

YOUTH VOICE MATTERS



**Report on impact of Covid19 on
Sheffield's children and young people
and what Sheffield needs to do next**

**Written and compiled by
Sheffield's Children and Young People's
Partnership Network**

Summary

How has Covid19 impacted on children and young people?

How do young people feel about lockdown?

What support has helped?

What do young people need next?

These are key questions our city, Sheffield, needs to ask and answer as we learn to live with Covid19. This report is based on research with the Children and Young People's Partnership Network during July 2020. The lockdown and ongoing restrictions have had a massive impact on children and young people. The experience has been mixed, with up and downs, some positives but a lot of worry and stress about the future.

Key themes

Mental health: the impact on their mental health has been increasing, leading to further pressure on the city-wide problem of waiting lists and under funding of young peoples' mental health services:

"To begin with ok I was happy despite what was happening - gave me more time to do things I would have never had time to do like starting different projects, listening to podcasts. Then became really repetitive, become demotivated and demoralised."

"I was lonely even though you are with the people in your house, you wish you could go out and play with friends."

Education: young people have been worried and stressed about the loss of education, the impact on their grades, future education and employment opportunities:

"Worried that other people will have had no troubles and that I'll be really behind."

"Felt like everything had been paused at the start. But suddenly then realised results are next month which made me panic because everything is still moving."

Employment: young people who are leaving education this summer and entering the employment market will be hugely disadvantaged. Many have already had interviews cancelled and feel in limbo:

"I am looking for work and had got two interviews lined up but they have been cancelled because of Covid. I live with two family members who are in the risky group so I am not going out. I don't know what jobs are going to be out there after this."

Youth Services: young people are calling for youth services at a local level to be continued and more developed to meet their needs as we come out of lockdown:

"Young people like me probably would not be able to name places we can go off the top of our heads, so should make them more publicly known."

"Saturdays would be good and close to home. My mum runs a boys' group and does what she can to help empower them, she uses her own money for this."

Racial Equity: young people took part in and were affected by the Black Lives Matter movement and protests. Sheffield's new Race Equality Commission must have more than one representative of young people – they are as diverse as our communities.

Key recommendations – actions we need to take together

Mental health

- Recognise the range of mental health services delivered by the VCS and work with us to develop a coordinated and youth-led provision across the city (in coordination with the Mental Health Partnership Network).
- Increase funding to children and young people's mental health services – work with the VCS to bid for partnership funding (in coordination with the Mental Health Partnership Network).

Education

- Provide support (1-1 and groups) to support students' emotional wellbeing – *'places in school, to take time out of your day to go and talk about your worries and stuff.'*
- Provide additional educational support to children and young people who have not been able to keep up with school work, who need access to laptops/internet and who have taken on more caring responsibilities during lockdown.

Employment

- Work with the VCS to support young people into apprenticeships, training and jobs. We can work together to support young people into employment alongside employers, including offering training to employers around supporting young people.

Youth Services

- Recognise the range of youth services being delivered by the VCS, noting the role Sheffield Futures has played in the delivery of youth services for over 20 years.
- Ensure the active participation of young people in the development and delivery on Council youth services from day one.

Racial Equity

- Work with Black-led VCS youth organisations in the city who engage directly with young people.
- Work with the VCS alongside statutory and private sector partners to develop a city-wide response to the issues and needs of black children and young people, and to proactively challenge and eradicate racism in our city

Call out

The recommendations above need Sheffield's young people, communities, organisations and decision-makers to work together. The summer of 2020 has been both difficult and at times inspiring, and there are opportunities now to learn and to work together for change.

Contents

Youth Voice matters – online discussion with young people 5-11

Experiences of lockdown 5-9

Coming out of lockdown 9-10

What youth services do young people need now? 10-11

Voluntary and community sector response 12-19

Moving from face to face to phone/online support 12-13

Developing online group support, resources and training 13-14

Digital exclusion 14

Delivering face to face work 15

Lockdown with Family 16-17

Black Lives Matter 17-19

Long term impacts on Sheffield’s children and young people 20-23

Mental health 20

Education 21

Employment 22

Learning from lockdown: sharing good practice 22-23

Future challenges, future youth services 24-26

Key recommendations 24-25

Thanks and about Children and Young People’s Partnership Network 26

Youth Voice Matters

To start answering the key questions *How has Covid19 impacted on children and young people? How do they feel about lockdown? What support has helped? What do young people need next?* the Children and Young People's Partnership Network (CYPPN) organised a Youth Voice Matters online meeting to hear what young people had to say. It was the first time in the current crisis that young people from different organisations came together to share their experiences.

We hope this will be the first of many Youth Voice Matters online conversations. There were 14 young people from Together Women, Chilypep, Sparkle, Endeavour, Shift Media and Sheffield Young Carers. Additional comments have been added from young people from Sheffield Futures and Chilypep who were unable to attend the online meeting.

Your experiences of Lockdown

The young people talked about the range of experiences under lockdown from emotional strains to having more time and learning about themselves. The following are examples of their experiences:

It has been unusual:

- *It happened really quickly, had to get out of school really quick*
- *I wasn't properly prepared for it*
- *I didn't expect it to be this long*

Keeping busy:

- *Exercise, baking, videoing, Scouts and Explorers activities, all online activities which I have enjoyed. I find it hard being outside with other people*

Feeling the stress and strain:

- *Frustrating at times because it's boring being in the same setting and not being able to go out and do everything you would want to be doing*
- *Lonely – even though you are with the people in your house, you do wish you could go out and play with friends*
- *Very low motivation – made me feel 'eugh' all the time*
- *To begin with ok I was happy despite what was happening - gave me more time to do things I would have never had time to do like starting different projects, listening to podcasts. Then became really repetitive, become demotivated and demoralised.*
- *Not been able to keep busy which usually keeps my mind off difficult things. Lockdown has made me think about things I usually would not. But also, been helpful to make me deal with things.*
- *Me and my family have been very confused about what we are supposed to do and it is causing a lot of worry for my family.*

Keeping up with education

- Quiet – used to working in class with lots of other pupils, have had to turn on the TV for background noise
- Felt like everything had been paused at the start. But suddenly then realised results are next month which made me panic because everything is still moving.
- Really worried about returning to school and undertaking exams.

