

**YOU TH
LEAD S.**



COVID CONVERSATIONS.

Establishing how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on BAME young people aged 8-19.

MARCH 2021

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ABOUT YOUTH LEADS UK

Youth Leads UK is a charity supporting young people aged 12-22 to enrich their skills, reach their potential and influence change. We do this through peer-led programmes of volunteering, social action, learning experiences and amplifying young people's voices with key decision-makers.

INTRODUCTION.

IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS, OUR LIVES HAVE BEEN TURNED UPSIDE DOWN, AND WE HAVE ALL FACED CHALLENGES.

SOME OF WHICH HAVE BEEN A STRUGGLE, ESPECIALLY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.

Coronavirus has brought poverty, inequality, work and housing into the spotlight. The new Children's Commissioner for England says that young people will be a "post-war generation" because of the "shocks" they have experienced from the COVID-19 pandemic. Dame Rachel de Souza also called on society to "repay children for the sacrifices they have made" over the last year.

In December 2020, Youth Leads UK was invited by Bolton Together to run several focus groups named 'Covid Conversations' to establish how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted BAME young people aged between 8-19 years old. Funding from HM Government, distributed by The National Lottery Community Fund to Bolton Together has made this report possible.

Working primarily with Bolton's schools and colleges, we were able to identify participants which were geographically diverse as well as having variation in age and levels of education.

The consultation focused on the impact that COVID-19 has had on health and wellbeing and what can be done to address this impact. We also explored how being from a BAME background might have made things different.

A total of 31 young people aged 8-19 took part in the focus groups providing us with their opinions through their experiences. All consultation took place face-to-face or via virtual meeting platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

Youth Leads UK used a predefined set of talking points and questions to initiate an open discussion with the children and young people involved.

TOPICS COVERED IN THE FOCUS GROUPS



- **ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PANDEMIC**
- **EXAMS**
- **MENTAL HEALTH**

- **NEWS AND INFORMATION**
- **RELATIONSHIPS**
- **RULES AND CHANGES**

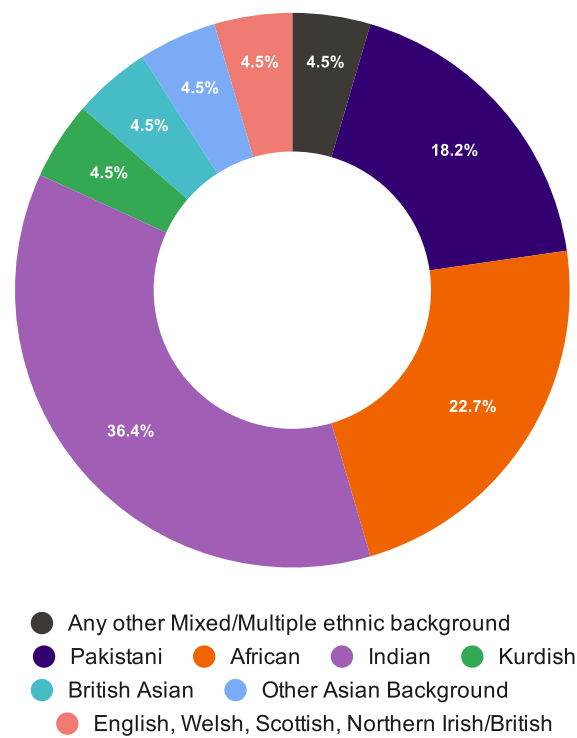


DEMOGRAPHICS.

AGES



ETHNICITY



BOLTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DATA



SEXUAL ORIENTATION *

Of all those who answered the question on their sexual orientation, 100% reported that they are straight/heterosexual.

NOTES

*Not all educational establishments were comfortable asking this question of their young people, so we are only showing results of those children and young people as opposed to the results of all of the 31 young people who took part.

** Demographic response forms were optional and not all participants completed them. The results shown above are only for those who completed the forms.

FINDINGS.



8-11 YEAR OLDS.

Eight children from 'St Bede CE Primary Academy' and 'Pikes Lane Primary School' participated in the focus groups.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PANDEMIC

When asked about how they would describe the pandemic, the children's answers were mainly one-worded:



Most of the children said that nobody in their immediate families had contracted coronavirus. Those whose family members had tested positive for the virus said that it made them feel sad. Having to isolate as part of school bubbles also made children feel sad and worried:

“Isolating was really hard. I wanted to see my friends and get back to school quickly.”

