

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

21st APRIL 2021

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

Agenda Item No:

**REPORT OF THE GROUP
DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY &
CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND
PARTICIPATION SERVICE: AN
OVERVIEW OF SUPPORT AND
PROVISION DURING COVID-19**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an overview of the support the Youth Engagement and Participation Service has offered young people during the Covid-19 period, whether directly or indirectly via partner agencies.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Scrutinise and comment on the information contained within this report.
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters contained in the report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 At the request of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee, this report is being presented to Members to raise their awareness of the nature and impact of the Youth Engagement and Participation Service's targeted support and youth work provision offered to young people over the past 12 months.
- 3.2 The aim of this report is to give Members a clear understanding of the needs of young people at the present time and provide an opportunity

for Members to contribute towards the service's recovery plan that will support young people to recover from the impact of the pandemic

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 On 23rd March 2020, the Youth Engagement and Participation Service suspended all face-to-face work with young people and colleagues, as a direct result of the country entering lockdown.
- 4.2 The Covid-19 restrictions required staff to demonstrate personal resilience in the practical implementation of emergency contingency plans to manage crisis, whilst at the same time predict and plan for the longer term impact on young people.
- 4.3 The situation required transforming the service's delivery methods almost overnight; this was only possible due to the active engagement of staff across the Youth Engagement and Participation Service to effect cultural change, supported by their managers who were confident to let staff take measured risks.
- 4.4 Focusing on service users, the team was tasked to assess needs and identify requirements, which were then used to reallocate resources and develop contingency plans. Their previous engagement in service innovation and their confidence to use their expertise and knowledge of the needs of young people resulted in a comprehensive youth offer of both targeted and universal services to assist young people process and manage their situation.
- 4.5 The Service has demonstrated its ability to anticipate the immediate, mid-term and longer term impact of Covid-19 on young people, through the number and range of projects it has undertaken over the last 12 months and the plans in place to continue to develop youth work provision over the coming months.

5. OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITY DURING COVID-19

- 5.1 **Referral work:** The service's core work over the past 12 months has been its referral work, supporting identified young people on a 1:1 basis. Despite lockdown restrictions, the service has amended its delivery model to offer dedicated and targeted support to young people remotely. This included text messages, WhatsApp, telephone and Zoom calls. In exceptional circumstances, if a young person was deemed to be at crisis point and remote support was not effective, face-to-face meetings have been authorised in Covid-secure environments.

Resilience assessments and subsequent action plans continued to be undertaken at the start of intervention, where possible, to provide clarity on the issues the individual was facing and provide guidance on the support plan being offered.

From the first day of lockdown, open cases have been routinely assessed and categorised to ensure those most at risk received enhanced support, time and attention from the youth workers. This practice has continued throughout all lockdown periods.

5.2 Mental health and wellbeing support: Many young people's mental health and wellbeing has been adversely affected by Covid-19 for a variety of reasons. This impact is likely to continue for a prolonged period of time as a legacy of the pandemic. At the beginning of the pandemic, the service invested in additional capacity in their team of Mental Health and Wellbeing Officers within YEPS. The team work directly with young people who are referred to the service for support to improve their mental health where they don't reach the threshold for other services, like CAMHS. In exceptional cases, the team will work with individuals who are open to CAMHS but require further additional support within their community or school on a more frequent basis than the health appointments. The staff employed within this team are qualified youth workers who have received enhanced training to be able to assist young people with their specific wellbeing needs.

5.3 Wellbeing packs: Packs have been sent out to over 200 young people struggling with the social restrictions and those referred for support through the Integrated Wellbeing Pathway. These packs included:

- Life journals
- Affirmation cards
- Art pads
- Colouring pens
- Stress ball
- Chatter box – provide daily tips on supporting wellbeing

Feedback has been positive and the life journals will become a legacy of the pandemic, to be used with future referrals as appropriate.

5.4 Reflective practice sessions: The service has been working in partnership with Education Psychology Service (EPS) colleagues, who have provided reflective practice sessions for the YEPS's Mental Health and Wellbeing Officers (MHWOs). These reflective sessions have offered the MHWOs the opportunity to develop their knowledge

and skills to more effectively support young people with mental health concerns. The clinical expertise of the EPS has assisted the MHWOs to consider the needs of young people in an alternative way and challenged the officers to develop more targeted plans for individual young people. These sessions will continue as part of the legacy of Covid-19, and a similar model of professional support is being investigated for other YEPS staff.

