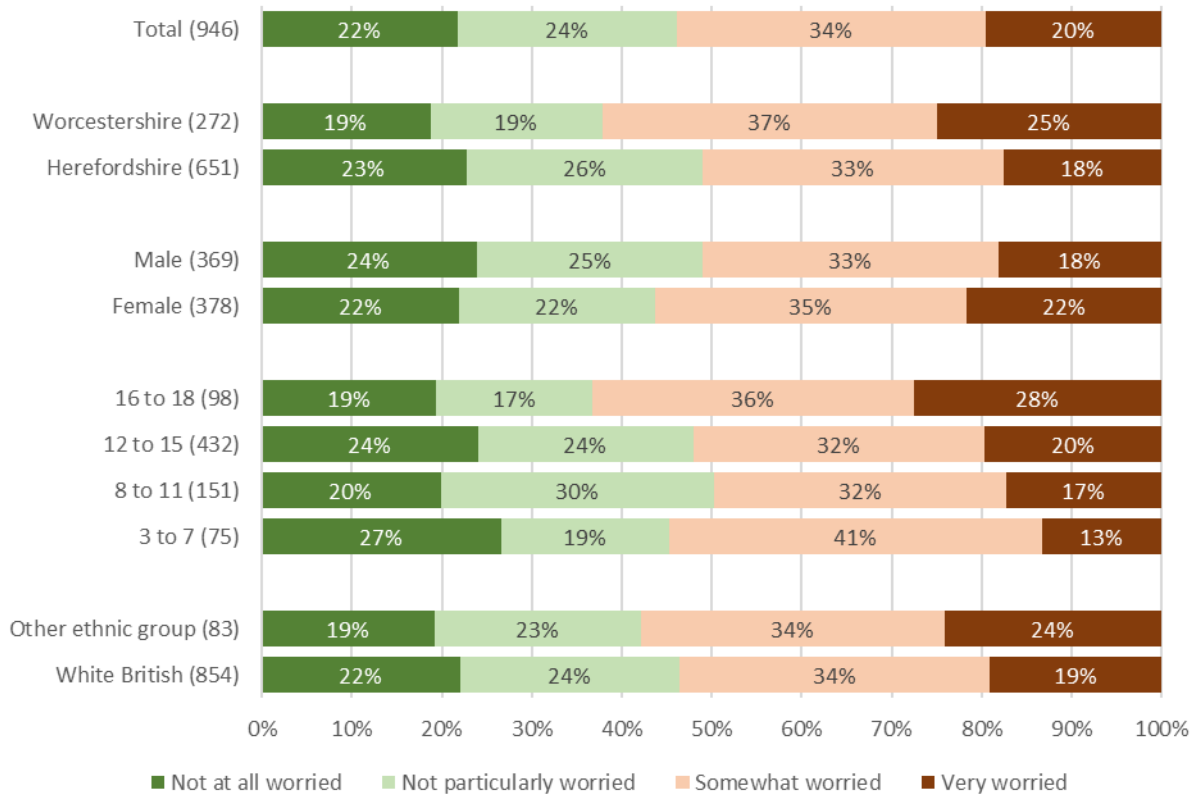
### How worried: crowded or unsafe home life



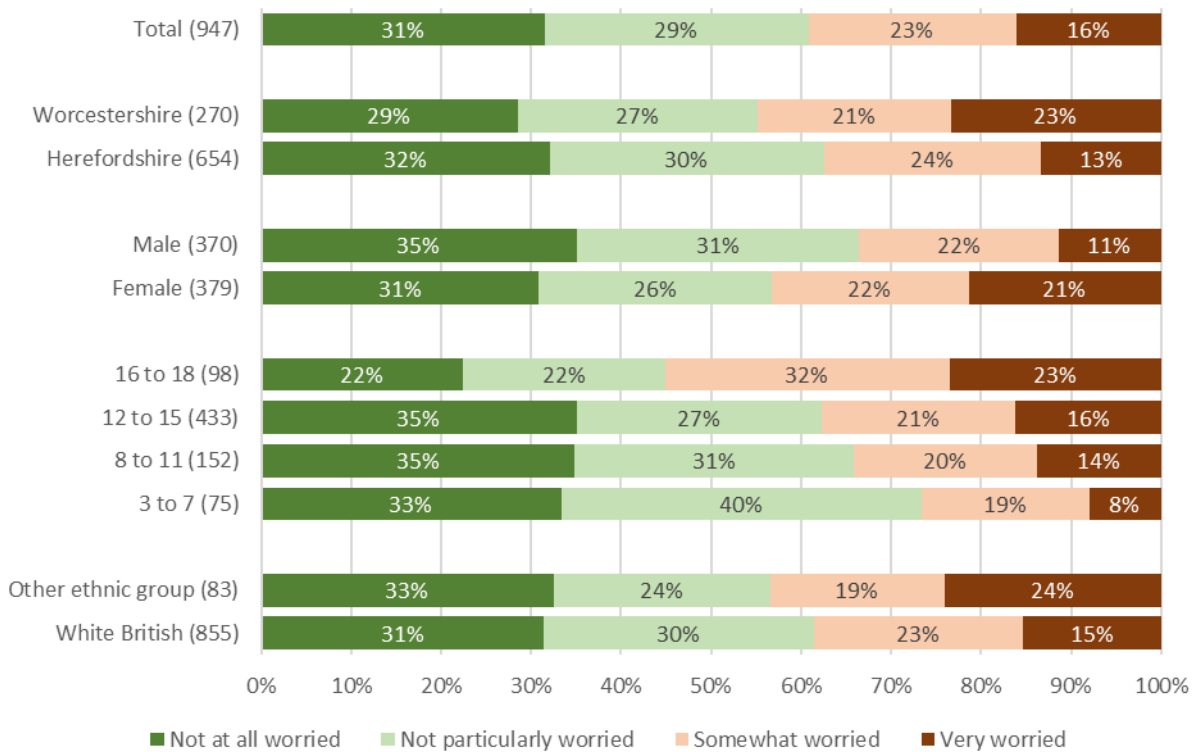
### How worried: lack of good nutritious food



### How worried: lack of freedom / loss of routine



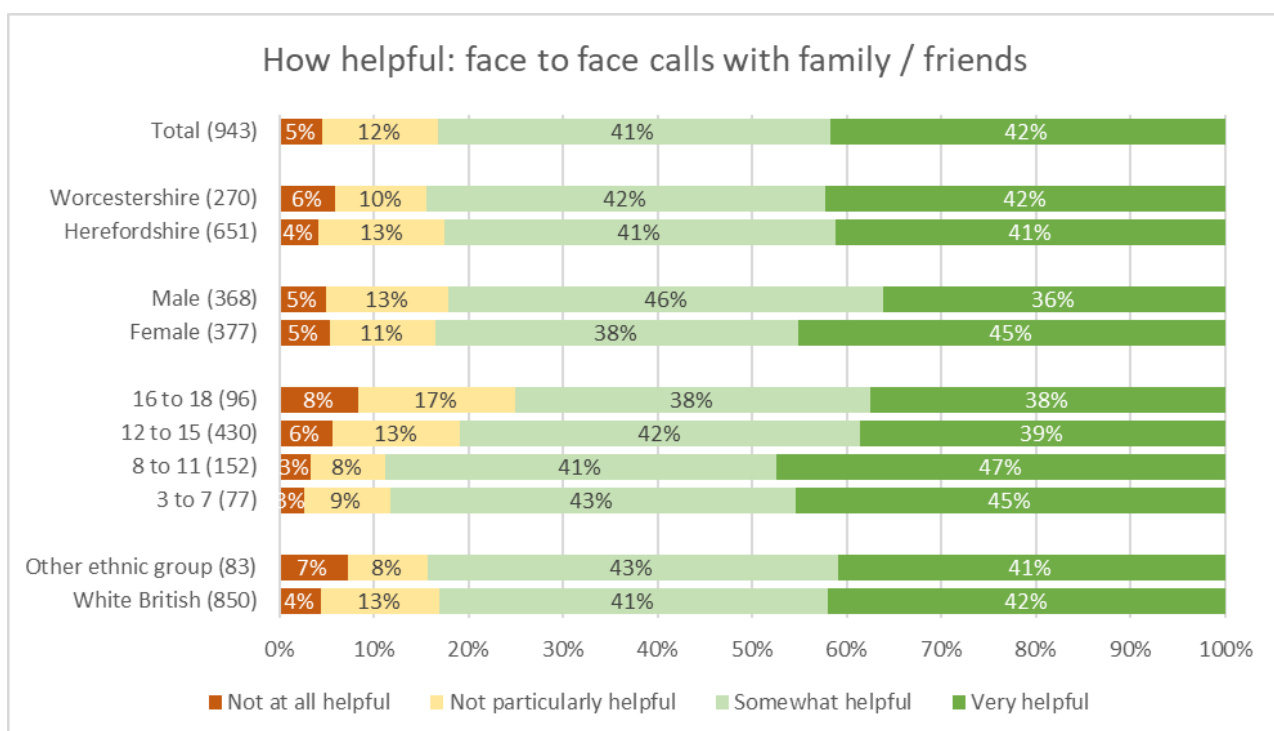
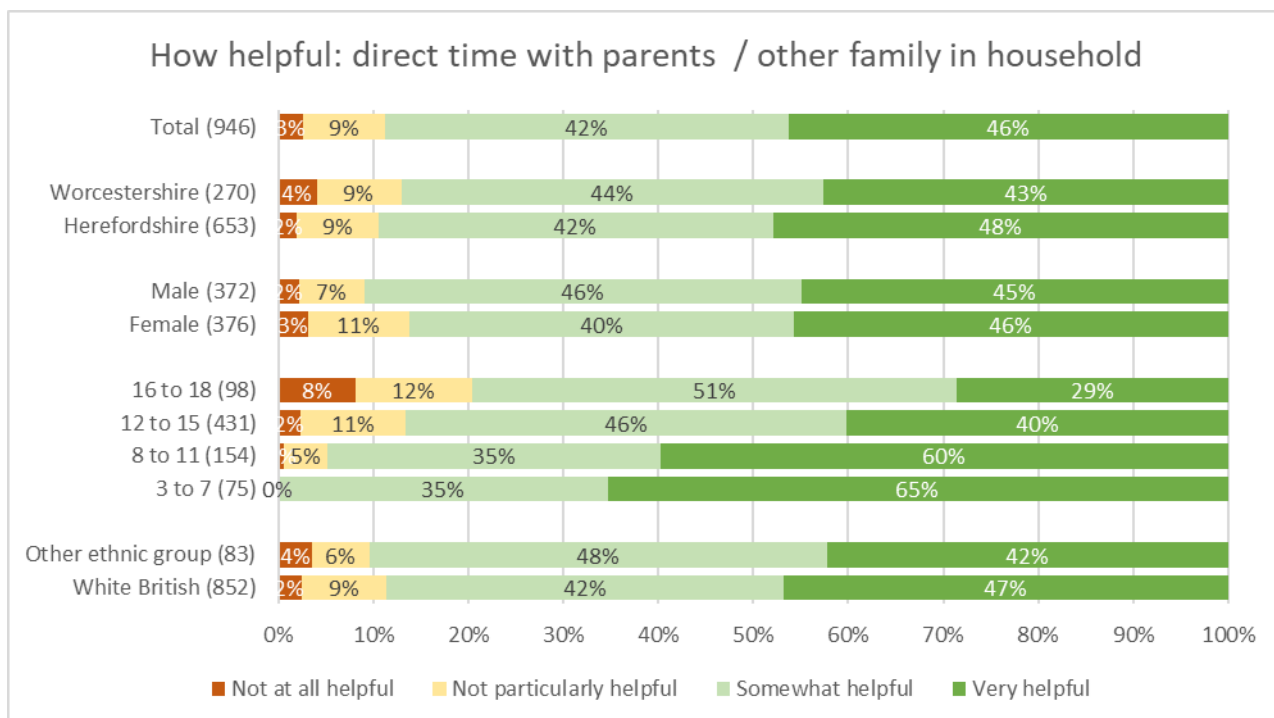
### How worried: not being able to talk face-to-face about problems