“If I could change something about the pandemic, it would be that there was no coronavirus. That way, we can remove the whole situation, and we would be back at school. Coronavirus hasn't been good for anything.”

THE IMPACT OF CHANGES

The children were asked open questions about their understanding of the changes that have occurred during the Pandemic and how this has affected them personally.

When asked if the children knew what the lockdown rules were, they said:

- “Washing your hands regularly”
- “Staying 2 metres apart”
- “Wearing a mask”
- “Stay home and stay safe”
- “Don't mix with other households”

The children were then asked what changes they have faced over the past year since the start of the pandemic; the most common responses were not being able to see their family and friends and not being able to play sports such as football and boxing practice. Other answers included not being able to go on their annual holiday, not attending school, and some food items not being stocked in supermarkets.

To gain a greater insight into their personal feelings and self-reflection, the children were asked to share what they have learnt about themselves over the past year. They explained how family is important and precious and how they have stayed connected through FaceTime. Others said how they are now good at extracurricular activities such as sports, arts and music.

“I’ve learnt that family is important because some people have had family members die.”

“I’ve learnt that I’m good at badminton.”

To break up the focus group for the younger age groups, we introduced the ‘Emoji Express’ game where participants were asked to move around the room to the emoji closest to their thoughts.

The majority of participants navigated towards **“worried”** and when probed, the children stated that was because they aren’t as active as they were pre-pandemic and they are uncertain about their futures. One child was excited to see their family more.

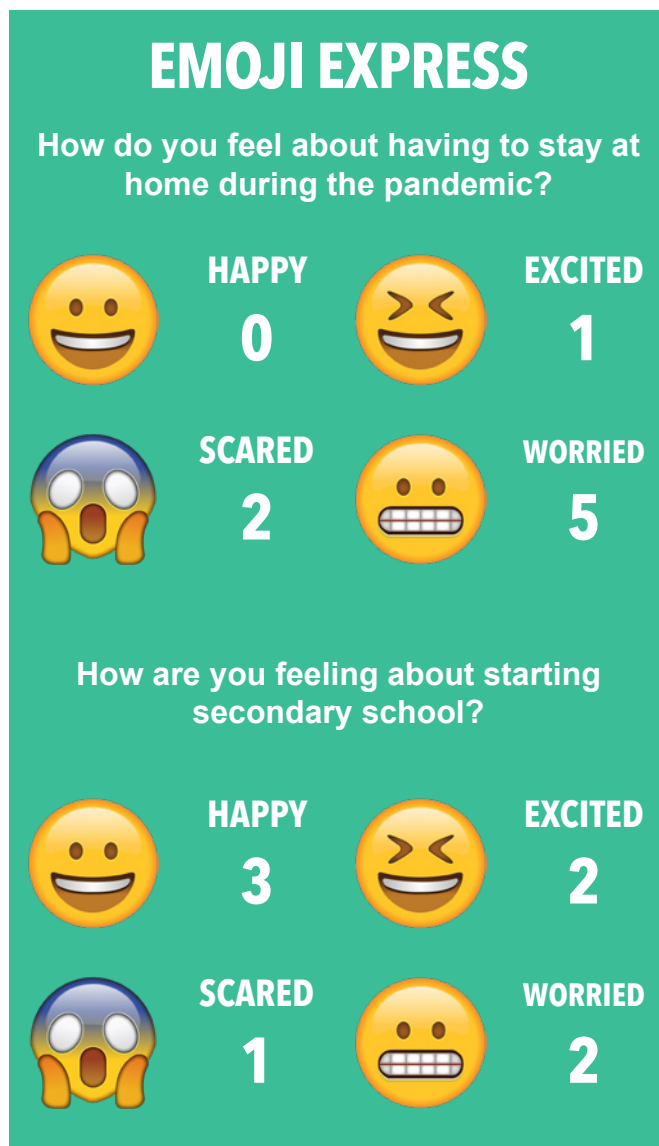
When asked what would need to be different for them to move between emoji’s, the answers were **“being able to see family and friends”** and **“having activities to do at home”**.

Thoughts on starting secondary school produced a mix of all four emotions. Although five children said they are happy and excited about starting secondary school, the other three expressed worry and fear.

“I don’t have any friends anymore.”