On a positive note:

- I have been up and down but feel I have connected with myself. I have started writing poetry and appreciate my surroundings more. I lost a grandparent during lockdown which was hard. But I am feeling more optimistic. I have started to exercise and begun to love myself.
- I was doing art at college and had finished all my coursework, so I had a lot of time on my hands; I have done more group work at Chilypep and Sheffield Young Carers.
- I have been supporting my neighbours who have been unable to leave their homes and I feel a great sense of pride and part of the community more now as a young person.

Words that describe your experience of Lockdown

Young people were asked to write three words to describe their experience, this is the picture that emerged:

Write three words that describe how lockdown has felt for you

Mentimeter



14

What has school/college/work been like?

The young people who spoke were in school and college, waiting to go to university and looking for work. *What would happen if there's a second wave?* Their experiences overall show the level of anxiety that lockdown has created for young people in education and concerns for the next steps in their lives:

Supporting young people

- *I am in the second year at secondary school and haven't been in to school at all. There is no teacher to help, so I am doing all my work at home without a teacher or my friends to ask questions and I usually talk to my friends if I am stuck on anything. My brother is in school and getting all the teachers' time.*
- *I am moving college this year but I haven't had a lot of support from staff.*
- *I have received support from college but many students are confused*

And returning to education in September:

- *I hope they take into account that we've been off for so long and we might not have understood the work as much.*
- *College has been supportive and I have received good feedback for assessed work. I had felt settled in college, but then it closed and students were out. I feel worried about returning to college and having to settle back in September at the same time as I have to decide on university courses.*
- *Hope that when we get back to school, they will still be aware that any of us can still catch COVID 19 and that we are in close proximity to each other. Hoping that we will have the right safety measures and procedures in place.*
- *Worried that other people will have had no troubles and that I'll be really behind.*
- *Worried that I won't understand things on a higher level, compared to other people who might have got it straight away.*

Exam stress

- *I feel stressed because I am doing A levels and there are a lot of pressures at home.*
- *I felt supported with college work*
- *I am really concerned because exams have been cancelled and now there is a threat that the grades may be lowered because people think teachers have been too generous. I am worried that it might affect my application to university.*
- *I have been trying to get a scholarship but due to remarking might not get the scholarship.*

Finishing education and looking for work:

- *I am looking for work and had got two interviews lined up but they have been cancelled because of Covid. I live with two family members who are in the risky group so I am not going out. I don't know what jobs are going to be out there after this.*
- *My family at risk of COVID too and I have been applying for jobs. I had the offer of an interview but it was cancelled with Covid.*
- *I had a job through NCS but it hasn't happened. I had planned to use the income to finance my university course expenses, now it is going to be so much harder.*
- *I don't know who to turn to for support, what will happen with college places.*

Facing a different university experience:

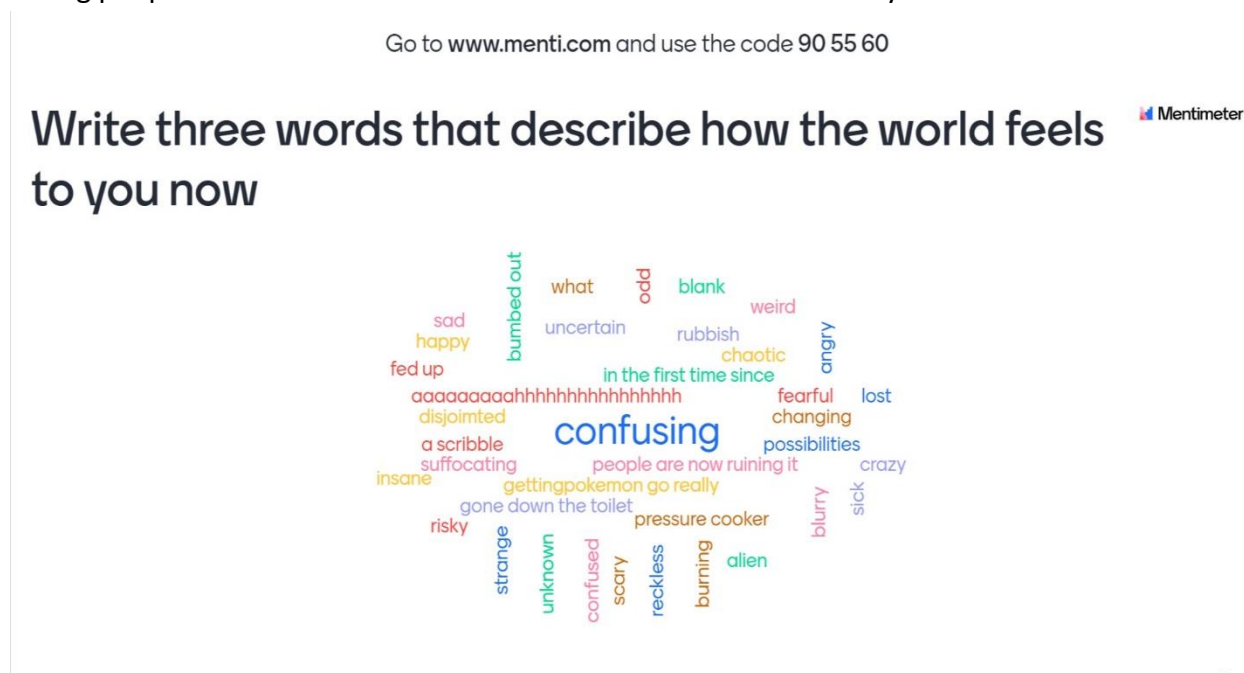
- *I had taken a gap year and returned to take my GCSEs, and I am now on an access course which has been cancelled during lockdown and we have been given a pass even though we didn't finish all our course work. I kind of feel I didn't earn it because I didn't complete*

all the course work. I have been lucky as I have been accepted for university, but university is going to be very different as well.