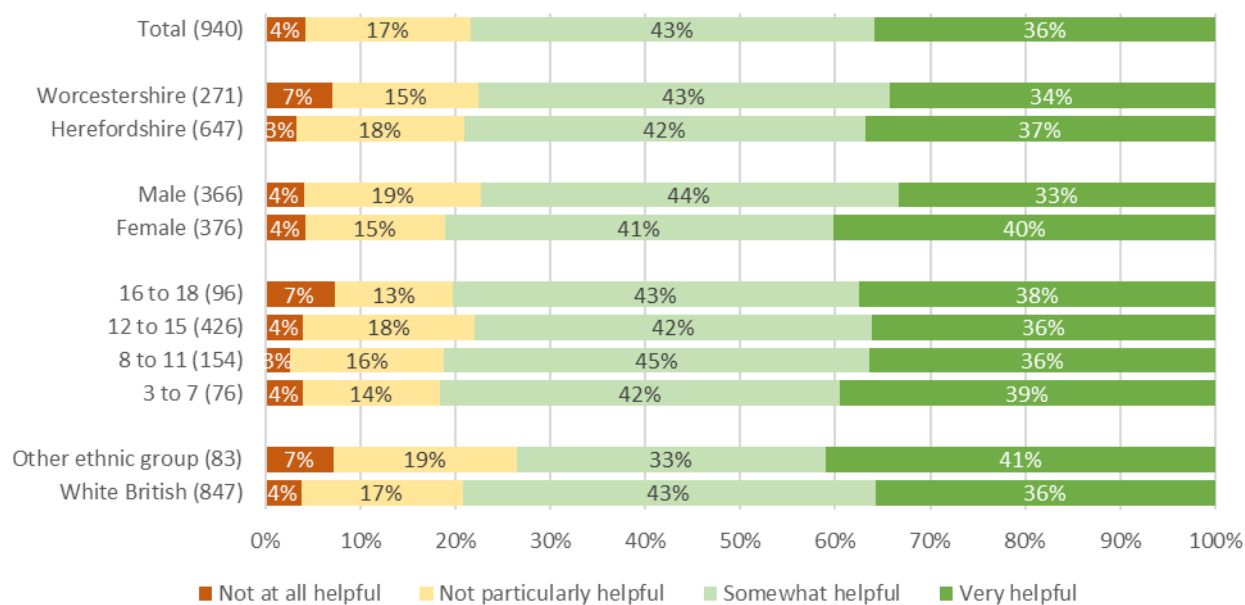


## Activities to improve mental health and wellbeing

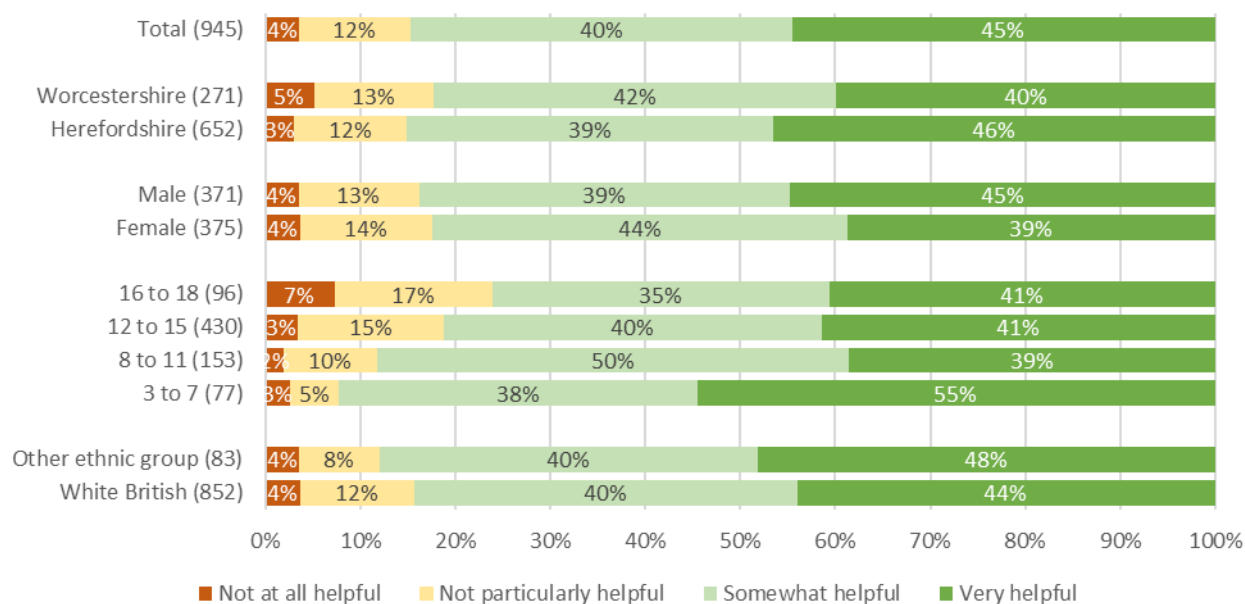
Respondents were then asked a series of questions about how helpful they had found various activities during the coronavirus pandemic, again the charts below illustrate variation in responses across demographic and geographic groups.