“It is hard to make friends when we are at home.”

“I think it will be a fresh start because it’s all new.”



FINISH THE SENTENCE

Participants were asked to fill in the gap with their thoughts.

I AM MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO

seeing friends and family /
shopping /
going back to boxing

AFTER COVID

MENTAL HEALTH

The children were asked how they would describe mental health. They answered with the following quotes:

“How people feel” | “Helping people be heard” | “Being active” | “Negative”

They all agreed that the pandemic had affected people’s mental health as they have been stuck at home and offered the following activities to improve mental health:



We explored the children’s thoughts on what could be better if the UK went into another lockdown. They said they would want to be more creative and have socially distanced walks with their school classmates to keep in touch with friends.

They all agreed that taking on activities has helped lift their moods. Teachers also commented on how at-home activities have helped increase energy and good spirits.

We asked the opinions of the children on vaccination. Although they all agreed that it is a good thing and would reduce the death rates, there was some uncertainty about whether Coronavirus would still be present or not. They expressed their concerns about some people not wanting to have the vaccine:

“People might be scared because it is new, and we don’t know if it works or what is in it”.

NEWS AND INFORMATION



**100%
OF PARTICIPANTS
WATCH TV NEWS**

We think it is essential that children in any emergency have access to impartial and precise information. All participants said they watch the news on the TV with their families. Participants commented that the news made them feel **scared** because of the number of cases, **worried** about more restrictions, and **emotional** as one family member died which the news reminded them of.

If they required any more information on Coronavirus, they would ask their parents/ teachers or look online, although most said they don’t need any more information.

What participants do at home after school:

- Online mosque
- Practice music and dance
- Chores
- Homework

FINISH THE SENTENCE

Participants were asked to fill in the gap with their thoughts.

THE BEST THING ABOUT COVID IS

seeing family /
less travel /
my bed

12-15 YEAR OLDS.

Thirteen young people from 'Ladybridge High School', 'Bolton Muslim Girls' School' and 'Eden Boys' School' took part in the focus groups.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PANDEMIC

Participants were asked how they would describe the pandemic.



Participants felt like they were missing out on their education. They also expressed sadness at the rapidly rising death toll. The pandemic was also described as a high contributing factor to a decline in mental health. The young people stated they became numb to the number of daily deaths and felt the same was apparent for the people around them.

“When the numbers went to over a hundred, society has become a bit numb.”

The young people stated that they have found it hard to stare at a computer screen all day when learning remotely. They also said that they better understand lessons in person rather than through a laptop.

All of the young people in this age group, except two, had tested positive for COVID-19 or had been ill with related symptoms, and most said their immediate or extended family had been sick with the virus. This worried them and made them feel scared, especially when it was an elderly member of their family. All of the young people said they've isolated at least once during the pandemic, with some having isolated on many occasions.

Most of the young people shared that they did not worry about getting coronavirus themselves and that they were more worried about spreading the virus to their families and friends.

“I'm not worried too much about getting it myself because the news has always said that young people won't get too ill, but I don't want to pass it on to elderly people who the virus hits hard”.

When asked what the isolation period was like, the young people said it felt very **‘on and off’** and **‘not continuous’** as they'd be in school for a few days and then be sent home again. Some preferred the change and enjoyed being at home at first but then concluded that they were missing out on a lot of education.

“My dad got covid, and we were all unwell, and this was the week before my mock exams - I didn't have the energy to revise”.

IMPACT OF THE CHANGES

All of the young people, when asked, said they were aware of some of the lockdown rules but not all. The below rules were mentioned:

- “Everyone must wear masks”
- “Only one person from a household can shop for necessities”
- “Not mixing with other households”
- “Traveling to other cities is forbidden”
- “All non-essential shops are closed”
- “Limits on the number of attendees at funerals and weddings”

They shared that they felt the rules are understandably strict as to slow the transmission rate of the virus and allow people to get out of the lockdown faster. Most students stated that they watch the news frequently to be updated. However, it was mentioned numerous times that the rules, at times, have been unclear.

Everyone in the discussions concluded that there needs to be more clarity with rules, especially with the new ‘roadmap’ changes.

When asked what changes they had faced over the past year, the most common thing young people shared was that they had stopped all sport-related activities such as football and cricket, and they have not been able to see their family and friends anywhere near as much as they used to. They also shared that they feel really bored at home sometimes, making them want to go outside for some fresh air and go out with friends to help them cope (although they refrain from doing this due to the lockdown rules):

“I sometimes go for walks with my household”.