- *Yes I am worried that it won't be the same experience, lots of the Freshers events have been cancelled. I don't make friends easily so this will make it hard for me to make friends as it's an area where I struggle.*

How the world feels now

Young people were asked to write three words to describe how they see the world now:



How do we feel now Lockdown is lifting?

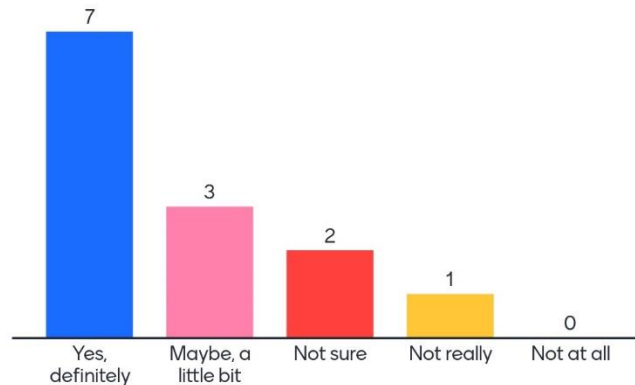
There was a mix of reactions to this question, partly based on timing as we asked the question as people were coming out of lockdown but when it wasn't clear what that meant:

- *Pleased to go back to work.*
- *Lockdown has not been much of a change for me, I don't make friends easily and has entered the 'virtual' world.*
- *Feel nervous, won't visit a pub and doesn't even want to visit a supermarket.*
- *Are the reasons right for lifting lockdown? Would it be better to lift lockdown when there is a vaccine? Now there are less precautions and it will be difficult to avoid a 2nd wave of infections.*
- *Real sense of confusion.*
- *What opportunities are available to me and my friends.*
- *Where am I allowed to go, I feel its not clear and I have lots of questions.*

Will you be doing anything new or different after lockdown?

Will you be doing anything new or different after lockdown?

Mentimeter



13



- *I will be wearing a mask, sanitising hands and taking precautionary measures – things will be different because we have to follow this.*
- *I will try to carry on, speak to more people and hope to carry on speaking to neighbours more.*
- *I now plan to go to Somaliland for a year to study religion and will return to education on return. I want to learn more about my religion, lockdown has helped me think about it more.*
- *I will be attending new college, make new friends and will continue to drink tea.*

What do you think you'll need coming out of lockdown?

Mental health support

- *Mental Health Services, without the waiting lists*
- *Funding to finance the mental health needs*
- *Support groups – places in school, to take time out of your day to go and talk about your worries and stuff.*

Feeling safe. The young people wanted clear guidance on transitions to the 'new normal'

- *Having clarity with signposting and guidance on where/when things are coming.*
 - *PPE equipment to be readily available.*
 - *Once we get back it might be difficult as coronavirus is still there even though things are easing up. Maybe there might be a second wave.*
 - *Bit worried about coming out of lockdown because things won't be the same. We will get to do things again but it might have restrictions so won't be the same. Would be good to have someone to talk to about these difficulties.*

Support with accommodation, finances and employment:

- *I will need extra support with moving – feel like I'll need to rush everything now.*
- *I have lost money from not doing my job this summer – was going to use this money to support at uni and emergency fund.*
- *I will be looking to apply for jobs for when Uni finished – help with employment.*

SHINE (a young people's weight management programme) spoke with their young people about their fears and anxieties for the future. Their top three concerns were:

1. Going back to school and confronting bullying again
2. Gaining back the weight I have lost during lockdown
3. I feel nervous about public transport

Several participants highlighted worries about how GCSEs would work and uncertainty about how college would work during CV-19. There were concerns around lost confidence in going out and being around other people and around 'uncertainty' – what will the 'new normal' be like.

What youth services do children and young people need now?

We asked young people how many youth services are you aware of in Sheffield, the following picture captures this information:

Write down all the youth services that you know of

Mentimeter



9

What would the perfect youth service look like?

As we come out of lockdown and start looking forward, young people were asked what youth services they would like:

Offer support:

- *Providing support to everyone.*

- *Some services offer a step process, starting with 1 to 1s, then group work and then exit strategies. Services should be aware that young people may need to re-start the process after lockdown.*
- *Might need more support after if they have had issues within the household.*
- *If projects have a step by step process e.g. moving people through CAMHS, or different levels of a service. Young people may need reassessing or to 'go back a step' to be able to move forwards.*
- *Being very clear about what is being offered.*

Feeling safe

- *Would go to a youth club but only if:*
 - *Knew where it was*
 - *Not at night*
 - *Because still young and it seems scary/potentially dangerous.*
- *Staff may need more time to cleaning down before and after groups ensure safety.*

Clear information on what is happening/available:

- *Dates for re-opening services will be difficult but virtual information will be useful. Transparency is important. Venues need to be bigger to accommodate visitors as safety is important.*
- *Not sure. Young people like me probably would not be able to name places we can go off the top of our heads, so should make them more publicly known.*
 - *Advertise on social media*
 - *Put it in a lot of places where people can see it*
 - *Approach schools and tell them about services existing.*
- *Don't see a lot of places where young people can go in my area.*