- 5.5 **Emergency childcare hubs:** The service was an active partner in the delivery of the emergency childcare hubs from March to June 2020. Staff were deployed to key hubs where there were a high number of secondary aged young people attending, either as children of key workers or vulnerable individuals. The staff supported the staffing of the hubs, delivering activities not only to attendees aged 11 years and above, but also supporting those under 11 years as well. The key hubs supported were Ysgol Nantgwyn and Heol y Celyn. The wider service collated activity packs and delivered to each school on a weekly basis, offering staff the flexibility to use the resources with the children and young people.
- 5.6 **School-based support:** At times when secondary schools have been operational, the Youth Engagement Officers have continued to base themselves on their allocated school sites, to ensure they are visible and accessible to the learners. When schools returned to sites in June and July 2020 and again from September to December 2020, the YEOs undertook their usual duties to support learners via offering support on a 1:1 basis (referral work); group work where a common need or issue was identified, such as managing anxiety about returning to school; targeted work for young people impacted by suicide; etc. After school sessions were offered to all schools in line with their Covid-19 risk assessments, where pupils could come together to participate in an activity as long as they remained within their bubble. An example of this is a Year 7 friendship group, to help pupils get to know their new classmates as many other social activities had been suspended.
- 5.7 **Summer holiday childcare:** Following the success of the emergency childcare hubs, the Council committed to the provision of childcare throughout the summer holiday period for children of key workers and vulnerable individuals. The YEP Service facilitated and delivered the summer holiday childcare programme across six hubs (Darran Park, Hawthorn, Penywaun, Porth, Tonyrefail and Ynysboeth), in conjunction with Leisure Services and internal Education and Inclusion Service teams. 336 spaces were available across the hubs, with an average attendance of 160 daily. In total, 3677 attendances were recorded at the hubs over the five-week period.

The staff led the delivery of the programme across the six sites for five weeks of the holidays, offering children and young people exciting and safe activities, supported by a select number of Covid-secure external providers. Activities included sporting activities, pyrography, clay model art, wellbeing/mindfulness, to name a few, and each were tailored for the age range of the group they were working with. The feedback from parents, carers, professionals and the children and young people was overwhelmingly positive.

- 5.8 **Integrated Wellbeing Pathway:** The Attendance and Wellbeing Service (AWS) and YEPS jointly developed the Integrated Wellbeing Pathway in response to the reported needs of young people as they were due to return to school following the first lockdown period. The pathway provides a continuation of support for young people who are experiencing heightened levels of anxiety about returning to school during the pandemic.

Young people who were at risk of not returning to school were identified by the school who informed the AWS. The AWS conducted Wellbeing Response Visits to the family home to ascertain the reason for the individual not returning to school. If, during the discussion with the family, it is identified that the young person was nervous or anxious about returning, the AWS would make a referral to YEPS for virtual sessions to build the young person's confidence so they felt ready to return to school.

The referral was managed over a series of sessions and provided the opportunity for the individual to work through a programme of support with the young person. This programme included mindfulness practices, sleeping techniques, positive affirmations, and understanding stress and how to manage it.

The additional capacity was funded by additional School-Based Counselling funding from Welsh Government, to provide an alternative option to counselling. For full details, see Appendix 1.

- 5.9 **Enhanced EET programme:** School leavers' exit from mainstream education has been significantly affected by Covid-19, leaving many without a destination or clear progression plan for their future. Therefore, the service, with input from schools, Careers Wales and the Gatsby Project workers in HR, developed an enhanced support programme to offer current year 11 pupils, 2019/20 leavers and electively home educated a range of interventions to help them identify an appropriate further education, employment or training opportunity.

Such interventions included virtual support session with individuals identified as at risk of becoming NEET; coffee mornings with career advisors; virtual volunteering experience days; virtual employment days, including CV writing skills, interview techniques; developing the basic skills of those in work to ensure they continue to be employable in the post-Covid world.

5.10 **Tackling youth homelessness:** Preventing youth homelessness continues to be a priority for the service, and whilst the number of young people presenting as homeless has reduced over the past year, it is likely that there are many young people who do not have a permanent residence and are temporarily living with other family members or friends. The service continues to develop its universal interventions to reduce the risk of homelessness, like awareness sessions and education programmes to improve life skills. It has also piloted a project with Llamau, to identify those most at risk of becoming homeless in the future. The learning from this pilot project will be used to develop an identification tool that can be rolled out to all schools during academic year 2021/22. Once identified, YEPS will provide a series of young person-centred and family interventions to improve relationships that allow the young person to remain within the family home.

5.11 **Street-based youth work:** From October 2020, the service entirely re-focused its community youth offer to deliver street-based youth work across the county borough. This was in response to the escalation of young people's needs who are seeking a trusted adult/support during the pandemic.