“I can’t go to the cricket club, which is really hard for me because I get really bored, and cricket keeps me active”.

Some of the young people expressed that they have seen a considerable decline in their physical and mental health due to not being able to go outdoors. They feel the masks, necessary as may be, are very restrictive and take away their identity as it is hard to identify one another when they are wearing masks. Those who wear glasses stated it causes their lenses to steam up, which can cause anxiety.

“I don’t know why, but I get anxious wearing a mask”.



Participants shared that they had picked up hobbies such as baking, painting and arts, and they have had more time for their pre-pandemic indoor hobbies. All of the young people expressed that they found this to be a stress reliever helping them considerably throughout the pandemic.



FINISH THE SENTENCE

Participants were asked to fill in the gap with their thoughts.

I AM MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO

prom / seeing friends and family / going shopping / being active / normality

AFTER COVID

EXAMS

We asked the young people their thoughts on exams being cancelled. Most participants commented that it was unfair to be judged on their performance in class.

“I don’t contribute much in class because the loud people are the ones who teachers listen to”.

Participants spoke of the potential for teachers to be biased when assessing grades based on class performance.

“People who are quiet in class will probably get lower grades because the teacher might not even know them”.

However, some shared the opposite opinion:

‘It’s stress off my shoulders. I was scared I was going to fail, so for me, it has helped me. All the little assessments and mocks will make up the grade, so I’ve got a good GCSE grade if I do well in them’.

Another young person agreed and said she is happy that exams are cancelled as she no longer has to stress about filling in the gaps in her learning.

Following this, the question of grade value was raised. This question was framed from an employer’s perspective. The young people felt it would not be fair for the employer to judge someone on the grades achieved in the absence of exams because students have not been given a choice about the matter. This was a government decision, and therefore the grades should not be deemed less valuable.

“Employers should change their mindset because an exam is just a reflection of that day. When I did my exams, my grandma was in the hospital with Covid, and I was just worried, so I know I didn’t perform as well as I could have”.

The young people were asked if they worried about their future in terms of job prospects. One of them said:

“Yes but I worry more about what I want to do. Will there be a job for me?”

FINISH THE SENTENCES

Participants were asked to fill in the gap with their thoughts.

THE MOST ANNOYING THING ABOUT COVID IS

missing out / being bored / losing social skills / staying at home / restrictions / not being able to see my family and friends / the uncertainty

THE BEST THING ABOUT COVID IS

learning more about myself / more time to focus on family / finding new talents / appreciating the world / time to sleep / the perfect excuse not to see anyone!

MENTAL HEALTH

The young people were asked to describe what the term mental health meant to them and they responded with the following:

“State of your mind- needs to be healthy and it’s normal to have happy and sad emotions; it needs to be balanced”.

“Something that is the same as physical health but is neglected because people care how they look and how they are perceived but don’t think about themselves, what is happening to my head, why are my emotions so negative”.

Participants’ views on mental health support varied in this age group. Some felt supported by their schools:

“School has been very supportive in terms of mental health. We’ve had sessions by experts in the mental health field and resources such as Kooth which I have used. School has excelled in this”.

Whilst some shared opposing opinions focusing on the long waiting periods to see the school therapist:

“I know someone who has had to wait 12 months to see the school therapist - I didn’t even know we had a school therapist, only because my friend told me that she’s been waiting for a year”.

Stigma was a focus of conversation and everyone felt that people need to be more confident when talking about mental health.

“Support for mental health is good but not as good as it should be”.

“A lot of stigma around mental health as opposed to physical health when they are equally important as it can ruin you just like being unhealthy”.

“A lot of people don’t understand mental health and it shouldn’t be a topic people don’t talk about, people should accept it rather than saying it is nothing and ignoring”.

Social media was listed as a factor in the deterioration of mental health and comments were made that it was not the best platform to discuss the topic of mental health.

“Mental health is either really stigmatised or really glorified, apps like TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat show people talking about their bad mental health but sometimes it is not in a good way”.