### How helpful: watching TV/films

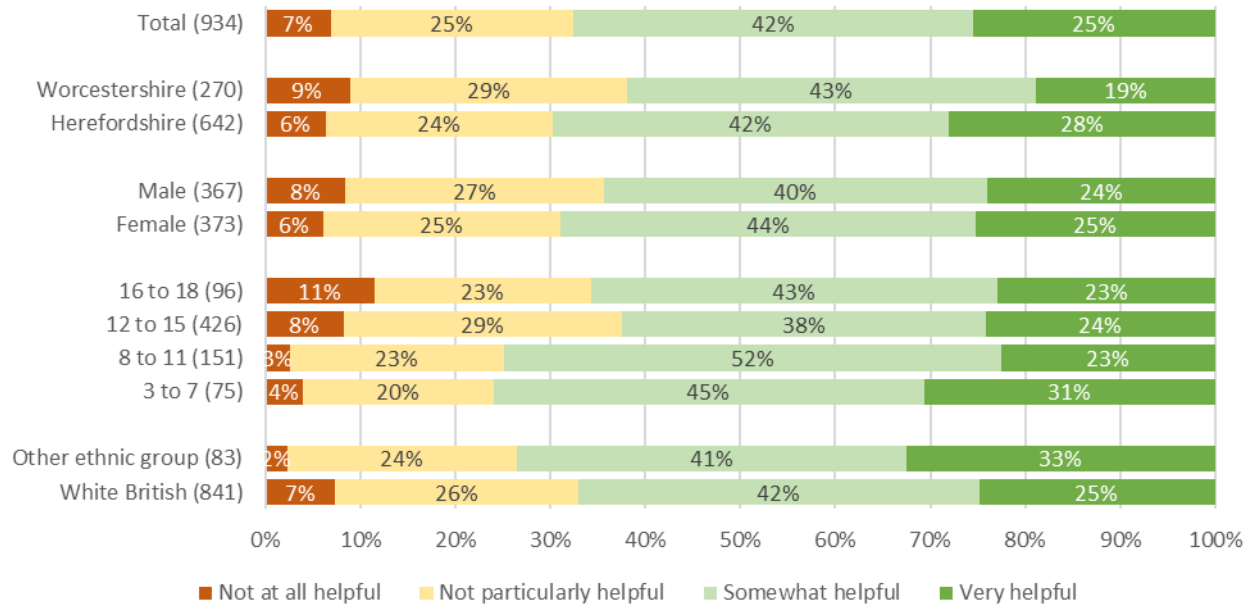


### How helpful: exercise

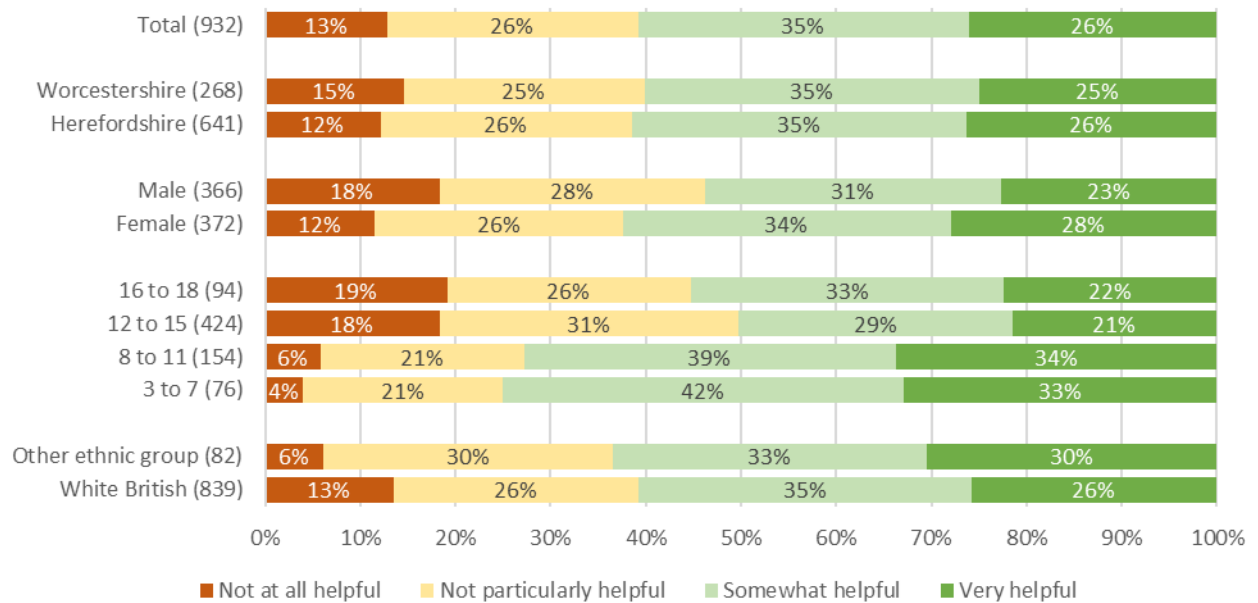




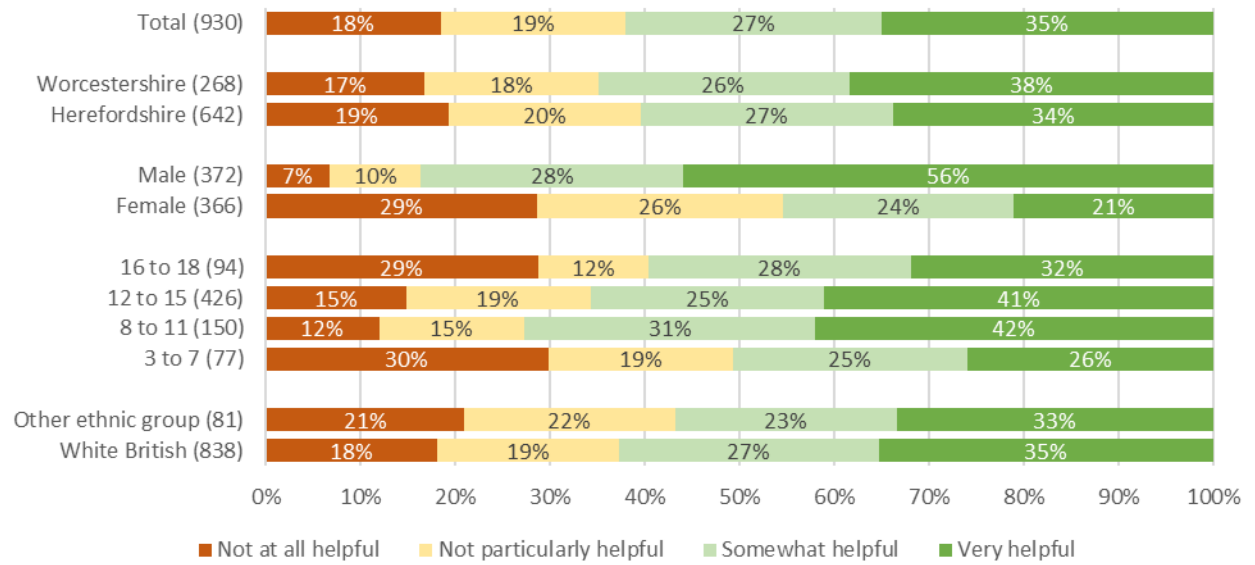
### How helpful: learning new skills



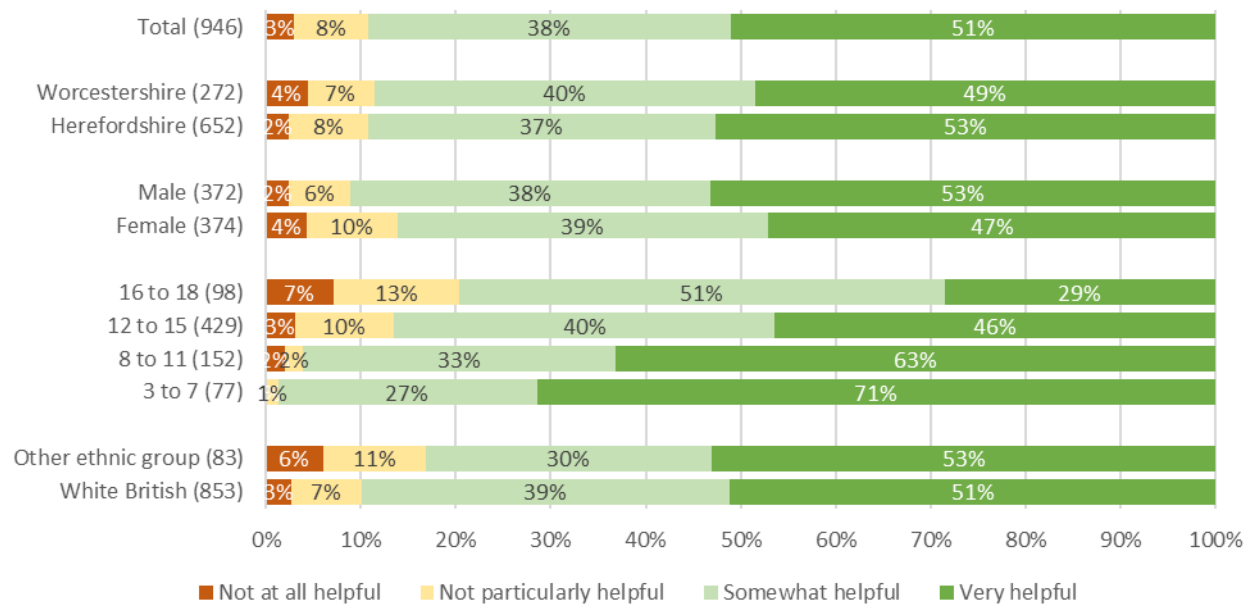
### How helpful: reading books



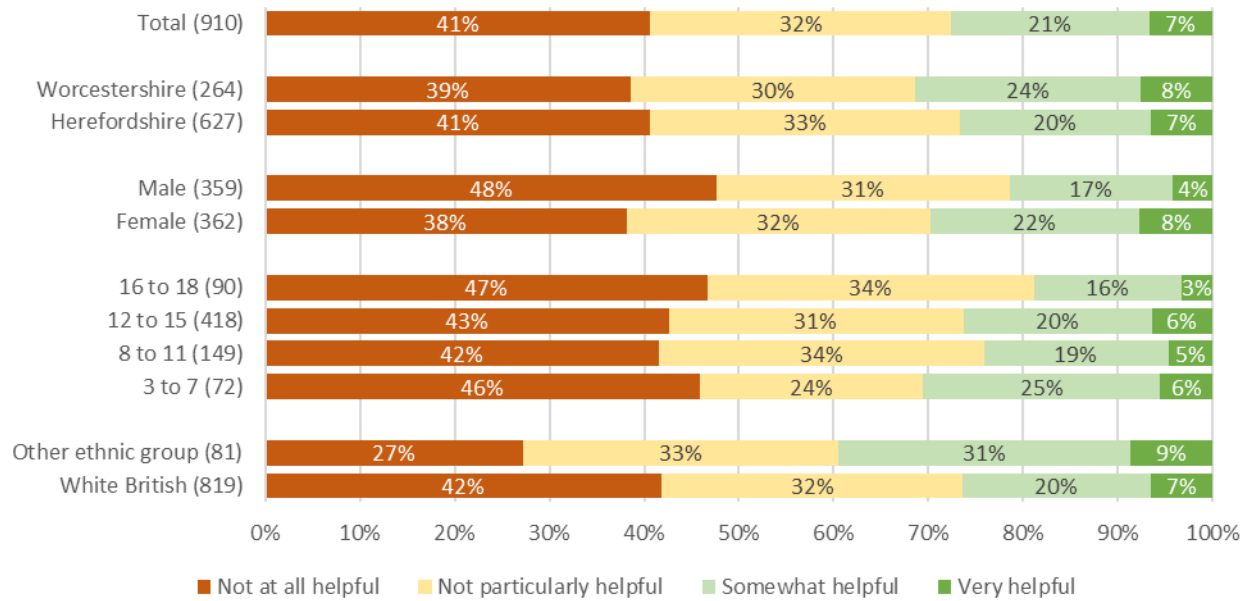
### How helpful: gaming



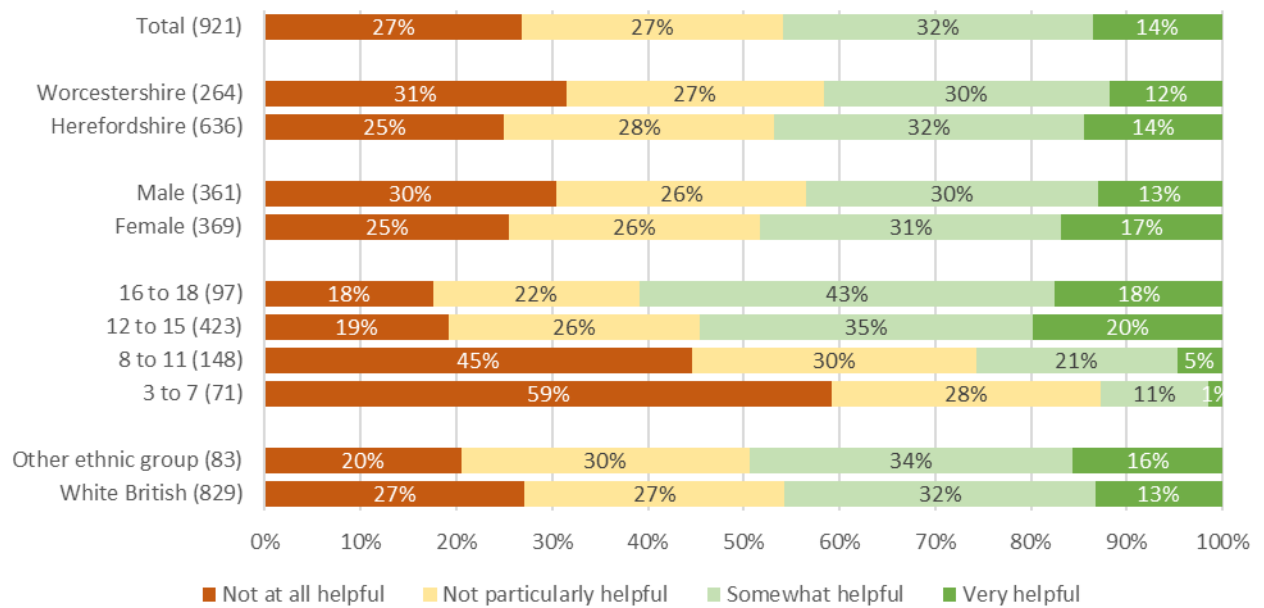
### How helpful: spending time with family

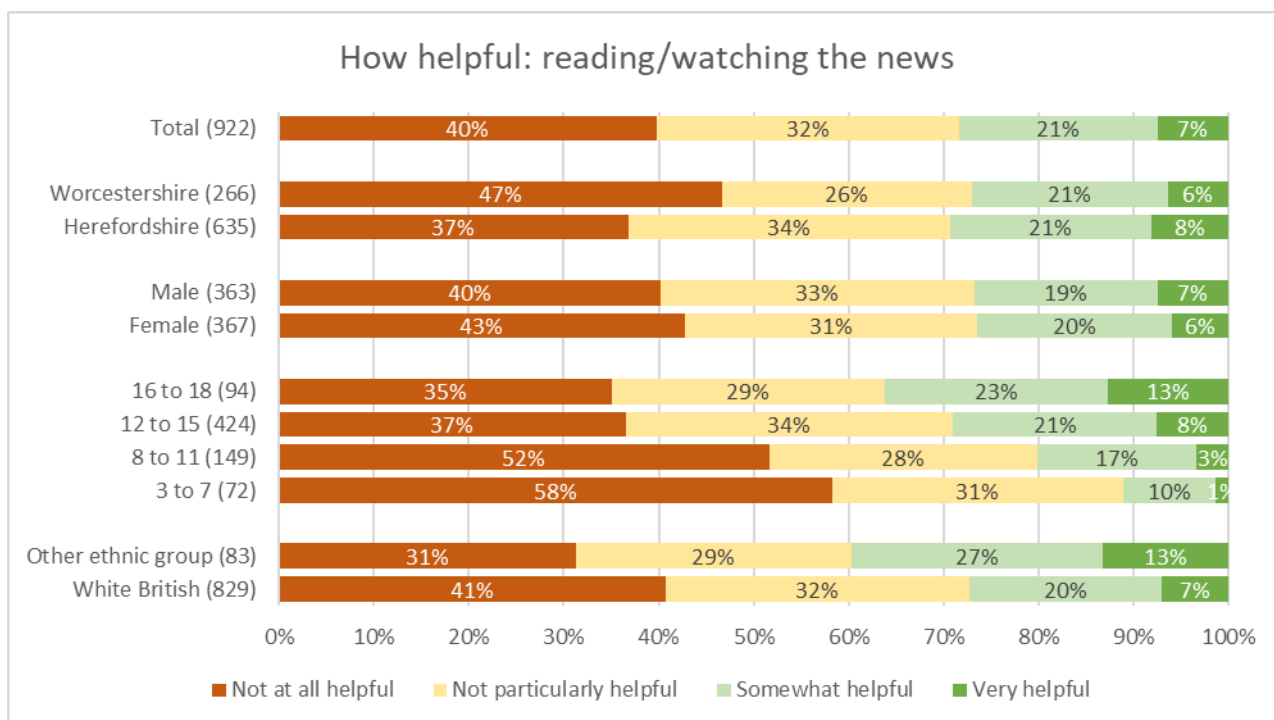


### How helpful: breathing techniques



### How helpful: spending time on social media





Respondents were invited to comment on other activities which they had found helpful or unhelpful during lockdown. These have been separated out below into two tables; helpful activities and unhelpful activities. Where participants mentioned turning off screens/news was helpful, this was combined into the category ‘unhelpful activities: news/screen time etc’ in the unhelpful activities table.

A lot of the activities which had been rated for helpfulness previously were revisited and repeated. Exercise was the most frequently mentioned helpful activity. Issues around completing schoolwork at home were the most frequently mentioned as unhelpful.

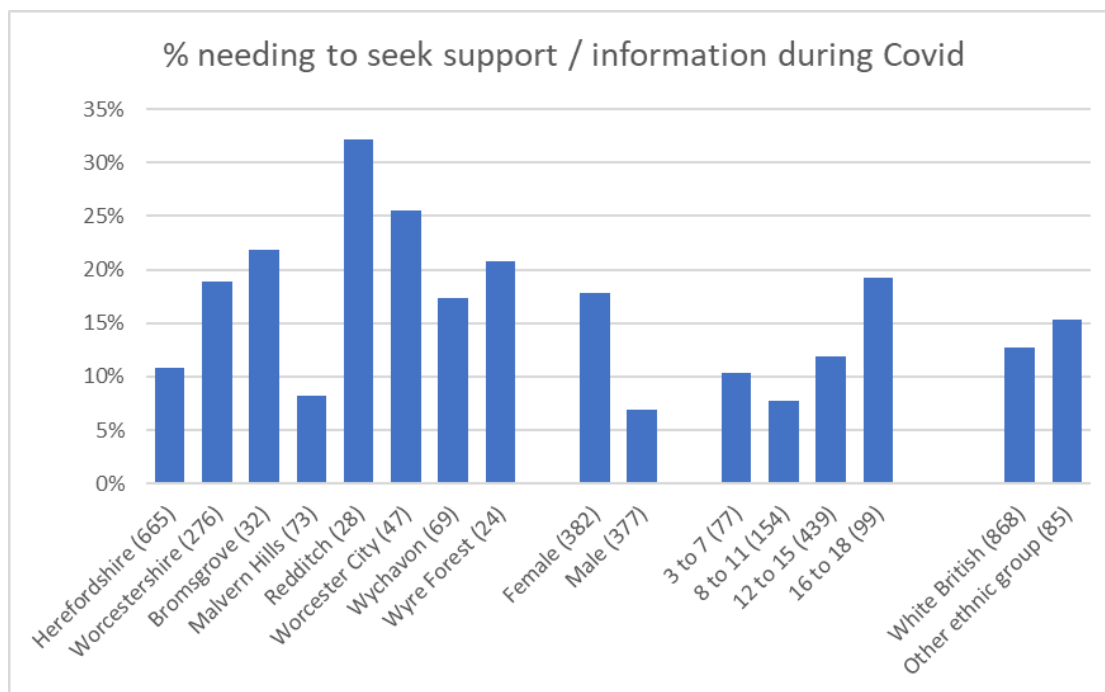
Can you think of any other activities you have done during lockdown that you have found particularly helpful or unhelpful? Please specify in the box below	Count
<b>Helpful Activities</b>	
Exercise (indoor/outdoor); sport; online exercise classes/games	162
Cooking and baking	89
Artwork; craft; photography; creative pursuits	72
Being outdoors/in the garden; fresh air; appreciating nature; exploring; camping	59
Pets/animals	57
Family time (actual/virtual)	56
Gardening; growing vegetables	44
Learning new skill; Researching; Online courses	44
Having a routine (including completing work/school work), Home-schooling rather than being at school (at own pace; less pressure)	32
Friends (video call/distanced; on Social Media)	31
Helping out around the house	17
Games; jigsaws; quizzes	15
Playing a musical instrument	15
Computer games; programming; making a movie	14