Timings and location – keep it local:

- *Saturdays would be good and close to home. My mum runs a boys group and does what she can to help empower them, she uses her own money for this.*
- *Opening in the middle of the day and again in the evenings.*
- *It is good to have somewhere local and easily accessible to other services, 1 place would be good.*

Learn from the online groups and support:

- *I agree, Zoom has enabled him to carry on attending meetings in spite of illness.*
- *I am autistic and feel that the whole world had been flipped upside down, however this has given a chance for young people to share their ideas and experiences and be heard.*

Voluntary and Community Sector Response

In Sheffield, local voluntary and community sector organisations who work with children and young people have rapidly adapted their delivery in the light of the Covid19 crisis. This section of the report highlights the changes and what the VCS sees as future issues and challenges.

Moving from face to face to phone/online support

Many organisations developed phone/online support within the first couple of weeks, seeing the need to ensure immediate contact with the children and young people they support. Any drop in the service would have an impact on the young people, potentially reducing the impact of previous months work. Here are some examples:

- *SRASAC's ISVA service* set up regular phone/email/text slots to continue to engage with their children/young people and parents. Staff were trained in the use of safe secure virtual counselling rooms so the young people can see their workers' faces.
- *SAYiT* set up a text service for young people and encouraged to access the Noah Lomax Fund where needed, which includes access to phone and online counselling, and a hardship fund for financial help with essential items.
- *Sheffield Young Carers* set up a system of weekly phone calls/online calls (minimum) to support young people and their families, a week before lockdown with parents already withdrawing their children from school.
- *Shelter* have spent lots of time supporting parents over the phone giving advice and suggestions for helping them to support their children and young people through the lockdown - encouraging them to talk, set reasonable boundaries and to help them manage their expectations of their children and themselves.
- *Chilypep* had transferred all possible work to online platforms and social media within a week of lockdown. Drawing on their understanding of the finer workings of CANVA Pro, Instagram, Facebook Live, Tik Tok, Twitter, Zoom, etc, a comprehensive online schedule of creative and interactive activities had been put in place including 'Walk with a Chliypepper', 'Cook with a Chilypepper', Art Club, Pet Day (which included a range of activities involving pets), 'Perform like a Chilypepper' and Self-Care Sundays. There were contributions each day from both staff and young people. In addition, in co-production with staff, young people worked to help share positive and creative self-help activities. Young people from across Chilypep's groups in Sheffield and Barnsley put together a list of helpful recommendations in relation to isolation which went out on their website and through social media.
- *Sheffield Futures* services transferred to virtual using online platforms such as Instagram and TIK TOK to get important messages out to young people. They developed quizzes, cookery cards and art challenges. They used the BlueJeans online platform to deliver their Targeted Intervention Programme – a group work approach which focused on staying safe on-line, emotional awareness and risks of exploitation. Sheffield Futures have also been delivering open access virtual youth clubs. They

replaced their drop-in NEET service with a helpline and our Door 43 service continued 1:1 work virtually and like with youth clubs held virtual well-being cafes.

- *SHINE* found that a high level of emotional support was required, as young people were at a higher risk of using food as a coping mechanism with increase in binge eating behaviours and weight gain.

For one organisation, *Element Society*, who deliver the National Citizen Service (NCS) programme, lockdown added an additional problem. The NCS Trust, the lead organisation, instructed all delivery partners not to have any further contact with the young people Element had already engaged with. Whilst they couldn't have face to face contact they put lots of stuff on their website, such as the "Rona Diaries" where young people could record the memories during lockdown. They put challenges on the site, quizzes and general information and useful contacts that might help a young person.

Developing online group support

From the initial response of offering online and phone support on a one-to-one basis had been established, VCS organisations quickly moved to the online development of another critical aspect of their work: online group support. The group support is a crucial element in much of the work because it provides a safe space to meet other young people with similar issues/concerns, offering peer support as well as development of skills. Here are some examples of how that group work developed online:

- *Together Women* is known for its' safe women-only centre and gender-specific work, hosting a wide range of weekly face to face voice and influence groups, activities, local and regional outreach and drop in sessions and designing new resources lead by girls for girls. During lockdown they have run the groups online via ZOOM, this alternative way of hearing from girls enabled them to continue to take a lead on what Together Women's services should look like and to come up with new ideas. They have run a creative writing competition called 'Express the Stress' to get a glimpse of how young women and girls have experienced this pandemic or how they are feeling.
- *All of SAYiT's LGBT+ youth groups* are running online, including Fruitbowl for young people aged 11-17 and Prism for young people aged 18-25. They are covering a range of different activities such as quiz nights, creative activities, home baking, yoga, in addition to support and checking in.
- *Chilypep* have moved their weekly groups online, using Whatsapp, Messenger and Zoom to continue the Mental Health influencing groups STAMP and OASIS, the HAPPY GROUP, a safe space for newly arrived young asylum seekers and refugees.
- *Museums Sheffield* have created a weekly Monday Makes short film for families. They have made woolly mammoths, funerary collars, created Op-Art, made doll's houses, paper beads and bunting. The Monday Makes films will continue for the foreseeable future. They have also contributed to the Sheffield Learning Together supplement in The Star.

- *SHINE* made rapid adaptations to their group work which was challenging in the need to provide a range of interventions to keep participants engaged.

Development of online resources and training

Beyond developing online group support, many agencies have adapted their material and resources to be used online. This flexible approach including methods from menti to zoom whiteboard, as well as uploading information onto organisations websites has been important to provide clear information, appropriate tools for support as well as offering their online expertise and resources to a wider range of children and young people.