PARTICIPANTS’ THOUGHTS ON HOW TO IMPROVE:

- **SOME FORM OF REGULAR OUTDOOR EXERCISE OVER THE SUMMER**
- **HAVING MORE THAN ONE SCHOOL THERAPIST AND A SHORTER WAITING TIME**
- **MORE YOUNG PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH**
- **THERAPISTS THAT ARE ACTUALLY YOUNG AND RELATABLE**

NEWS AND INFORMATION

All of the young people watched the news on the TV with their families or received alerts through the BBC news app. The feelings towards the news varied amongst the young people as some found it to be a bit worrying whilst others felt it helped them remain hopeful for things to return to normal.

“When they say they are going to lift restrictions, it makes me feel happy because we can get back to some sort of normal again”.

All participants preferred to have a youth-focused platform for COVID-19 related news.

Some of the young people used social media platforms as a source of receiving news. The social media apps used by the young people included: Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and Twitter. They felt strongly about social media having both good and bad attributes when it comes to influencing young people.

“A lot of people have committed suicide; they might be having a good day but then receive lots of hate in the comments section on their social media posts. People just aren’t aware of how their words can impact others”.

“Social media is good for things like the Me Too and BLM movements. So if it is done right, it can be good”.

It was suggested that young people be taught how to use social media in a good way; teaching online etiquette focusing on how others might feel and the general do’s and don’ts of social media.

All of their families have been strictly following the rules and some mentioned that they would prefer to receive more information about COVID-19 - specifically why they have put the restrictions in place and what we can, and can’t do.

AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES:



**GOING ON
TIKTOK**



**WATCHING
NETFLIX**



**FACETIME WITH
FAMILY/FRIENDS**



**PLAYING
GAMES**



**SPENDING TIME
WITH FAMILY**



**RELAXING
MORE**



**GOING TO THE
MOSQUE**



**SLEEPING
MORE**

16-19 YEAR OLDS.

Ten young people from 'Bolton School Sixth Form Boys' Division' and 'The Sixth Form, Bolton' took part in the focus groups.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PANDEMIC

We started by asking participants what they thought of the pandemic:

“Completely out of the ordinary. Not like 2019, and this wouldn’t have been expected, it has changed everyone’s lives”.

The impact on social lives resulting from the pandemic and being placed into multiple lockdowns was a common concern shared amongst all the young people. They felt that being isolated from the outside world and having to balance education-related responsibilities was overwhelming.

“It’s affected my mental health and became a nightmare”.

All participants had self-isolate either due to a positive case in their household or college bubble. Four out of ten young people had at least one family member who had tested positive for COVID-19 and experienced the virus’ most severe symptoms - it had been a difficult situation for all of those young people as concern for their loved ones led them to miss out on some of their online lessons.

“My dad and granddad had covid. Granddad almost passed away, but he’s okay now, he was in hospital for a month and took a while to recover. Hard to understand how someone can catch it and suddenly be on a ventilator. I had to isolate for 14 days and missed a lot of college. Couldn’t do all lessons online and was able to catch up with the help of teachers”.

“My dad had covid over Christmas, and that was a very difficult period because he had to go to hospital. My parents are both doctors, that was some kind of reassurance but a very worrying time, especially because it was just before another lockdown - I stopped attending lessons, but as it was over the holidays, I was able to catch up in good time by January”.

IMPACT OF THE CHANGES

All of the young people demonstrated a good understanding of what the lockdown rules are and why some people might break the rules. Participants felt that there could be a bit more consistency and clarity. The rules that were mentioned during the conversation included:

- “Staying 2 metres apart”
- “No households are allowed to mix”
- “Only certain shops are allowed to be open”

“I mean, obviously, it’s not a good thing. Right now, it’s been a year of the pandemic and people are just fed up with the rules”.

“I see people with their friends and stuff on social media, I honestly don’t blame them - I understand why they’re doing it - I would want to do it too, but I know it’s only temporary”.

“It has so many repercussions if you don’t wear a mask like one person could spread to another and then it’s just a chain reaction and that could have just been stopped by wearing a mask, so I don’t understand why you wouldn’t - I have strong opinions on that - unless you are medically exempt”.

Being plunged into the lockdowns and adjusting to staying at home, the majority of the young people reacted to it more positively than others. Some had found time to experience self-worth and explore their potential by taking on new interests such as arts & crafts and sports.

“I’ve become more in touch with myself and hobbies like exercising to try to find myself. I had a lot more time and was bored but now that time is utilised”.