Listening to music	14
DIY; Sort/clear out; rearranging; decorating; carpentry	13
Mindfulness; meditation; relaxing (including bath/swing seat); taking breaks; thinking time	12
Reading; listening to audiobooks	12
Writing; writing a diary	9
Helping the community	8
Watching TV/YouTube	7
Sleeping; having a lie-in	6
Talking about worries	6
Contacting teachers about schoolwork	5
Online social clubs e.g. scouts	5
Social Media	5
Getting away from family members; being on own	4
Appreciate things; stay positive; make future plans	3
More time for hobbies	3
New toys; talking to toys	2
Alcohol	1
Parent furloughed to support child	1
Religious pursuits	1
Sensory play	1
Setting yourself challenges	1

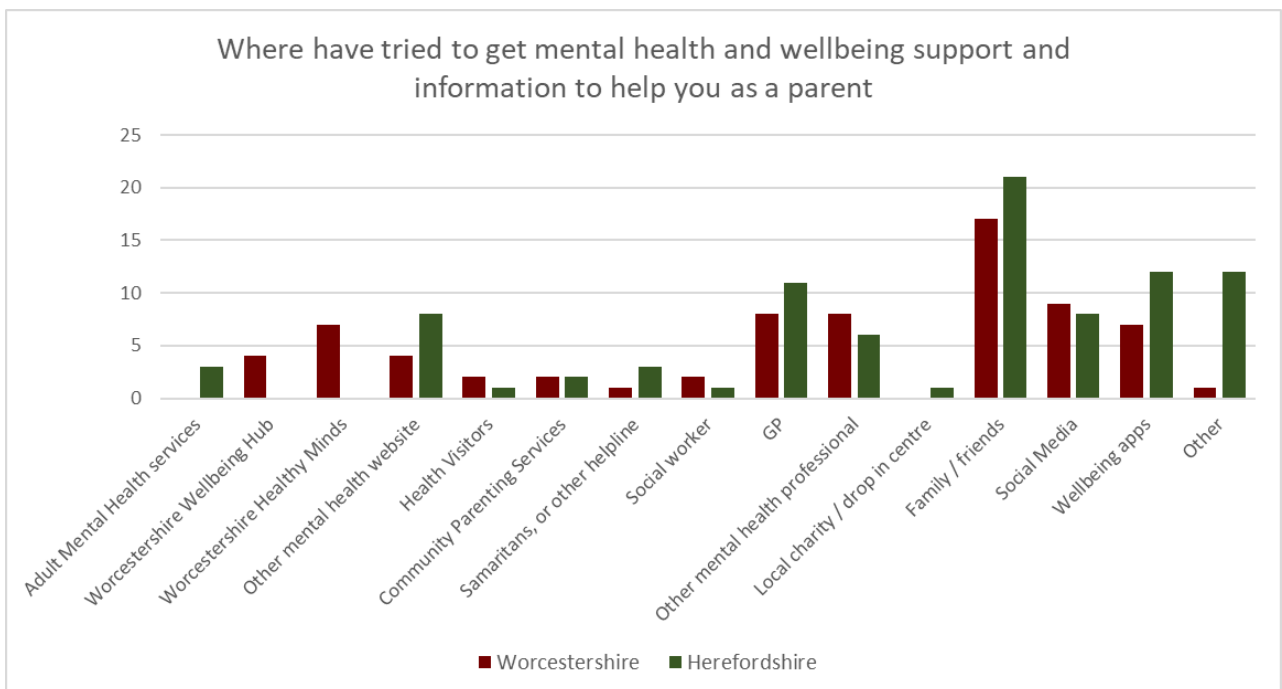
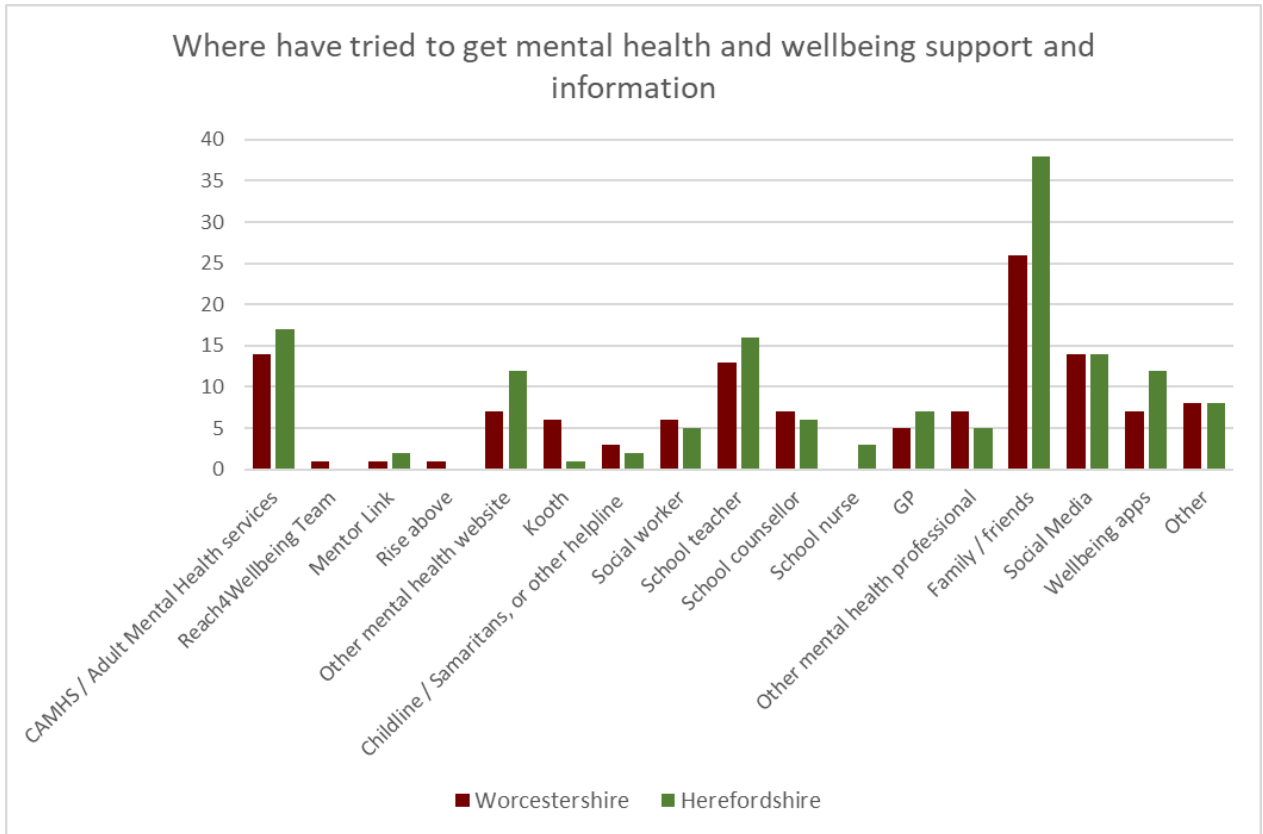
<b>Can you think of any other activities you have done during lockdown that you have found particularly helpful or unhelpful? Please specify in the box below</b>	<b>Count</b>
<b><u>Unhelpful Activities</u></b>	
Unhelpful: home schooling; unsupervised schooling; asking teacher Qs publicly; volume of work; logistics (no laptop); online completion	10
Unhelpful: news; social media; screen time; gaming (or stop these a while before bedtime)	9
Unhelpful: not being able to see family; friends; lack of adult focussed interaction	6
Unhelpful: family around all the time	2
Unhelpful: no access to swimming pool	2
Unhelpful: chores	1
Unhelpful: Electronic meet-ups	1
Unhelpful: exercise restrictions (at start of lockdown)	1
Unhelpful: leaving the house	1

## Mental Health Information and Support

Overall, 13% of respondents have felt the need to seek support or information on mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus outbreak, with more girls than boys needing this, and more older teenagers than young children.



The most popular source of information and support across both counties to help young people and parents was family/friends; people also sought help from CAMHS services, schools, websites and social media.

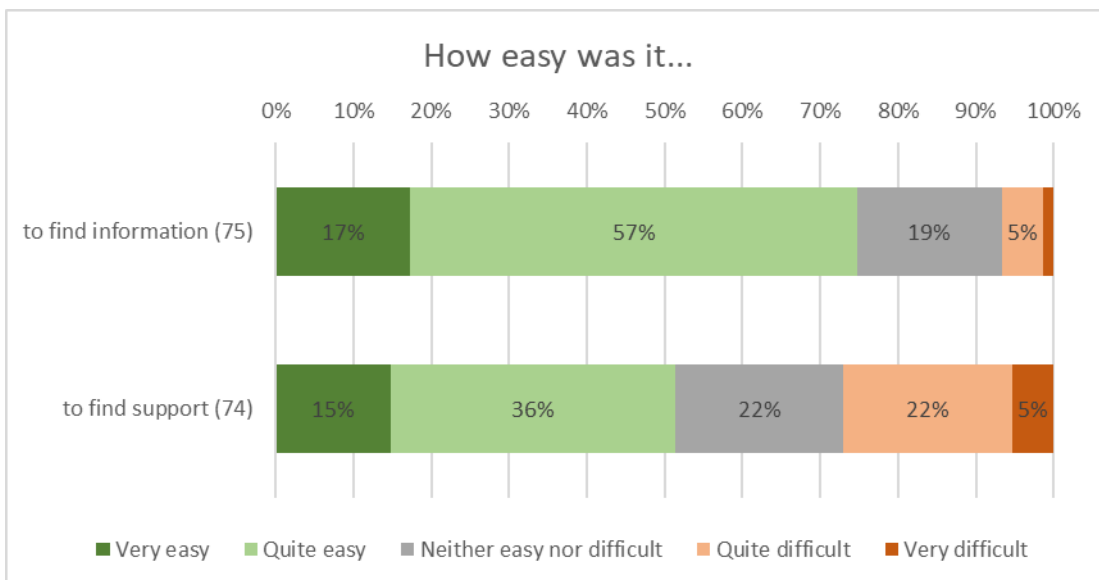


59% of people who tried to get information on mental health and wellbeing felt they successfully got this; 53% of those who tried to get support on mental health and wellbeing were successful.

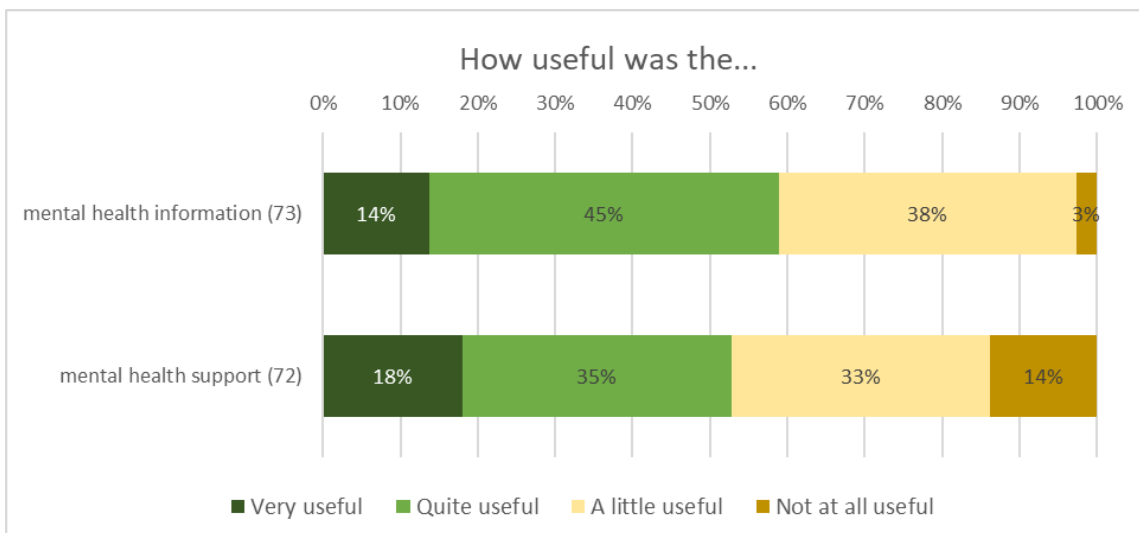
Respondents were asked to comment on what had stopped them from getting the information and / or support they felt they needed for their mental health. The comments are categorised in the table below.