- *SRASAC* have gathered online resources to send to children/young people and their parents to support their recovery from sexual abuse.
- *SAYIT's LGBT+ Domestic Abuse project* is offering online training, information and briefings to organisations to support LGBT+ victims of domestic abuse.
- *Chilypep* created a new set of visuals for our weekly online programme which could go out both on their website and across social media. This includes signposting information for support as well as interactive activities with a focus on keeping well during lockdown.
- *Sheffield Futures* used google classrooms to develop a bank of resources which includes one off hour sessions or more intensive 6-week programmes.

Digital exclusion

Online support has been a lifeline for many children and young people during the Covid19 crisis, however it has also highlighted the inequality of digital seclusion. Many young people don't have access to the internet or devices at home. This has excluded them from any online activity including school or college work.

- *Sheffield Young Carers* raised funds for 40 computers, appropriate software, headphones for confidentiality and internet access for young carers who had no access to IT for schoolwork or keeping in touch with friends.
- *Shelter* have supported many of the children and young people we work with has been by providing them with the equipment they need to complete the schoolwork that is set for them
- *City of Sanctuary Sheffield* set up 'The Homeschool Project' which has provided laptops, data and additional homeschool materials to asylum-seeking families with school-age children. They crowdfunded over £20,000 and used this to deliver the above to over 100 families in Sheffield, Doncaster, Rotherham and Barnsley.
- *Chilypep* received some emergency funding from The Paul Hamlyn Foundation to provide digital support particularly for those young people from the asylum seeking and refugee community. They have been able to support them in accessing Wi-Fi and broadband as well as purchase several laptops and tablets that are able to be loaned by young people that need them.

- *Museums Sheffield* have developed projects with partners across the city including Artfelt at the Sheffield Children's Hospital, Create Sheffield and community groups to ensure that digitally excluded children have access to high quality art and craft activities, equipment and materials. Activity packs have been distributed to over 2000 children and young people across the city

Delivering face to face work

Most VCS organisations focussed on delivering online work but some face to face work continued with high risk vulnerable young people. Sheffield Futures describe their work in this period:

“During Lockdown Sheffield Futures with agreement from commissioners were able to continue delivering our Assertive Outreach Project, Detached Youth Work and minimal face to face work with high risk vulnerable young people within the Community Youth Teams and CSE respectively. We followed National Youth Agency and The Federation of Detached Youth Workers COVID-19 guidance in developing our risk assessment to ensure staff and young people remained safe.

“We continued to use a partnership approach with the Assertive Outreach Project, supporting young people living in care who were going missing. Youth workers were deployed across the city to locate young people and support them back to their homes, referring on to specialist services where appropriate. A snapshot taken found workers assisted to locate 17 individuals requested by Edge of Care Team. The number of missing episodes varied per young person, one having been reported and searched for 14 times.

“In terms of detached youth work, due to limited availability of staff we focused on areas across the city with high incidences of ASB and/or receiving negative attention by the media. Young people we engaged with by and large understood the current situation but were anxious and confused about what the future might hold for them and their families. Youth Workers undertook a lot of signposting work with young people in relation to family concerns i.e. food banks, helplines and education institutes. As lockdown progressed young people were starting to discuss boredom, mental health and crime.

“At the beginning of lockdown, we were able to RAG rate all open 1:1 cases and determine which young people and families required more support. An example of this work was visiting a young woman at risk of exploitation and a young man whose engagement in criminal activities was at risk of escalation.

“Over the lockdown period we were able to increase our presence steadily and engage with more young people, we are providing a five-week summer programme of activities and have developed activity bags for young people each with a theme, sport, arts, cookery and through The Youth Association we are distributing 300 activity/information packs

containing- ideas to help the community, COVID information, diary/reflection resources, and coping with stress materials.”

Lockdown with Family

The lockdown with families has had a range of impacts on children and young people:

Confidentiality: for many of our services, we work with young people on a basis of trust and confidence. We are able to speak with children and young people in neutral spaces such as community venues, schools etc. rather than at home where young people may not feel free to talk. The online support during Covid19 has been offered to young people at home. Many young people are locked down into silence, for example many LGBT+ young people are not out to their families, and their safe space to be themselves outside of the home was lost in lockdown. The impact on emotional wellbeing as well as domestic abuse are two issues which will continue to impact on their lives.

Many VCS organisations work with family members as well as young people. They have identified a number of issues facing families from food to housing:

- *Sheffield Young Carers* have linked families into services for support such as food banks, linking with Food Share, Blend as well as individual food banks; liaising with social workers/MAST workers to ensure that our service interweaves with theirs (e.g. ensuring we don't ring on same day the social worker is due to ring). There has been additional work such as securing free school meal vouchers – chasing schools, arranging food delivery where no voucher forthcoming. Other areas of support include benefits, rent, safeguarding incidents including domestic violence and conflict within families.
- *SAYIT's* parent and carers support group are receiving 1:1 support and will facilitate a group if requested.
- *SRASAC's ISVA service*: young people whose families have been awaiting rehousing are feeling frustration at the lack of movement in the council housing bidding system.
- *Shelter* have provided families with a wide range of resources and activities to keep them busy at home. These have included art and craft resources, toys and games, puzzles and colouring activities as well as outdoor toys and resources that will encourage them to explore the outdoors.
- *City of Sanctuary, Sheffield* have supported families to access Free School Meals through The Virtual Sanctuary.
- *Sheffield Futures Door 43 service* have supported young people with their emotional needs during lockdown, by developing self-help videos, fun interactive quizzes and weekly challenges.
- *Chilypep* have found that some young people have experienced breakdowns in family relationships during Covid19 crisis, and many parents of young people with mental health difficulties have experienced increased anxiety themselves in terms of

their young person's health and how to support them through lockdown. Staff have responded by providing a listening ear to both young people and parents, having regular check ins, and by sending information and resources. They have also supported some young people and their families through safeguarding and domestic abuse, including attending virtual CIN meetings and working with the police, schools and social care.