However, some felt that the change harmed their mental health by having a repetitive schedule and being disconnected with everyone around them.

“Everything is online now, it’s harder to communicate. Especially with mental health. Every day is the same. Nothing exciting. I just watch Netflix now”.

Some of the young people had parents working in the NHS, so adjusting to their increased working hours and having the pressure to be more careful around the house, in terms of hygiene, to reduce the transmission was stressful for them.

“My mum is a GP, and it’s been hard because we’ve had to be really careful. As soon as I come home, I wash all my clothes and have a shower. Because my parents are key workers and I’m at school, there’s always been a risk of getting Covid which is a lot of pressure”.

Even though the young people experienced both positive and negative changes during the lockdown, they all managed to learn something encouraging about themselves or others. The activities that the young people learned and engaged themselves with included:



SEWING



COOKING



CYCLING



GARDENING



MUSIC



RUNNING



DRAWING



SOCIAL MEDIA

“Before the pandemic, people were just rushing and worried about the future and dwelling on the past. Now, what matters is the now and we need to cherish the now and not worry about the future and understand what is going on right now”.

In terms of being aware of their surroundings, one young person said: **“I think I just realised that as humans, in general, we are inclined to be social, and people want to just be together in the sense of just being able to talk to each other you know, be around other people”.**

EXAMS

With exams being cancelled, most young people felt relieved, but that was followed by a feeling of uncertainty and worry about their futures. Some of them described it as stressful not having the chance to sit their exams and prove their potential. Some participants indicated that they would like to have the option to sit their exams later in the year.

It was agreed that the value of grades has decreased from an employability perspective as the grades may not be a true reflection of an individual's capability. Participants commented that there will always be the caveat of whether or not they would have achieved the awarded grade if they had completed their exams.

“Not being able to sit GCSEs after stressing all year was a relief. I could have done better than my results, but I was happy all things considered”.

“I couldn't concentrate on learning in our crowded house, and we had to do assessments at home, which was hard. I'm not looking forward to A-levels because I know how stressful it will be, but I want to sit the exams to show what I am capable of”.

MENTAL HEALTH

Participants were asked to discuss mental health and what it means to them:

“State of wellbeing in terms of behaviour and emotions” | “Measure of how people feel, in a cognitive sense as well, whether they feel positively or negatively” | “Mental Health varies from person to person as we don't know what is happening in people's lives”.

As a result of the pandemic, youth mental health has become poorer, with social isolation taking its toll. However, having activities and hobbies throughout the past year was mentioned as a positive way to help with wellbeing.

Most young people had seen their immediate family more and friends less, but there was one occasion where due to parents being doctors and their increased working hours, the young people had seen them less often. However, they described it as not being a source of negative impact as they are mature enough to acknowledge the nature of their parents' work and mentioned that it might have been harder for younger people.

When the lockdown rules were eased, some of the young people met their friends and were glad to do so as it made them feel **‘happy’**, **‘cheerful’** and **‘nice’**.

PARTICIPANTS' THOUGHTS ON HOW TO IMPROVE:

- **KNOWING WHO TO GO TO IF YOU ARE SUFFERING**
- **HAVING MENTAL WELLBEING SESSIONS**
- **MORE ACCESSIBLE HELP**
- **REDUCING STIGMA IN CERTAIN COMMUNITIES**

FINISH THE SENTENCE

Participants were asked to fill in the gap with their thoughts.

THE BEST THING ABOUT COVID IS

having a lot of extra time / self-reflection / spending time with my family / reduced school stress / appreciating the NHS

BAME IMPACT.

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children and young people have been disproportionately impacted by grief and bereavement. Recent statistics by Kooth (the online mental health support provider) show that children and young people from BAME communities have been more likely to contact them needing support during the pandemic than their white peers.

The disproportionate impact of coronavirus on some BAME communities is reflective of existing inequalities and discrimination. Children and young people from Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black African families are most likely to be living in poverty - where links between poverty and mental health are well evidenced. We also know that children and young people from BAME backgrounds are less likely to access support services which is why online and confidential providers such as Kooth are being used more widely.

When explored with the children and young people, the majority of participants felt that belonging to the BAME community has had an impact in one way or another. They also commented that there are reasons as to why some people from their communities may not want the vaccine. Young people from the secondary schools commented on 'negative media narratives' focused on the BAME community which have led to an erosion of trust in the press.