What has stopped you from getting the information and / or support you felt you needed for your mental health?	Count
Unable/unwilling to access support via telephone; not as effective as in person	13
Can't face it; low motivation; find it difficult to talk about feelings; no one understands	8
Support not available	8
Unable to contact support; no response; slow response	7
Not able to access support	4
On waiting list; delayed referral; appointment cancelled	4
Other commitments; lack of resources	3
Difficult to process and practice online info	1

Most people found it quite easy to find information, but people had more difficulty finding support for mental health and wellbeing.



And for those who found information and/or support, nearly 60% found the information very or quite useful, and over 50% found very or quite useful support for their mental health and wellbeing.





Respondents had the opportunity to comment on what was useful or not useful about the mental health information and / or support they found. Generally, comments indicated that information found was helpful and that it was reassuring to find others in their situation.

<b>Please let us know what was useful or not useful about the mental health information and /or support you found</b>	<b>Count</b>
Some good/useful info/apps available	15
Information or support community gave reassurance/normalised problems	7
Support continued/was received	5
Need more support	4
No motivation to act upon new info; advice received won't help; don't think issues serious enough; no substitute for physical contact with loved ones	4
Online information confusing/conflicting; some symptoms not shown; support websites overcrowded	3
Already aware of all/most information available	2
Haven't made contact/used info yet OR only just started	2
Supported by friends	2
Assessment quick and guidance for support whilst on waiting list	1
No response from organisations contacted	1
Online solution solved problem	1
Past experience - know what need to cope	1

A further free text question asked about what participants thought of the mental health services they accessed, due to differing delivery during the outbreak. The table below categorises these comments.

<b>Many mental health services are being delivered differently due to the effects of the coronavirus. What did you think of the mental health services that you accessed? Please give any thoughts you have below.</b>	<b>Count</b>
Phone/video calls better than nothing; support fine considering current situation	6
Difficult to talk on phone/video call (may be overheard; can't read emotions; meaning on phone)	5
Service Limited/poor/ceased	4
Online info somewhat helpful	2
Apps: helpful	1
Check-in calls: helpful	1
Find phone calls easier than face to face	1
GP: helpful	1
Lots of information available for self-informing	1
Parent sought help through job	1
Staff changes/continuity caused issues	1
Support from friends with children with similar needs: helpful	1
Teacher: helpful	1
Waiting for services	1

## Advice and Additional Comments

Comments were sought from participants about what advice they would give for young people who are feeling isolated, alone or struggling with other mental health issues. 472 respondents commented, and these are categorised in the table below. Talking was mentioned by the majority of those who commented. Interestingly, whilst 162 respondents commented in a previous question that exercise was helpful for their mental health and wellbeing, only 80 recommended it for others below.

<b>Do you have any advice for young people who are feeling isolated, alone or struggling with other mental health issues?</b>	<b>Count</b>
Talk to people; Talk about problems/worries with family/friends/teacher/teddy bear	293
Keep busy; occupy yourself with hobbies/new skills/gaming/reading/baking/gardening; do something you enjoy; have variety	97
Exercise	80
Get outside; fresh air; observe nature	56
Focus on achievements; keep motivated; try not to worry; Stay positive; take each day at a time; we are lucky; things could be worse; set a goal; plan for the future	45
Seek help; use mental health services/apps/Childline; ask for mental health help at school	42
Spend time with family/friends (including gaming/playing/quizzes)	35
This won't be forever; life will get better; focus on the future; these are weird times	30
You're not alone; others are going through this; it's Ok to not be OK; your feelings are normal	28
Take time to self for thinking/relaxing/to notice things you wouldn't usually; appreciate your surroundings; practice mindfulness/meditation/breathing techniques/yoga	24
Stay away from news/social media; choose reliable sources	22
Have a routine; maintain normality; get up, showered and dressed	20
Write down your thoughts for yourself/someone else to read	16
Eat healthy food; drink plenty water	13
Time with pets/animals	10
People care about you; people want to help; accept offered help	8
Listen to music	7
Do something kind for someone else; be nice to others	5
Don't compare yourself to others; be kind to yourself; you are enough	5
Keep up with schoolwork	5
Don't get overwhelmed by schoolwork	4
Sleep more; nap	4
There's nothing you can do about it	1
Use social platforms	1

The final question gave an opportunity for respondents to share anything else they wished to. The largest number of comments were further advice, reiterating comments made in the previous question. This was closely followed by a request for more support to be available.

Is there anything else you would like to share with us on this issue?	Count
Seek help; stay positive; stay safe; talk; exercise; take a break; pray; be kind to others	31
More resources/support needed; more face-to-face support; more free support; easier to access support; improvement needed in CAMHS; support for teachers; more consideration by decision makers; waiting for services	29
Concerns over returning to education (necessity of mental health support; virus spreading; children at different levels from lockdown learning; social anxiety; unpreparedness for starting university; wish to change school)	17
Concerns over missing out on schoolwork; home-learning material badly planned/poor quality; no virtual classes; too much work pressure; no teacher input once returned, just supervision	16
Keen to return to normality/school	16
Positives of Lockdown (more family time, less stress, love home-schooling); acknowledge/support these children on return to school	11
Survey not age-appropriate/caused upset; WCC cause of stress	4
Difficulties of parents working/busy: home-schooling; peer contact for young children; passing on stress to child	5
Feeling forgotten about by teachers/the system	4
Times are hard/unusual	4
Grateful for support received	3
Child experiencing feelings of worthlessness/debilitation	2
News is unhelpful and confusing/lies	2
Child in denial of mental health Issues	1
Good weather; very helpful	1
Lockdown is isolating for an only child	1
Self-discipline to complete school work is difficult	1
Summer holidays daunting (without school work)	1
Understand restrictions in services	1
Worried about weight gain	1





<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Children and young people scrutiny committee</b>
<b>Meeting date:</b>	<b>Tuesday 28 July 2020</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020 - 2023</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Cabinet member children and families</b>

## Classification

Open

## Decision type

This is not an executive decision

## Wards affected

(All Wards);

## Purpose

To undertake pre-decision scrutiny on the Corporate Parenting strategy and the Care Leavers covenant.

## Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) To consider the draft corporate parenting strategy 2020 – 2023 (appendix A) and provide comments and recommendations to the cabinet member children and families;**
- (b) Scrutiny agrees to receive an annual report on Corporate Parenting to enable progress of the strategy to be monitored; and**
- (c) To consider the draft care leavers covenant (appendix B) and provide comments and recommendations to the cabinet member children and families.**
- (d) To consider the Fostering and Adoption Annual Reports for 2019-20 and provide comments and recommendations to the cabinet member children and families.**

## Alternative options

The committee could choose to not undertake pre-decision scrutiny of the corporate parenting strategy 2020-2023 and the care leavers covenant. This is not recommended as the committee has scrutinised the corporate parenting strategy on an annual basis and has included scrutiny of the updated strategy in its work programme for 2020/21.

## Key considerations

1. The Children and Social Work Act 2017, introduced a duty on councils to have regard to the following corporate parenting principles when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people;
  - to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
  - to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
  - to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
  - to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
  - to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
  - for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
  - to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
2. To be able to evidence the Council's commitment and action in relation to these responsibilities it is necessary to have a strategy. As corporate parents it is the Council's responsibility to ensure that every effort is made to enable children and young people in care to succeed as well as their peers. Corporate parenting is a responsibility of all elected members and officers within the Council as well as statutory partners. A strategy enables the Council and its partners to be clear about priorities, what needs to be done and by who if change is to be achieved. The strategy needs to be understood, owned and monitored by full Council. The Strategy is attached in Appendix A
3. Almost all children in care will have experienced trauma as a result of abuse and/or neglect. Although many children in care and care leavers are able to achieve well overall outcomes for looked after children and care leavers in relation to educational achievement, emotional and mental health, offending and employment are worse than their peers.
4. The Care Leaver Covenant is a programme developed under the Department for Education's (DfE) Keep on Caring policy and it aims to improve outcomes for care leavers. It seeks to create practical, specific, offers by organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors to support care leavers aged 16-25 in living independently.
5. To address these challenges, the 'mission' of the Covenant is to promote five key outcomes, so that care leavers:

- are better prepared to live independently;
  - have improved access to employment, education and training;
  - experience stability in their lives and feel safe and secure;
  - have improved access to health support;
  - achieve financial stability.
6. In order to lead by example it is important for the Council to make its own covenant commitments to care leavers. The Council is a “trailblazer” local authority for the care leaver’s covenant and has the opportunity to lead the way in improving outcomes for care leavers. The Care Leaver covenant is attached in Appendix B.
7. The Fostering and Adoption Annual Reports 2019-20 are included as background papers for scrutiny committee’s consideration. Links to the background papers are provided at the foot of this report. They provide important context and information on services that support looked after children and are a key aspect of the council’s statutory duties and role as corporate parent.

## Community impact

8. It is a council priority within the county plan is to “strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together” in particular the priority to “ensure that children in care, and moving on from care, are well supported and make good life choices”.
9. The strategy will also complement the Children and Young People’s plan pledges of be safe from harm, be healthy, be amazing and feel part of the community.
10. Children and young people in care are members of our community and many will live within our community as adults. Therefore doing our best to support these children and young people to achieve happy, healthy and successful lives will benefit the community in the future.

## Equality duty

11. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the ‘general duty’ on public authorities is set out as follows:
- A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
12. The public sector equality duty requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying ‘due regard’ in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.

The corporate parenting strategy seeks to redress the impact of disadvantage due to being a looked after child and early life experiences of abuse and neglect. As corporate parents our responsibility is to understand the needs of all children and young people in

care and care leavers and give them every opportunity to achieve their goals irrespective of their background, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability. Evidence shows that children in care and care leavers are more at risk of under-achieving in education, physical and mental health difficulties that impact upon their life experience into and throughout adulthood.

## Resource implications

13. The strategy is cost neutral in that practice improvements can be achieved through existing resources.

## Legal implications

14. The decision to introduce the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020-2023 and the care leavers covenant rests with the executive and will be determined by the cabinet as it is an executive function.
  - The Local Authority has a legal duty to Looked after children and young people in respect of its corporate parenting principles and functions.
  - By having a strategy in place the Council can show its commitment to corporate parenting and highlight what support it can and will provide to looked after children and young people by working together with other agencies to provide a collaborative approach to best outcomes to be achieved.
  - Likewise the Care Leavers Covenant clearly shows the commitment in seeking to improve better outcomes for care leavers. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 main purpose is to help young people who have been looked after by a local authority move from care into living independently in as stable a fashion as possible. To do this it amends the Children Act (c.41) to place a duty on local authorities to assess and meet need. The responsible local authority is to be under a duty to assess and meet the care and support needs of *eligible* and *relevant* children and young people and to assist *former relevant children*, in particular in respect of their employment, education and training. The proposed covenant shows the services that we as a Local Authority shall provide to meet the duties detailed within the Act.
15. Scrutiny committees have the power to undertake pre-decision call in of forthcoming decisions programmed on the forward plan. The constitutional rules concerning pre-decision call in are contained in the Scrutiny Rules under paragraph 4.5.90.

## Risk management

16. There are no risks identified to adopting a clear strategy for Corporate Parenting
17. There are risks associated with having no clear strategy in place. There are expectations upon the Council and its partners to act as responsible and ambitious corporate parents for looked after children and care leavers. The absence of a strategy is likely to be noted as a concern by Ofsted and would bring increased scrutiny regarding the level of commitment and leadership by the Council in this area.