Black Lives Matter (BLM)

Covid19 crisis is a major issue in 2020 but not the only one to hit the headlines. The Black Lives Matter movement has affected young people, from the systemic racism faced by Black young people in Sheffield through to young people from across the city protesting for change. Here a couple of organisations talk about the impact on their young people:

- *Together Women*: All of the girls we worked with felt very emotional and shocked by what they had seen when George Floyd was killed. They then got very passionate about the BLM movement and wanted to talk about this more with workers and their peers to gain more understanding of racism and white privilege. They have all felt some inequalities themselves and it really mattered to them that they could come together online in a safe non-judgmental space and take some action. They produced posts for social media in support of BLM and designed protest banners.
- *SRASAC's ISVA service*: Many young people continue to express upset at issues of injustice (have been interested in the BLM campaign). They want to feel listened to and heard by the adults around them and for their parents/safe carers to also have support to recover from trauma after what has happened to them.
- *Element Society*: put out a statement on their website about BLM and one of their past graduates was a prime mover in organising Sheffield's peaceful demonstration.
- Young People from *Chilypep and Element Society's social action project*, 'Gen Z: A Generation for Change' took part in a training session around the BLM movement, including the history, the current context and issues such as white privilege and implicit bias. This also included 'safe space conversations' for the group to discuss their feelings and concerns in a supportive environment. One group member said of the session, "A lot of young people really need to see this."
- *Sheffield Futures* detached youth workers attended the Black Lives Matters Protest in Sheffield and spoke to many young people in attendance, they also facilitated two workshops for young people.

Participants at Sheffield Futures BLM workshops shared their views, thoughts and ideas

All the young people present felt that they were able to support the BLM movement in one way or another. They felt the incident with the statues was very powerful and this was the start, however they don't feel that this will directly stop racism. They also discussed:

Social media: the young people had an in-depth discussion about social media and what they are noticing about the content in regards to racism and the BLM movement. The young people generally felt that they were seeing a mixture of positive and negative information on social media and more could be done to counteract the negativity. One young person felt that there has been some conflict on social media and although she hasn't had to unfriend anyone, she knows friends of friends who have been exposed as having racist views. There were also concerns raised around how getting too emotionally involved in things you see on social media can have a massive negative impact on young people's mental health. The young people felt that social media was very helpful at the moment as people are not tolerating and instead challenging racism.

Biased reporting: the young people also felt that some media was racially biased in their reporting, as they are only showing the negatives like the people throwing bricks and not the positive peaceful protests.

Supporting black-owned businesses: a discussion was had around a current Facebook group called Black Owned and believe there is also a 'Sheffield Black Owned' that promotes BAME businesses. One suggestion the young people thought might be helpful was an app for BAME businesses in order to make them more accessible. The young people also wondered whether this platform could be used as a way to break down barriers and promote positives, to encourage people to use black family businesses. The young people felt that there needs to be more awareness of black people's shops and stores need to be more representative of the communities they serve.

Changing education – what's taught and who teaches: the young people felt that they needed to be taught more positive things about BAME culture and not just learn about the slavery movement. They felt that they needed to be taught more about famous BAME people and the history of other cultures. One young person felt that teachers don't understand the power they have. They felt that teachers need to stand up to racism more and that more open discussions needed to be had in schools that are more diverse to enable them to feel like a community. They felt that more black teachers/ motivational speakers/ positive role models would help.

In general, the young people felt that schools need to stop making people feel different. They felt that schools need an all-round approach to looking at culture. They feel that consequences for racism in school needs to be more severe. In terms of work, the young people felt that they were easily stereotyped. The young people felt that when they go into shops they are also discriminated against. When they walk out with nothing or put items back they felt they were often looked at and some shops saw them as thieves.

Racial profiling: the young people acknowledged that racial profiling happens and they felt that you couldn't always get mad at the police as a lot of the time they are just doing their jobs. They felt that black people don't generally call the police and that if you phone the police you feel like a snitch. Their perception of schemes like cadets was that it is mainly white kids and they feel that more black kids need to be targeted, and they feel it needs to be made more easily accessible such as run in schools as an after-school club. They feel that

young people need to be encouraged to be part of the police system and need to see more ethnic minorities represented.

The 3 key things the young people agreed were most important were:

- 1) Promoting petitions that support the Black Lives Matters movement such as those on change.org
- 2) More education for young people around racism and the BLM movement.
- 3) History should be taught with no safety barriers.

Long term impacts on Sheffield's children and young people

Many organisations have expressed concern about the long-term impacts of Covid19 crisis, in particular the lockdown, on young people's wellbeing, education and future prospects, amongst other things:

- *SRASAC's ISVA service* works with children of all ages (5-18) with the majority aged 13 and above, and there has been a mixed response. Children under the age of 13 have expressed enjoying spending time with family at home when they are used to a parent working long hours who can now spend time with them. Some children/young people have felt relief not to be attending school as they are no longer facing issues with bullying, whereas some have expressed missing friends and peers.
- *Shelter* is concerned for children and young people's understanding of the way that their 'normal' has shifted. There will be an expectation that children and young people simply 'adjust' the way they live in order to fit in with the 'new normal' and, for many, this will cause increased anxiety. The 'new normal' will affect almost all areas of some children and young people's lives. Many travel by public transport to and from school, schools will be implementing new routines and ways of organising their working, shops and other public places will be operating in new ways and, to top it off, people's behaviour and the way they conduct themselves in public will have changed.
- *SHINE* found their older age group had better health outcomes than younger age group in general. The younger group reported it was more difficult to control eating during lockdown than in school as food was more easily available. 100% of the older group reported it was easier to control eating during lockdown with less 'temptations' than in school, no 'tuck shops' unhealthy breakfasts, junk foods including bacon and sausage sandwiches, etc. This is worth feeding back to SCC and schools.
- *Chilypep* found that young people from their refugee and asylum-seeking support group found it harder to engage online, and had difficulties with language and access to technology, which has increased their sense of isolation. Many young people found not being with workers and friends difficult, as over time it became apparent that whilst online contact is better than nothing, virtual methods do not replace or meet young people's needs for social contact and face to face relationships.