Research shows that BAME communities are at a higher risk of becoming seriously ill or dying of COVID-19. Kooth, has seen a 26.6% increase in BAME children and young people contacting them with suicidal thoughts.

"I think the death rate in BAME people has been a lot higher because there are more BAME people who are key workers - they've kept on working, because they have to keep the country running. There's a lot of BAME people who work within the NHS and stuff like that, so I think yeah, it's impossible to ignore the impact it has had".

"People might not understand that our elders are probably not educated on stuff like that" said one young person with regards to showing resistance towards getting a vaccine or not.

The government made some decisions that young people felt discriminated against, for example, when the restrictions were changed and became stricter hours before Eid celebrations were due to take place.

However, a minority of the young people felt that everyone is going through the same thing regardless of what community they belonged to.

THE WIRRAL
Bakers at food factory

BECKENHAM
Photo: Joe White in workshop

WALLINGTON
Shipping during a pandemic

50% MORE LIKELY TO DIE
Study reveals BAME risk

Call for race equality action

London boroughs top for Covid carnage in England

Mogg rule
OUT of touch Jacob Rees-Mogg is a Tory and joke and we respect him turning Parliament into a laughing stock by forcing MPs to form 15-minute queues to vote.

HOLIDAYS BACK ON?

KEEP CALM - WE CAN BEAT THIS

Look on the bright side

RECOMMENDATIONS.

Based on our findings and experience, we call on Bolton's decision-makers to continue to prioritise and invest in children and young people. Specifically, our recommendations are:

REBALANCE THE EDUCATION SYSTEM TO PRIORITISE EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING.

We recommend all schools and colleges to strengthen their responses to children and young people's mental health and mindfulness needs, as there is far too much disparity across Bolton's education system on children and young people's understanding of mental health and where they can go for support.

INTRODUCE AN EXTRA-CURRICULAR BURSARY SCHEME. The value of grades are being called into question by employers and society in general, and the importance of soft skills are as vital as ever. We would like to see an extra-curricular bursary scheme established across Bolton to provide financial support to children from low-income families to be spent on meaningful activities. This would help to address the significant financial barriers to participation.

INVEST IN A PROGRAMME OF SUMMER ACTIVITY. Using resources such as unopened school buildings, a resilience programme needs to be offered to all children and young people over the summer holidays to re-establish and create new relationships. We would particularly like to see this at crucial transition points for the most vulnerable children and young people, such as moving from primary school to secondary school and moving from secondary school to college.

PROVIDE TIMELY, TRANSPARENT AND CLEAR INFORMATION. Schools and colleges play a role in supporting children and young people being informed about the world around them and away from outside influences. We ask all schools and colleges to strategically plan regular communication for children and young people to address the uncertainty and anxiety around COVID-19.

INCREASE AWARENESS OF MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT. We ask for a Bolton-wide campaign showcasing the support available to children and young people, such as Kooth and Chat Health.

INCREASED EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT AND ALTERNATIVE ROUTES. We call for a programme that guarantees all young people aged 16+ receive an opportunity to develop their skills through work experience and youth social action (whether virtual or in-person). We know that this can be transformational for mental health and wellbeing, giving young people a sense of purpose and giving them positive activities to participate in.

The Bolton Family

Bolton has a thriving community, voluntary and social enterprise sector with many organisations working with children, young people and families. We encourage decision makers to work with Bolton's civil society to implement these recommendations.



#TeamBolton's Vision Action Group as outlined on Bolton Council's website

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

This Youth Voice report was produced by a team led by Youth Leads' Mehran Mokri. The data collection was conducted by staff at Youth Leads:

- Saeed Atcha MBE DL - CEO,
- Mehran Mokri - Head of Programmes,
- Zahra Khan - Project Support Executive,
- Abeer Abdul Aziz - Youth Engagement Officer,
- Leah Peploe, Youth Engagement Officer.

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- St Bede CE Primary Academy
- Ladybridge High School
- Bolton Muslim Girls' School
- Eden Boys' School
- Bolton School Sixth Form Boys' Division
- The Sixth Form, Bolton

Barnardo's and Kooth have helped provide useful context in terms of the impact upon BAME children and young people throughout the pandemic.

Finally, we would like to thank all of the children and young people who took part. Their comments and experiences helped us better understand the current situation and their thoughts will ultimately bring benefits to young people, the community, and the health service.

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