## Consultees



18. The strategy has been developed by the Corporate Parenting panel which includes representatives from Wye Valley Trust, Clinical Commissioning Group, foster carers and Herefordshire's Children in Care council, Your Voice Matters.
19. The Corporate Parenting panel recommended and endorsed a final version of the strategy on 18 May 2020.
20. The Corporate Parenting panel endorsed the Care Leavers covenant commitments on 18 May 2020
21. The Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020 - 2023 and the Care Leavers covenant will be presented to the Children and Young People's scrutiny committee on the 27 July 2020.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Corporate parenting strategy 2020-2023

Appendix B – Care leavers covenant

## **Background papers**

- [Fostering service annual report 2019 – 20](#)
- [Adoption Service annual report 2019 – 20](#)

**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**



# ACHIEVING THE BEST FOR OUR CHILDREN

Herefordshire's  
Corporate Parenting Strategy  
2020 - 2023

## Foreword

Many care experienced children, young people, and care leavers face difficult situations and challenges in their lives that could lead to disadvantage both now, and later in life without the right care, stability and support. In Herefordshire we are strongly committed to our role as corporate parents and fully recognise the role we play in providing positive opportunities and enabling our young people to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Your Voice Matters, Herefordshire's Children in Care Council, have shared their views and experiences with us, enabling us to work together to identify the key changes needed locally. They have made valuable proposals for how we can better address their needs and expectations, including work on promoting 'language that cares'. Their voice truly matters if we are to support and enable them to achieve the education, training and work they aspire to.

Working in partnership with organisations across Herefordshire, alongside children and young people we aim to be the best parent we can be. We want children and young people with experience of care or leaving care to be safe, healthy, to aim high, and to be a key part of our local community, the same as we would wish for our own children.

At the time of writing we are facing an unprecedented global public health crisis, which has impacted on all of our lives in many different ways. I am extremely impressed by the creative ways in which our children and young people have shared their experiences, concerns and thoughts on the coronavirus pandemic and the limitations it has placed on us as communities and as individuals, and made valuable proposals including better ways of keeping in touch, and an investigation into encouraging positive mental health.

This strategy not only sets out our key objectives as corporate parents, working alongside our partners and young people themselves, but also recognises the additional actions we need to take to ensure our children and young people can build bright futures in light of the additional economic, social and environmental challenges we currently face.

I am delighted to be leading member support to deliver this strategy, and in making sure that children and young people are at the centre of its delivery.

Cllr Norman  
Lead Member for Children and Young People  
Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel

## Introduction

'Corporate Parenting' means the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies to give care experienced children, young people and adults (care leavers) the best start in life. A child in the care of the council should expect the whole council to be the best parent it can be. Every member and employee of the council has the statutory responsibility to act for a looked after child in the same way that a good parent would act for their own child.

Every good parent wants the best for their child - to see their child flourish, to enjoy good health, to be safe and happy, to do well at school, to enjoy good relationships with their peers, to make the most of leisure opportunities, hobbies and interests, and to grow towards adulthood equipped to lead independent lives and to make their way as happy, healthy, successful and financially secure adults.

Herefordshire's Children & Young People's Plan 2019 – 2024 makes four pledges to all children and young people which are:

1. Keeping children and young people safe – BE SAFE FROM HARM
2. Improving children and young people's health and wellbeing – BE HEALTHY
3. Helping ALL children and young people succeed – BE AMAZING
4. Ensuring that children and young people are influential in our communities – FEEL PART OF THE COMMUNITY

The role of corporate parent extends beyond children's social care. It is the responsibility of each elected Councillor, every member of staff and wider partner agencies to enable children in the council's care to lead happy and fulfilled lives.

Being a good corporate parent means we should:

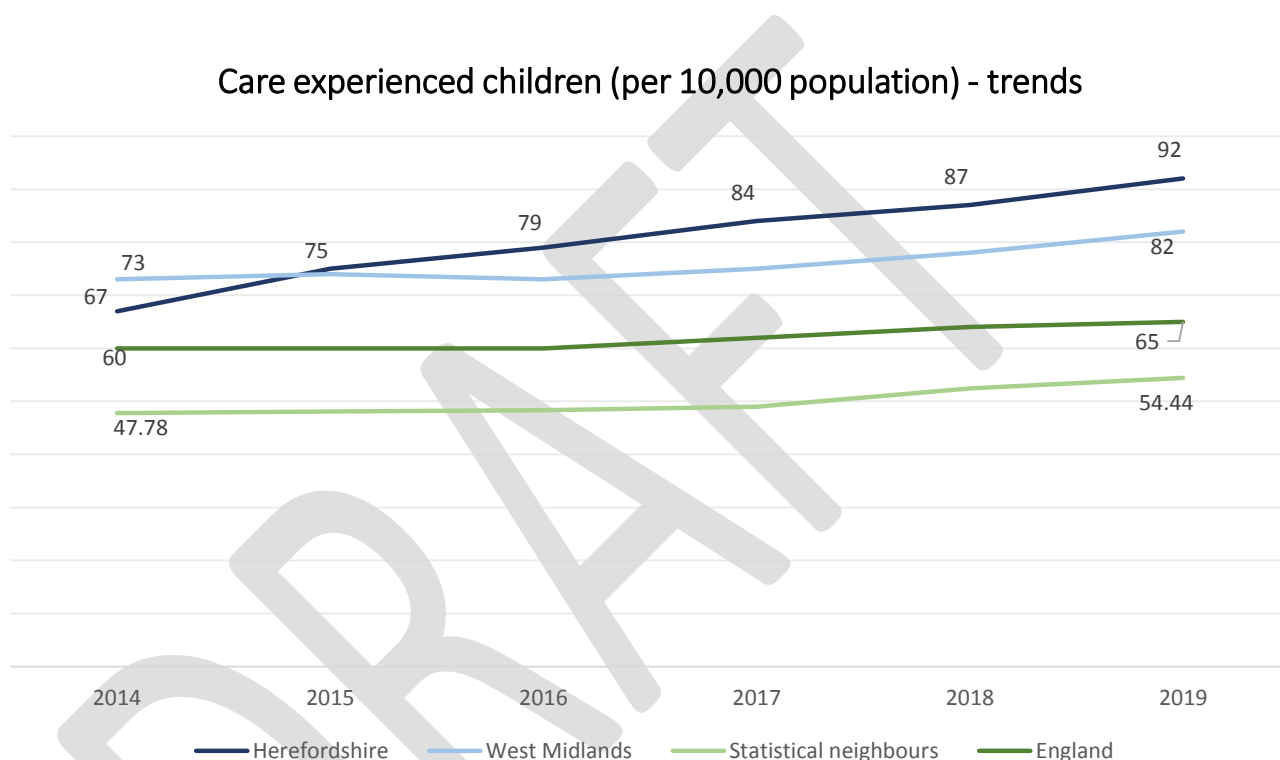
- accept responsibility for children in the council's care
- make their needs a priority
- seek for them the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children.

This strategy sets out our commitment to work together to improve outcomes for care experienced children and young people, and care experienced adults for whom we all have a special responsibility.

We have worked alongside 'Your Voice Matters', Herefordshire's Children in Care Council, to identify key priorities and to develop actions that will lead to positive change for our children and young people.

## The National and Local Picture

The number of care experienced children and young people in Herefordshire has risen year on year since 2014, from 242 to 352 in 2020. However when considering the rates (per 10,000 population) of care experienced children and young people, Herefordshire is consistently higher than our statistical neighbours, other West Midlands authorities and indeed nationally.



Many children in our care have faced real challenges in their lives and deserve care, support and stability to make sure they have every chance of achieving in life rather than facing ongoing disadvantage.

Research suggests that care experienced children can have poorer outcomes in terms of education, physical and mental health<sup>1</sup>, are more likely to go missing, putting them at greater risk of abuse or exploitation<sup>2</sup>, and care leavers are less likely to be in education employment or training.

<sup>1</sup> Rahilly and Hendry, 2014

<sup>2</sup> All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked after Children and Care Leavers, 2012.

**The gap between Herefordshire’s looked after children and ‘all’ Herefordshire Children**

Year	Key Stage 1 percentage point gap achieving the expected standard Reading, Writing and Maths	Key Stage 2 percentage point gap achieving the expected standard Reading, Writing and Maths	Key Stage 4 Attainment 8 gap in scores	Key Stage 4 Progress 8 gap in scores
2017	50.6	23.5	21.3	0.98
2018	49.1	45.6	28.3	1.38
2019	6.1	19.3	20.6	0.55

**Care Leavers - Suitable accommodation (%)**

Local Authority, Region and England	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Herefordshire</b>	<b>70.00</b>	<b>76.00</b>	<b>80.00</b>	<b>94%</b>
<b>West Midlands</b>	<b>82.00</b>	<b>84.00</b>	<b>85.00</b>	TBC
<b>Statistical Neighbours</b>	<b>86.44</b>	<b>85.89</b>	<b>86.13</b>	TBC
<b>England</b>	<b>84.00</b>	<b>84.00</b>	<b>85.00</b>	TBC

**Care leavers who were not in education, training or employment (%)**

Local Authority, Region and England	2017	2018	2019	2020 (to be added)
<b>Herefordshire</b>	<b>55.00</b>	<b>49.00</b>	<b>44.00</b>	<b>TBC</b>
<b>West Midlands</b>	<b>43.00</b>	<b>41.00</b>	<b>40.00</b>	TBC
<b>Statistical Neighbours</b>	<b>40.11</b>	<b>38.57</b>	<b>39.29</b>	TBC
<b>England</b>	<b>40.00</b>	<b>39.00</b>	<b>39.00</b>	TBC

In Herefordshire we have made year on year improvements in securing suitable accommodation for care leavers. Whilst the proportion of care leavers not in education, employment or training has reduced over the last three years, we are committed to further improving our performance during the lifetime of this strategy.

## Achievements and challenges

Alongside Your Voice Matters (YVM), the Corporate Parenting Panel have undertaken a review of progress against priorities set for 2016 – 2019:

### **Commitment to corporate parenting:**

Over the last three years a number of actions have been undertaken to raise awareness of corporate parenting responsibilities with Council members and staff, and various opportunities for supporting care experienced children have been identified. Difficulties have been experienced however in converting some of these opportunities into action, and there is a need for partner agencies to fulfil their duties at a more strategic level. It has also been hard to measure impact.

### **Preventing need for care:**

Although there is a strong partnership commitment to the council's early help offer, and successes in achieving sustainable change for vulnerable families, Herefordshire has experienced a continual rise in the number of looked after children. This is a trend experienced nationally.

### **Providing a safe and stable home:**

The number of fostering households in Herefordshire have increased (add stats). Enhanced adoption support arrangements put in place during 2019 has increased the potential for securing successful adoption arrangements. There are improvements in the way we can assess and support children at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation and there is a new contextual safeguarding team in place which has enabled a more detailed understanding of prevalence and risk for care experienced children and adults. However securing enough foster placements against a backdrop of rising demand, and improving stability of placements are ongoing challenges.

### **Education:**

Quality of personal education plans have increased, care leavers have greater access to IT in order to support study, and in terms of attainment, there is a narrowing gap between looked after children and all Herefordshire children at key stages. Areas of challenge include school exclusions, securing of consistent placements (reducing the need for school moves) a need to further improve personal education plans, and to further raise attainment and aspirations of care experienced young people.



**Health:**

Timeliness of health assessments have improved and a review of paperwork intends to strengthen the voice of the child, there has been an expansion of Children in care nurse capacity, and a new pilot is hoped to improve access to CAMHS. Further work is needed to recognise broader health and wellbeing needs, to develop better communication channels, develop trust (i.e. reassurance relating to disclosures), and to provide better health history information to care leavers.

**Sport, Leisure and Culture:**

Whilst there are various mechanisms to support care leavers to access appropriate opportunities (e.g. discounted leisure passes), resource pressures have impeded progress in this area, and more focus is needed on developing relationships with key local organisations to support access and increase opportunities.

**Voice of care experienced children and adults:**

Your Voice Matters (YVM) has a raised profile, and has actively encouraged new members to attend. There is an awareness of the Corporate parenting role, and tools such as 'Mind of My Own' are in place to gather views and experiences. YVM have links with other children in care councils and attend a number of local forums to ensure their views are represented. Challenges have included a consistent approach to YVM involvement in Panels and Cllr involvement in YVM meetings, the effective sharing of information produced by YVM, and ensuring that contributions have made a demonstrable difference.

**Leaving care:**

There is an increasing use of supported accommodation, including the development of accommodation for care leavers with complex needs, numbers not in education, employment or training has reduced, increased accessibility of the 16+ team, a council tax exemption has been introduced and there is improved partnership working with the DWP, housing solutions, probation and YOS. However the quality of some supported accommodation and ability to support care leavers locally needs to be improved, the numbers of NEET need to be reduced further, and a programme focussing on independent living skills has not been progressed.

