

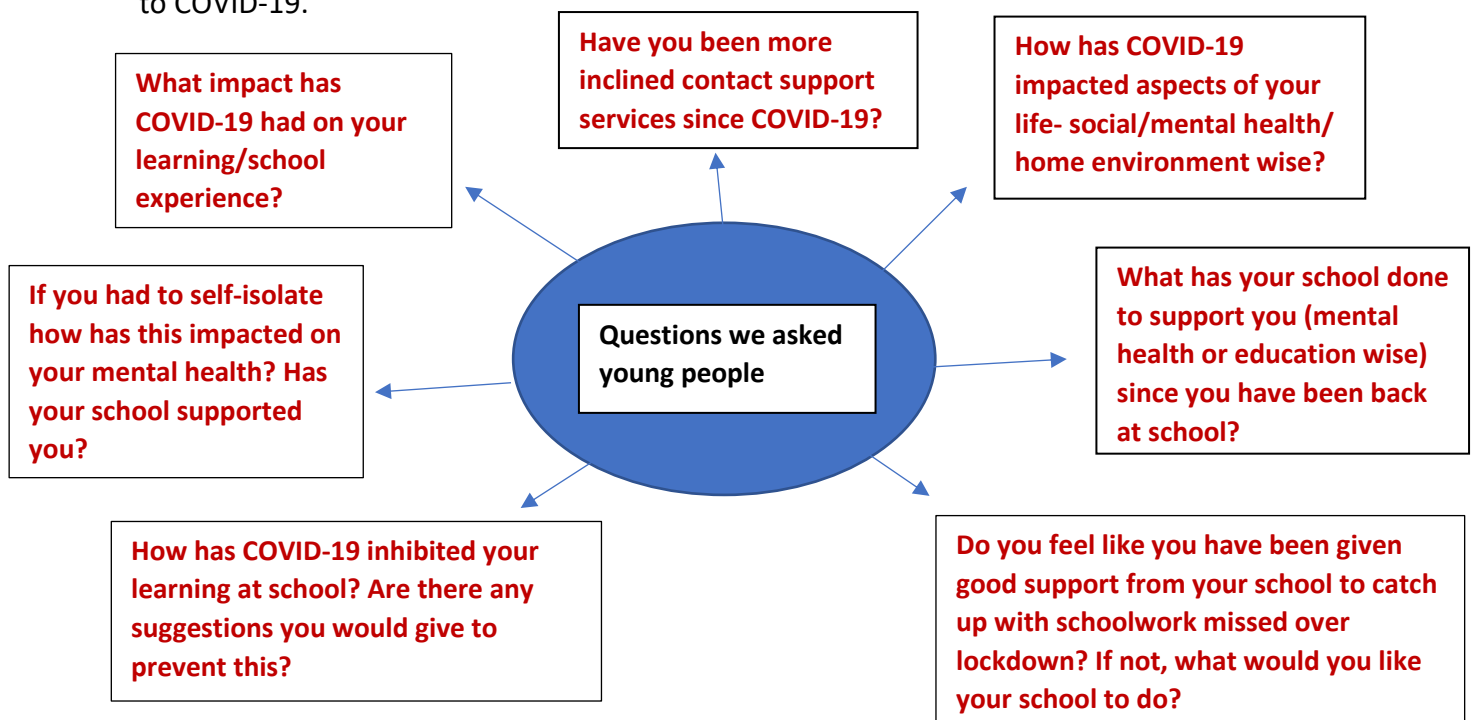
BCP Youth Parliament

How COVID-19 has impacted young people?

As young people part of the BCP community, we have experienced first-hand the positive and negative impact of lockdown and COVID-19 on young people's lives through the disruption it has caused to education, social life, and home environment. However, to ensure we were being true advocates for young people in BCP, we conducted research through:

- Polls and questionnaires on our social media account on Instagram
- Sending out a questionnaire to various schools/youth centres
- Asking students at the schools we attend about the impact COVID-19 has had on their lives
- Held youth forums via Zoom which included young people from a range of different demographics

Therefore, ensuring our research is more representative of young people in BCP's response to COVID-19.



Impacts of Covid on young people

The reoccurring messages we heard from young people were that they felt:

- **alone** due to the detrimental effects Covid has had on their social lives,
- **uncertain** of the future (especially around exams),
- **frustrated** at their school's lack of support with mental health/work missed over lockdown
- **confused** at the unclear Covid restrictions,
- **afraid** of catching Covid because of the health impacts of it and/or having to self-isolate increasing stress levels at the work they will have to catch up
- **stressed** due to the changes Covid has had on their lives.

Problem	What we heard?	Solution
Lack of communication from schools around exams	Students in Year 11/Year 13 felt that their school had failed to make sure they were aware of the developments and changes made by the government (not all students necessarily watch the news and are unaware of these things) to exams this year, which increased their levels of uncertainty and stress.	Promoting schools to make sure all these students are aware of any changes made to their exams this year. 'I am really confused with all the changes to exams and the school as failed to inform on what they are'- what a young person said on this issue.
Cold classrooms	Many schools leave windows open in classrooms to prevent the spread of Coronavirus. This inhibits students' focus and distracts them from their learning which increases their stress levels.	Encourage schools to be more lenient with uniform policy to enable students to wear coats/jumpers in classrooms.
Lack of mental health support	Young people reported that coming back to school was a very difficult and strange transition, with all the new restrictions. After being away from school so long, many said they feel their school has been prioritising catching up on work over mental health. 'My mental health has not been good during Covid and I have really struggled with being alone' – a young person's response to how Covid has impacted them.	More promotion by the council of mental health resources like Dorset Mind, Kooth, Listening Ear. When asking young people if they were aware of these organisations, many people said they were not, or they did not know how to access them.

Problem	What we heard?	Solution
<p>Lack of clubs and activities</p>	<p>This has lead to many young people feeling increasingly isolated and alone because these extra-curricular activities acted as a downtime where young people could spend time with friends and not stress about school.</p> <p>‘Now my clubs have stopped I feel really sad and alone’- young person describing the impact this problem has had on their lives.</p> <p>At school we have to conform and many people use clubs as a way of expressing their identity. Covid has taken this away and has left many young people feeling that their lives are consumed by school.</p>	<p>Ensuring that schools still prioritise mental health and wellbeing of their pupils, rather than purely focussing on catching up on work missed due to Covid. This can be achieved by promoting schools to re-centre on the importance on social activities and where possible re-open these clubs providing, they meet Covid guidelines.</p>
<p>Difficulty in adjusting to online learning</p>	<p>Many young people reported the difficulty in coordinating things like Teams/Zoom, and how distracting it can be working at home, especially with siblings. This equated to an increased backlog of work and further stress levels.</p>	<p>Ensuring schools have equipped students with all the resources they need to work at home and clear guidance on how to access lessons. Moreover, promotion of charities like ‘Coronavirus Tutoring Initiative’, which offers free online tutor lessons, for most subjects, from university students.</p>

Positive impacts

Despite these concerns, many young people have also highlighted the positives of Covid which include: some people saying they have benefited from the new flexibility of engagement for example holding meetings online allowed some to try things they have never tried before. Many young people reported Covid making them feel more grateful for what they had and allowed young people to spend precious time with their families.

Final thoughts

To conclude, we strongly emphasise the importance of combating loneliness that many young people are experiencing due the impact Covid has had on their relationships with their peers and the adverse effects Covid has had on young people's mental health. We encourage the council to unite the young people of BCP into the community during these unprecedented times and promote social interaction (within Covid guidelines) among their peers to prevent people feeling so isolated.

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