Long term impacts on mental health

There is growing evidence of the impact on young people's mental health during the Covid19 crisis (see [Young Minds report](#)). Organisations with the Network have raised this as a major issue now and as we move towards living with Covid:

- *Together Women*: There are some young women in particular young women with mental health conditions or young women who have experience sexual exploitation, or abuse that need face to face support as COVID has given them doors hide to

behind or been more vulnerable in their homes, it's so much easier for them to put a phone down and more difficult to keep families on board with interventions that are taking place with other services including social services and the police, they have become more hard to reach or it's been more challenging to keep them motivated or on track .

- *Sheffield Young Carers*: The current situation means that young carers are no longer getting the 'break' from caring at school, college or work which, coupled with additional financial and benefits pressures as well as the stress of lock down, is rapidly increasing the need for mental health support.
- *SRASAC's ISVA service*: Criminal trials have been gradually cancelled on a month by month basis and this seems to have negatively affected all the young people who have been awaiting to give evidence as no alternative trial dates have been set. This leaves an extended period of worry and fear at the prospect and a feeling of 'limbo' which has negatively affected the mental health of those young people.
- *Shelter*: Part of Shelter's role is giving children and young people time and space to explore their feelings about the Covid19 crisis and return to 'normal' and find ways through it that they are comfortable with. They are, however, aware that some children and young people will require more specialist services to help them to deal with the impact of the pandemic on their mental and emotional wellbeing.
- *Chilypep*: Some young people found being at home and not having to go to public places and school/college had been a positive for them in the short term for managing their levels of anxiety. The impact on them became apparent as lockdown went on, in that they began to withdraw from activities, becoming very anxious about re-entering social spaces.

Long term impacts on education

The closure of schools and colleges has had a major impact on the education of children and young people across Sheffield. For many it has been hard to keep up, to find time for schooling, to have digital and internet access.

- *Shelter* have continued to contact schools and the education department along with other agencies on behalf of our clients in order to support them with navigating the wider reopening of schools and processes such as school appeals. The seemingly continuous changes that have affected our schools and the new systems and processes that have been implemented, for example different ways of setting home learning as well as the introduction of vouchers for those eligible for free school meals, has made it difficult for many families to get the information and support that they need.
- *Sheffield Young Carers* have worked closely with local education providers (schools, colleges and universities) to ensure young carers continue to receive support during lockdown. In terms of ensuring that young carers are supported longer term to catch up, young carers from SYC, along with 7 other young carers services, developed a set

of Education Top Tips for schools. This is being circulated nationally through the Children's Society's new toolkit.

Long term impacts on employment

There have been headlines in the mainstream media about the fact that young people will be most impacted by the economic crisis created through Covid19 pandemic. The young people who took part in Youth Voice Matters outlined some of the issues they face including cancelled job interviews and little opportunity in the current job market (see p.5-6).

- *SRASAC's ISVA service*: Young people particularly over the age 17 and above who would have been trying to engage in higher education and employment appear to feel lost and frustrated.

Learning from lockdown: sharing good practice

As with the many difficult situations that young people and young peoples' services face there is always the willingness to learn and share good practice. Lockdown is not different. The following are how some organisations are learning from lockdown:

- *Together Women* have known that young people spend lots of time online but much of their engagement would obviously be during the late evening, girls have said they have followed Together Women for a while on social media but barriers, such as transport, dark nights, or been too busy with studies had stopped them from engaging previously. Moving forward into the new normal Together Women as staff and as an organisation have many more tools in their toolkit, and thanks to the girls' new ideas and campaigns to keep moving forward.
- *Sheffield Young Carers* were looking to provide more online support before the lockdown and has been forced to adapt and learn quickly. As a result, they will be keeping online support available, recognising that it makes their service accessible to young carers who struggle to travel or who feel less comfortable in face-to-face situations. The move to online has also enabled SYC's Action Group, a group of young carers who campaign around their rights, to meet with young carers across the country more easily. The first result is top tips for education providers to identify and support young carers during and post-Covid19 crisis.
- *Chilypep* had begun to look at how to make the best use of online working and social media before the pandemic, but the situation forced them to rapidly adapt. Staff have developed their understanding and skills, and a range of platforms have been adopted. Young people have been heavily involved in developing and delivering much of the online work, and Chilypep are now developing their existing training for both young people and adults into online delivery models alongside face to face training

The online work has raised a number of issues including safeguarding and consent:

- *Together Women*: Safeguarding and gaining consent for young women and girls to participate in the groups had to be considered as we were now engaging with girls who we had not met before. We now have a google doc engagement/consent form that can be sent to the girls and their parents, before joining our online groups if under 18.
- *Sheffield Futures* now have several different platforms to engage young people, young people can choose what suits them best whether it is online, F2F, small group work or 1:1. Futures have also developed new Instagram content and utilised YouTube to get relevant content to young people and post lockdown will look to continue this approach.