Progress over the last three years, alongside a review of key statistics for Herefordshire and further input from YVM have shaped our seven new priorities and key actions for 2020 – 2024:

### **What do care experienced children and young people want?**

1. We want our corporate parents, and other key leaders to understand and act on their responsibilities
2. We want to have a safe and stable home
3. We want to reach our potential in education
4. We want to be physically and emotionally healthy
5. We want to enjoy a range of play, sport, leisure and cultural opportunities
6. We want our voice to matter
7. When leaving care we want to live happy, healthy and financially secure lives

### **Delivering the strategy**

Each of the seven priorities has an allocated lead, who will work alongside a YVM representative to take forward the relevant actions. The lead is responsible for reporting progress to the Corporate Parenting panel chaired by the Lead Member for Children and Families. The Panel includes representatives from:

- Your Voice Matters,
- Political group representatives,
- Herefordshire Council (incl. the Director for Children and Families).
- Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Wye Valley Trust
- Foster Carer representatives

In addition, progress will be reported to Cabinet on an annual basis.

What do care experienced children and young people want?	How will we make this happen?	How will we know it has been successful?
<p>1 We want our corporate parents, and other key leaders to understand and act on their responsibilities</p> <p>Lead – Lead Member for Children and Young People</p>	<p>All councillors to receive corporate parenting training and to commit to individual actions to support care experienced children and young people</p> <p>Corporate parents, council staff and partners will champion the child’s voice and celebrate their achievements</p>	<p>Revised Councillor pledges, and annual evidence of progress. Delivery of the Care Leavers Covenant</p> <p>YVM report that they are listened to. Councillors, council staff and partners engage with and seek views of care experienced and care leavers in their decision making. Evidence via board reporting. Evidenced actions to celebrate achievements</p>
<p>2 We want to have a safe and stable home</p> <p>Lead – Head of Looked After Children</p>	<p>We will recruit enough foster carers so children in care can live locally – close to their family, friends and school.</p> <p>We will provide training and support to build resilience of foster carers so that they are better able to meet the needs of children and young people in care</p> <p>Children and young people in care are safe</p>	<p>Increased bed nights for in house fostering and independent fostering agencies. Reduction in the number of children placed out of County. Improved placement stability</p> <p>Evaluation of training and surveys of foster carers</p> <p>Children who go missing Numbers at risk of exploitation</p>

What do care experienced children and young people want?	How will we make this happen?	How will we know it has been successful?
3a We want to reach our potential in education	Scrutinise progress and attainment, challenging schools to ensure target grades are achieved.	Increased proportion achieving target grades
	Providing training to schools to better understand care experience children and reduce exclusions	Reduced exclusion rates
	Increase the range of opportunities for vulnerable learners post 16	Reduced number of care experienced who are NEET
	Develop an 'Aspirations programme'	Increase in numbers attending university
3b We want our education and training to 'recover' after the disruption of Covid 19	Work closely with schools, colleges and training providers to support you to return to education and training and catch up on missed learning.	Children and young people will be attending education and training and will be achieving their expected outcomes at the end of their phase of learning
Lead – Virtual school head teacher	Work with employers and employment support services to help young people to find work.	Young people who have lost work through Covid 19 will find employment
4 We want to be physically and emotionally healthy	Provide all children and young people with the individual social, emotional, physical and practical support they need to ensure they are prepared with skills that support good health for life.	All health reviews will have a recorded SDQ and an outline action plan to support improved lifelong health.
	Children and young people will be supported by carers and professionals to take responsibility for their health and understand how to access a variety of physical, emotional and mental health services.	Children and young people will confidently access a variety of health services when a health need arises.

What do care experienced children and young people want?	How will we make this happen?	How will we know it has been successful?
Principle Clinical Psychologist in CAMHS	Improve children and young people's access to health professionals, services and health information that will support emotional, psychological and physical health direct and indirectly.	Develop a mental health pathway for Children in Care and their carers to access CAMHS assessment and psychological support.  Increase points of health contact with professionals and evidenced based health information and advice using a variety of media platforms.
	All Care Leavers need to understand their health history so they can understand their health needs and maintain good health throughout their life.	Secure funding for the Care Leavers Health App and ensure all Care Experienced Young People can access their health information when they need it.
5 We want to enjoy a range of play, sport, leisure and cultural opportunities  Lead - Director of Resources	Develop links between other service areas of the authority such as Public Health, to join up resources across the council to help support this priority	Increase in opportunities as reported to the Corporate parenting Panel.
	Look to persuade council strategic partners such as HALO leisure, Courtyard Theatre, Hereford FC, Higher and Further education providers to provide direct and indirect support	Reported increase in support from strategic partners.
	Develop a communication strategy to ensure that young people and carers are aware of opportunities that are available.	Communication strategy produced and implemented.
	Explore holding annual sporting event, for young people.	Feasibility assessed by March 2021.
6 We want our voice to matter	Support YVM to develop and undertake their priorities, and represent the voice of all CYP.	YVM deliver against priorities and hold the CPP to account.

What do care experienced children and young people want?	How will we make this happen?	How will we know it has been successful?
Lead – Lead Member for Children and Young People (supported by foster carer representative and Participation and Mentoring Officer)	Staff, councillors, communities and businesses involve children and young people in rebuilding our community, economy and environment after lockdown.  We will support positive and constructive involvement with other topical issues including climate change and Black Lives Matter.	Children and young people report that they are listened to, supported and involved.
	Consultation and participation of children and young people is embedded within Herefordshire Local Authority as best practice.	Children and young people are attending and participating in their LAC review meeting
	Support and educate our workforce to develop confidence and competence when working with ALL children and young people	Evidenced involvement in training plans and training delivery, further development of peer support service.
	Support our workforce to improve their understanding of children and young people's wishes and feelings.	Evidence that the wishes and feelings of young people are considered, visible and championed in everything we do including commissioning, procurement and policy making.
	7 When leaving care we want to live happy, healthy and financially secure lives  Leads – Head of Looked After Children and Director Of Resources	We will prepare young people to live independently
More young people are engaged in education, training or employment		Reduction in NEET at age 19, 20 and 21
Young people have a choice of accommodation that meets their needs		Increase in suitable accommodation at age 19,20 and 21

We, Herefordshire Council, will demonstrate our commitment to the care leaver covenant through the following action:

- Exempt all care leavers from paying council tax until they are 25
- Offer every child in care or care leaver in the County a minimum of one week's work experience in the Council or with a service contracted by the Council
- Guarantee all care leavers who apply for a job within the council an interview if they meet the essential criteria
- Guarantee advance notice of the availability of all Level 2 and Level 3 apprenticeships within Herefordshire Council to care leavers for a period of 14 days prior to general advertisement
- Include social value added for care leavers in terms of employment opportunities and/or support is considered in all procurement and commissioning carried out by the Council
- Encourage partner agencies, commissioned services and local businesses in Herefordshire to make their own care leavers covenant.

Signed on behalf of: Herefordshire Council

Signature:

Name:

Position:

Date:











<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Children and young people scrutiny committee</b>
<b>Meeting date:</b>	<b>Tuesday 28 July</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Work programme 2020 - 2021</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Democratic Services Officer</b>

## Classification

Open

## Decision type

This is not an executive decision

## Wards affected

(All Wards);

## Purpose and summary

To review the committee's work programme 2020/21; the updated version of the committee's work programme for the current council year, 2020/21, was agreed at the meeting of the committee on 2 June 2020. Since that meeting the changes in paragraph 3 below have been proposed to the work programme which the committee is asked to agree.

## Recommendation(s)

That the committee:

- (a) reviews the 2020/21 work programme at appendix a and discuss any additional items of business or topics for inclusion in the work programme;
- (b) agrees the changes to the work programme itemised in paragraph 3 below; and
- (c) notes the recommendation tracker in appendix b.

## Alternative options

1. It is for the committee to determine its work programme to reflect the priorities facing Herefordshire. The committee needs to be selective and ensure that the work programme is focused, realistic and deliverable within existing resources. The committee needs to develop a manageable work programme to ensure that scrutiny is focused, effective and

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from  
Matthew Evans, Tel: 01432 383690, email: Matthew.Evans@herefordshire.gov.uk

produces clear outcomes. Topics selected on the work programme should reflect issues of current importance facing children's services at Herefordshire council.

## **Key considerations**

### **Work Programme**

2. The work programme needs to focus on the key issues of concern and be manageable allowing for urgent items or matters that have been called-in. Should committee members become aware of any issue they think should be considered by the committee they are invited to discuss the matter with the chairperson, vice chairperson and the statutory scrutiny officer. The current version of the work programme is attached at appendix a.
3. The committee is asked to agree the following changes to the work programme:
  - That the report concerning the oral health needs assessment is withdrawn from the current meeting and placed on a list of items to be considered at a future meeting date;
  - That the report concerning pre-scrutiny of the decision on accommodation and support framework for care leavers is allocated to the meeting on 15 September; and
  - That the peer-on-peer abuse review report is reallocated to the next meeting of the committee on 15 September 2020 to allow more time for its finalisation and approval before presentation to the committee.

### **Constitutional Matters**

#### **Task and Finish Groups**

4. A scrutiny committee may appoint a task and finish group for any scrutiny activity within the committee's agreed work programme. A committee may determine to undertake a task and finish activity itself as a spotlight review where such an activity may be undertaken in a single session; the procedure rules relating to task and finish groups will apply in these circumstances but the review is likely to be attended by all members of the committee and chaired by the chairperson.
5. The scrutiny committee will approve the scope of the activity to be undertaken by a task and finish group, the membership, chairperson, timeframe, desired outcomes and what will not be included in the work. A task and finish group will be composed of a least 2 members of the committee, other councillors and may include, as appropriate, co-opted people with specialist knowledge or expertise to support the task. The committee will appoint the chairperson of a task and finish group.
6. The committee is asked to determine matters relating to the convening of a task and finish group including the scope of the review to be undertaken, the chairperson, membership, timeframe, desired outcomes, what will not be included in the review and whether to co-opt any non-voting members to the group. Such co-optees could consist of individuals with valuable skills and experience that would assist a task and finish group to undertake a review (see below).

#### **Co-option**

7. A scrutiny committee may co-opt a maximum of two non-voting people as and when required, for example for a particular meeting or to join a task and finish group. Any such co-optees will be agreed by the committee having reference to the agreed workplan and/or task and finish group membership.

8. The Committee is asked to consider whether it wishes to exercise this power in respect of any matters in the work programme.

### **Tracking of recommendations made by the committee**

9. A schedule of recommendations in the current administrative council term is appended to this report as appendix b.

### **Forward plan**

10. The constitution states that scrutiny committees should consider the forward plan as the chief source of information regarding forthcoming key decisions. Forthcoming key decisions are available publically under the forthcoming decisions link on the council's website, as below:

<http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mgDelegatedDecisions.aspx?&RP=0&K=0&DM=0&HD=0&DS=1&Next=true&H=1&META=mgforthcomingdecisions&V=1>

### **Suggestions for scrutiny from members of the public**

11. Suggestions for scrutiny are invited from members of the public through the council's website, accessible through the link below. There have been no suggestions for scrutiny received from members of the public since the previous meeting of the committee.

[https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200148/your\\_council/61/get\\_involved/4](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200148/your_council/61/get_involved/4),

## **Community impact**

12. In accordance with the adopted code of corporate governance, Herefordshire Council is committed to promoting a positive working culture that accepts, and encourages constructive challenge, and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development and review. Topics selected for scrutiny should have regard to what matters to residents.

## **Equality duty**

13. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
14. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from  
Matthew Evans, Tel: 01432 383690, email: [Matthew.Evans@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Matthew.Evans@herefordshire.gov.uk)

delivery of services. As this report concerns the administrative function of the children and young people scrutiny committee, it is not felt that it will have an impact on our equality duty.

## Resource implications

15. The costs of the work of the committee will have to be met within existing resources. It should be noted the costs of running scrutiny can be subject to an assessment to support appropriate processes.
16. The councillors' allowance scheme contains provision for co-opted and other non-elected members to claim travel, subsistence and dependant carer's allowances on the same basis as members of the council. If the committee agrees that co-optees should be included in the membership of the spotlight review they will be entitled to claim allowances.

## Legal implications

17. The council is required to deliver a scrutiny function. The development of a work programme which is focused and reflects those priorities facing Herefordshire will assist the committee and the council to deliver a scrutiny function.
18. The Scrutiny Rules in Part 4 Section 5 of the Council's constitution provide for the setting of a work programme, the reporting of recommendations to the executive and the establishment of task and finish groups, as below.
19. Paragraph 4.5.28 of the constitution explains that the scrutiny committee is responsible for setting its own work programme. In setting its work programme a scrutiny committee shall have regard to the resources (including officer time) available.
20. Under section 4.5.10 of the constitution a scrutiny committee may appoint a task and finish group for any scrutiny activity within the committee's agreed work programme. A committee may determine to undertake a task and finish activity itself as a spotlight review where such an activity may be undertaken in a single session; the procedure rules relating to task and finish groups will apply in these circumstances. The relevant scrutiny committee will approve the scope of the activity to be undertaken, the membership, chairperson, timeframe, desired outcomes and what will not be included in the work. It will be a matter for the task and finish group to determine lines of questioning, witnesses (from the council or wider community) and evidence requirements.
21. Under section 4.5.19 of the constitution task and finish groups will report their findings/outcomes/recommendations to the relevant scrutiny committee who will decide if the findings/outcomes/recommendations should be reported to the cabinet or elsewhere.

## Risk management

22.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
There is a reputational risk to the council if the scrutiny function does not operate effectively.	The arrangements for the development of the work programme should help mitigate this risk.

## **Consultees**

23. The work programme is reviewed at every committee meeting.

## **Appendices**

Appendix a – Work Programme 2020/21  
Appendix b – Recommendation tracker

## **Background papers**

None identified.





## Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

28 July 2020

### Work Programme 2020/21

Meeting date: 2 June 2020 – 1.00 p.m.		Despatch: 22 May	
Item	Description	Report Author	Form of Scrutiny*
Review of performance and progress against the Safeguarding and Family Support improvement plan.	To review progress against the improvement plan produced in response to the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) inspection judgement of June 2018 and the subsequent Safeguarding and Family Support division improvement plan.	Liz Elgar	Performance Review
Child Exploitation task and finish group – outcomes and recommendations	To receive the outcomes and recommendations of the child exploitation task and finish group.	Matthew Evans	Policy review and development
Meeting date: 28 July 2020 – 1.00 p.m.		Despatch: 20 July	
Schools update	To provide an update on the reopening of schools including detail of the number of children who have returned to school and how schools will continue to support children who have not returned. The report should include detail the known situation of the mental health impact and educational deficit experienced by pupils during the lockdown.	Ceri Morgan/Alison Naylor	Performance review
Corporate Parenting Strategy – 2020-2023	To consider the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020-2023 and the Care Leavers covenant.	Gill Cox	Pre-decision scrutiny
Adoption Service and Fostering Service annual reports	To receive the annual reports from the adoption and fostering services and consider the outcomes and recommendations. To make recommendations to the cabinet member on the operation of the services during 2020/21.	Gill Cox	Performance review
Meeting date: 15 September 2020 – 1.00 p.m.		Despatch: 7 September	

Review of peer on peer abuse cases	To provide the outcome of the review (including lessons learned) into cases of peer on peer abuse referred to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).	Ceri Morgan	Performance Review
Review of performance and progress against the Safeguarding and Family Support improvement plan	To review progress against the improvement plan produced in response to the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) inspection judgement of June 2018 and the subsequent Safeguarding and Family Support division improvement plan.	Liz Elgar	Performance Review
Impact of pandemic on opportunities for school and care leavers	To provide a report concerning how the council is intending to address the impact on school and care leavers of the potential economic downturn and reduced employment opportunities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.	Ceri Morgan	Performance Review
Decision on accommodation and support framework for care leavers	To conduct pre-decision scrutiny on developing proposals for a local contract framework for purchasing accommodation based services for care leavers and other vulnerable young people ahead of a key decision in 2020.	Ewen Archibald, Christa Jackson	Pre-decision call-in
Meeting date: 1 December 2020 – <b>1.00 p.m.</b> <i>Date subject to change in accordance with the budget 2021/22 timetable</i>		Despatch: 23 November	
Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	To seek the views of the committee on the draft medium term financial strategy (MTFS), the budget proposals for 2021-22 relating to Children and Families.	Andrew Lovegrove, Josie Rushgrove	Pre-decision call-in/Policy review and development
Update on reducing the number of looked after children (LAC)	Updates concerning efforts to reduce the number of looked after children (LAC). To include an update on the 49 cases presented to the meeting on 25 November 2019 that had been identified for Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) or reunification.	Liz Elgar	Performance Review
Review of performance and progress against the Safeguarding and Family Support improvement plan	To review progress against the improvement plan produced in response to the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) inspection judgement of June 2018 and the subsequent Safeguarding and Family Support division improvement plan.	Liz Elgar	Performance Review
Meeting date: 2 February 2021 – <b>1.00 p.m.</b> <i>Date subject to change in accordance with the budget 2021/22 timetable</i>		Despatch: 25 January	

Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	To seek the views of the committee on the draft medium term financial strategy (MTFS), the budget proposals for 2021-22 relating to Children and Families.	Andrew Lovegrove, Josie Rushgrove	Pre-decision call-in/Policy review and development
Meeting date: 23 March 2021 – 1.00 p.m.		Despatch: 15 March	
School Examination Performance	To consider school performance of summer 2020 and make recommendations to cabinet on how the effectiveness of the school improvement framework and strategy could be enhanced.	Alison Naylor	Performance review
Review of performance and progress against the Safeguarding and Family Support improvement plan	To review progress against the improvement plan produced in response to the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) inspection judgement of June 2018 and the subsequent Safeguarding and Family Support division improvement plan.	Liz Elgar	Performance Review

- Business to allocate in 2020/21**
- Access to Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and Speech and Language Therapy – **Briefing note to be provided**
  - Early Help Strategy – policy review and development item – scrutiny panel - **Proposed**
  - Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) – task and finish group – **Proposed**

Youth Justice Plan	To endorse the Youth Justice Plan 2020/21 for approval by full Council and consider whether there are any comments the committee would wish to make that would inform the production of the Plan for 2021/22. A representative of West Mercia police will also be invited to the meeting.	Youth Offending Team	Performance Review
Oral Health Needs Assessment	To provide a report on the high-level action plan for improving oral health in Herefordshire and details of any progress against the recommendations in the oral health needs assessment.	Public Health	Performance Review
Childhood obesity	Update on work of the council to address childhood obesity – to be scheduled for a meeting in 2021	Public Health	Performance Review

Report of work of prevent and disrupt group to address child exploitation	To provide detail on the work of the prevent and disrupt group to address child exploitation in Herefordshire	Liz Elgar	Performance Review
Briefing note concerning the NEETs project			Briefing note
Outcome of the audit of the reduction in child protection plans			Briefing note
Current risk of exploitation in Herefordshire			Briefing note
Public Health England BSIL Programme			Briefing note

\* *Pre-decision call-in, Performance review, Policy review and development*

**Schedule of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee recommendations made and actions in response**

Meeting	item	Recommendations	Action	Status
15 July 2019	Corporate Parenting Annual Update – 2018/2019	<p>RESOLVED: That:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A briefing note is provided concerning the multiagency panel relating to looked after children mental health services;</li> <li>• A briefing note is provided on the introduction of the care leavers covenant;</li> <li>• A response is provided to the question relating to the implications of the national funding changes on A Levels undertaken by looked after children;</li> <li>• A letter is sent to Herefordshire clinical commissioning group to seek clarification regarding the resourcing of the looked after children health team; and</li> <li>• A briefing note is provided on SHYPP referral levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circulated on 3 October 2019</li> <li>• Circulated on 3 October 2019</li> <li>• Response circulated on 31 July 2019</li> <li>• Letter sent to CCG on 31 July 2019</li> <li>• Circulated on 3 October 2019</li> </ul>	Completed
	Fostering and adoption service annual reports 2018/19	<p>RESOLVED: That:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The achievements in the adoption annual report and the compliments in the fostering report are recognised and the officers working in those</li> </ul>		Completed

		<p>teams and carers of the council's looked after children are commended;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A briefing note on proposals to increase the retention of foster carers and details of the training provided be provided;</li> <li>• A letter is sent to the Wye Valley Trust (WVT) to request details of the provision of occupational therapists in Herefordshire; and</li> <li>• A session is organised to look at case samples of how appropriate forms of care are determined for looked after children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster carers training programme circulated on 31 July.</li> <li>• Letter sent to WVT on 31 July.</li> <li>• Included in safeguarding training delivered to members of the Council.</li> </ul>	
16 September 2019	Accommodation based support service for care leavers	<p>RESOLVED: That the committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supports the introduction of the accommodation based support service for care leavers;</li> <li>• supports an ongoing review of the service to determine its effectiveness and possible replication in future; and</li> <li>• requests that a site visit to the facility is arranged once completed.</li> </ul>	Approved at cabinet on 26 September	Completed
	Youth Justice Plan 2019-2020	<p>RESOLVED: That the committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Endorses the Youth Justice Plan for presentation to full Council; and</li> <li>• Asks that an addendum is added to the report, in forthcoming years, providing up-to-date statistics.</li> </ul>	Approved at full Council on 11 October	Completed

25 November 2019	Review of budget and corporate plan proposals for 2020/21 relating to the remit of the children and young people scrutiny committee	<p>RESOLVED: That the committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports the planned investments for looked after children, edge of care and improving social care services and requests further information is submitted to the committee regarding proposals for these services; and</li> <li>• Asks that a report concerning the dental health initiatives is provided to the committee setting out key performance indicators for the proposals.</li> </ul>		Completed
	Update on reducing the number of looked after children	<p>RESOLVED: That the committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognises the work that has been undertaken and the progress made in implementing systems to reduce the numbers of looked after children; and</li> <li>• Asks that a report is submitted to a meeting in 12 months times which provides a breakdown of the progress made in regard of the 49 children identified for SGOs or reunification.</li> </ul>	Added to work programme for committee on 2 December 2020.	Completed
	Review of performance and progress against the safeguarding and family support improvement plan	RESOLVED: That the committee notes the report and the improvements made since the previous quarter.		Completed

	2019 / 2020			
14 January 2020	Review of budget and corporate plan proposals for 2020/21 relating to the remit of the children and young people scrutiny committee	<p>RESOLVED: That the committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports the additional areas of investment identified in the budget;</li> <li>• Writes to the local MPs to request details of actions to lobby central government to improve oral health in Herefordshire; and</li> <li>• Requests a report to a forthcoming meeting of the committee containing the high-level action plan for improving oral health in Herefordshire and details of any progress against the recommendations in the oral health needs assessment.</li> </ul>	<p>Correspondence sent on 30 January 2020.</p> <p>Added to work programme for committee on 2 December 2020.</p>	Completed
	Spotlight review – outcomes and recommendations	RESOLVED: That the committee agrees the recommendations and outcomes of the peer on peer abuse in schools spotlight review (appendix b) for submission to the executive, subject to the amendments to recommendations outlined above and evaluation of appropriate factual corrections.	Executive response reported to the committee meeting on 2 June 2020	Completed
16 March 2020	School Examination Performance	<p>RESOLVED: That the committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notes the report and the good results in key</li> </ul>		Completed



	2019	<p>stage 1 and key stage 2; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Request that in future the presentation of the results is set against performance in earlier years.</li> </ul>		
	Review of performance and progress against the safeguarding and family support improvement plan 2019/20	<p>RESOLVED: That the committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>requests that in future details of the changes that the directorate was trying to accomplish be presented in a one page briefing document including details of the intention of a project, who was responsible for it and how change would be measured.</li> <li>requests a briefing note on the mind of my own (MOMO) app.</li> <li>proposes that all members of the children and young people scrutiny committee be invited to the performance challenge session.</li> <li>agrees that meetings are scheduled four weeks after the release of the quarterly report concerning the safeguarding and family support improvement plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This suggestion is being looked into and future reports of progress against the improvement plan will outline how the recommendation could be taken forward.</li> <li>Circulated on 15 April 2020.</li> <li>Arrangements are being looked into.</li> <li>The scheduling of meetings is being looked into.</li> </ul>	
2 June 2020	Review of peer on peer abuse cases	<p>RESOLVED - That the committee agrees the deferral of the report to the next meeting on 28 July to allow for the inclusion of the 2017 review and risk assessment pro forma and clarification of gaps identified in the information provided.</p>	<p>It is proposed that the report is considered at the meeting of the committee on 15 September 2020.</p>	
	Review of performance and	<p>RESOLVED: The committee agrees that:</p>		

	<p>progress against the safeguarding and family support improvement plan 2019/20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consideration is given to how future versions of the report could provide details of the prioritisation of actions in the improvement plan;</li> <li>• consideration is given to how third sector organisations could be resourced to support actions in the improvement plan;</li> <li>• the children and families directorate works with the adults wellbeing directorate to undertake joint work on establishing a clear transition pathway for vulnerable young people;</li> <li>• all members of the committee should be invited to attend performance challenge sessions; and</li> <li>• the outcomes of the audit of the reduction in child protection plans to be made available to the committee.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invitations to Council members of the committee have been circulated.</li> <li>• added to the committee's work programming.</li> </ul>	