Online support has also had its benefits, as one young person explained: *“I am autistic and feel that the whole world had been flipped upside down, however this has given a chance for young people to share their ideas and experiences and be heard.”*

Future challenges, future youth services

The Covid19 pandemic has had a huge impact on children and young people from disruption to their education through to increased levels of anxiety about the future. In the same summer, we have seen young people organise and protest as part of the Black Lives matter movement. This report highlights the experience of some of our young people – there are more views out there that we need to listen to. The report also identifies a number of key issues that we, as a city, need to address together to create a place where children and young people feel included, valued and are active participants in their future and that of Sheffield as a whole.

Key recommendations

Mental health

The report highlights this as a major concern for children and young people. The impact on their mental health has been increasing, leading to further pressure on the city-wide problem of waiting lists and under funding of young peoples' mental health services. We call on mental health providers and funders in the city, in particular CAMHS/AMHS and the CCG to:

- Note the issues raised by young people in this report (p.3 and 5) and by VCS organisations (p.13).
- Recognise the range of mental health services delivered by the VCS and work with us to develop a coordinated and youth-led provision across the city (in coordination with the Mental Health Partnership Network).
- Increase funding to children and young people's mental health services – work with the VCS to bid for partnership funding or other funding where the VCS can take the lead (in coordination with the Mental Health Partnership Network).

Education

Education providers in the city, from schools to universities, are now planning the opening up of provision and how to reduce the impact of the loss of education for so many children and young people. We call on education providers to:

- Note the issues raised by young people in this report (p. 3-4) and in particular to note the impact of digital exclusion (p.10).
- Provide support (1-1 and groups) to support students' emotional wellbeing – *'places in school, to take time out of your day to go and talk about your worries and stuff.'*
- Provide additional educational support to children and young people who have not been able to keep up with school work, who need access to laptops/internet and who have taken on more caring responsibilities during lockdown.

Employment

Young people who are leaving education this summer and entering the employment market will be hugely disadvantaged. We call on Sheffield employers (including the VCS) to:

- Note the issues raised by young people trying to enter, or currently in, employment (p.5-6).
- Work with the VCS to support young people into apprenticeships, training and jobs. We can work together to support young people into employment alongside employers, including

offering training to employers around supporting young people who, for example, may have mental ill-health, be carers, low in confidence or limited budget for transport/clothing etc.

Youth Services

Sheffield City Council has taken youth services back into the council with an increased budget, we call on the City Council to:

- Note the [Vision for Young People](#) developed by Sheffield VCS and work with us to develop a coordinated and youth-led strategic vision for universal and targeted provision to cover the whole city and meet the needs of all young people.
- Note the issues and suggestions raised by young people in this report (p.6-7).
- Recognise the range of youth services being delivered by the VCS, noting the role Sheffield Futures has played in the development and delivery of youth services in our city for over 20 years.
- Ensure the active participation of young people in the development and delivery on Council youth services from day one.
- Ensure that any decision on the Council's youth services includes young people's representation, with decision-making rights.

Racial Equity

Sheffield's new Race Equality Commission must have more than one representative of young people – they are as diverse as our communities. We call on the Commission to:

- Note the views of young people on BLM (p.11-12).
- Work, in particular, with Black-led VCS youth organisations in the city who engage directly with young people.
- Work with the VCS alongside statutory and private sector partners to develop a city-wide response to the issues and needs of black children and young people, and to proactively challenge and eradicate racism in our city
- Ensure young people are represented across all aspects of the Commission.
- Elect a young person as joint Chair.

Call out

The recommendations above need Sheffield's young people, communities, organisations and decision-makers to work together. The summer of 2020 has been both difficult and at times inspiring, and there are opportunities now to learn and to work together for change.

We call on Sheffield's City Council, Sheffield CCG, NHS and Primary Care, Education and Training Providers, Employers and the Voluntary and Community Sector to take this report as a first step in engaging with, and responding, to the amazing children and young people in this city. They are the future and they are in the best place to know what that future should look like.

CYPN is committed to taking this agenda forward. We will be in touch.

THANKS TO

All the **young people** who took part in the Youth Voice Matters event and young people from all the participating organisations for their time, wisdom and energy.

All the **organisations** that sent in their responses/participated in Youth Voice Matters (in alphabetical order):

Chilypep	Sheffield Rape Advice and Sexual Abuse
City of Sanctuary Sheffield	Centre (SRASAC)
Endeavour	Sheffield Young Carers
Element Society	Shelter
Museums Sheffield	Shift Media
SAYiT (Sheena Amos Youth Trust)	SHINE
	Together Women

Ellie Munday, Chilypep and **Shelly** McDonald, Together Women for developing and running the Youth Voice Matters event

Sara Gowen, Sheffield Young Carers and **Lesley** Pollard, Chilypep for coordinating this response and writing the report as co-chairs of CYPPN.

Pam Colton for her ongoing support for the Network and amazing note-taking during CYPPN meetings and especially in the Youth Voice Matters event.

Children and Young People's Partnership Network (CYPPN)

CYPPN is a network of organisations from the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) with the aim of enhancing the quality of services to children and young people in Sheffield.

The role of the Network is

- **Representing Views** of the VCS Network members to the City Council, other statutory agencies and the private sector, including on Partnership Boards and multi-agency working groups
- **Networking and Information Sharing** to support the development of the VCS sector through regular meetings, updates and partnership working
- **Campaigning** on the issues and priorities of VCS Network Members and the communities they serve
- **Sharing good practice and continuing professional development** leading to increased partnership working, improved quality of service delivery and workforce development.

If you are a VCS organisation who works with children and young people and would like to join CYPPN, please email Pamela Colton Pamela.Colton@vas.org.uk