The service is currently deploying up to four teams every evening to the key localities across RCT where young people are known to frequent. Youth workers have been keen to establish this method of engaging with young people whilst other community options are suspended due to Covid-19 restrictions. This work has been well-received by young people with 2785 contacts made in the Autumn alone. The staff engaged with young people to ask them how they were managing in lockdown, what they feel the issues they are facing and what they would like to see in their local communities to support them. Responses such as re-opening youth clubs and after school provision was a primary request, alongside additional mental health and wellbeing support, better outdoor shelters and street lighting, and access to the condom card scheme. This feedback has helped the service to formulate its recovery plan for the coming 12 months, including adding capacity to key provision offered by the service.

- 5.12 **Other community provision:** During the street-based sessions, staff have started to establish new relationships with local businesses to consider what they are able to offer young people in their own area. For example, in Treorchy, a supermarket has offered YEPS the use of a parcel of land for free to develop as a safe outdoor space for young people to congregate and for the service to host outdoor activities, such as street dance. In addition, discussions are underway about the use of tennis courts in the area for additional physical activities hosted by both YEPS and external partners to offer several sporting activities throughout the week. This work was suspended during each lockdown period, but work will continue with the relevant organisations once it is safe to do so.
- 5.13 **Staff support in children's homes:** Covid-19 regulations have meant that most frontline services in RCT have seen a staffing shortage at some point over the past 12 months, as staff have had to self-isolate when they develop symptoms. This has resulted in cross-team working to ensure that essential services can continue to be provided despite staff sickness. YEPS staff have provided staffing support in the Council's children's homes at such times, working with children and young people in these homes during the working week, evenings and weekends. This practice has strengthened the working relationships between these teams and has informed service improvements for the future as part of the service's recovery plan.
- 5.14 **Commissioned mobile youth clubs:** Utilising core budget and external capital grants, the service commissioned two vehicles to act as mobile youth clubs. The vehicles will provide the opportunity for a hub in a locality where access to a suitable permanent venue is not available. They can be used as mobile youth clubs, as the base for community activities like fun days and street-based youth work, as well as a hub for use at times when an immediate response is required within a community. The vehicles will be in full use by the service and its partners from April 2021 onwards.
- 5.15 **Virtual youth offer:** Transforming service delivery methods required the active engagement of staff across the service to effect cultural change, supported by managers who were confident to let staff take measured risks. Focusing on service users, the team was tasked to assess needs and identify requirements, which were then used to reallocate resources and develop contingency plans. Their previous engagement in service innovation and their confidence to use their expertise and knowledge of the needs of young people resulted in a virtual youth work offer available within 72 hours of lockdown commencing. Service data demonstrates significant levels of online

engagement with users in addition to the 1:1 support for over 1000 young people delivered remotely.

The service realigned its online offer, with a significant increase in the volume of information, advice and guidance, as well as universal activities available to young people via the website (www.wicid.tv) and social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube) The comprehensive offer was delivered by YEPS with significant contributions from delivery partners including sexual health teams, substance misuse organisations, and commissioned providers.

- 5.16 **Youth fora:** the service has been proactive in consulting with young people throughout the pandemic. From seeking opinions during 1:1 sessions to surveys on social media platforms, YEPS staff have been committed to listening to young people to inform service developments.

To further inform the service's decisions on future developments, officers have worked to transfer the physical local youth fora into online sessions. The three local youth fora have met eight times to discuss the concerns young people have as a result of Covid and the support they would like to see implemented as part of the service's recovery plan. In addition, the fora met with, discussed and contributed towards:

- Votes@16 campaign *#yepsisthisyourfirsttime*
- Police and Crime Commissioner's "Young Voice Conversation" and the development of their young people's website
- Safer Wales "Champions of Wales" project
- Jigsaw Project, looking at how girls and women have been impacted by Covid-19
- Poetry Project, to create a series of short poems to change the negative views of young people within their wider community.

- 5.17 **Workforce development:** The pandemic has required the service to be dynamic and quickly adapt to the emerging needs of young people. Reviewing the levels of engagement and reporting rising levels of needs, the service has been able to review its staffing requirements to meet the future needs of young people. As such, the service commenced a management of change process in February 2021, realigning its priorities to the current and future needs of young people and adding capacity to the service in key areas where more additional staffing hours will be needed.

Furthermore, the service has made a firm commitment to the upskilling of the youth workforce across RCT, not only for Council employed youth workers but for those working in our partner organisations, such as third sector and housing partners and also community members. Delivering youth work qualifications at Level 2 and Level 3, this

commitment will not only benefit community members and organisations but most importantly the young people with whom they will be supporting.

In January 2021, the service appointed two youth work apprentices. Throughout their two-year contract, they will work in all areas of the service and gain Level 2 and 3 qualifications in Youth and Community Work.

6. IMPACT TO DATE

6.1 Over the course of the year, 2020/21, the service has provided targeted support to:

- 1035 individual young people on a 1:1 basis through its referral work, which includes 784 new referrals accepted during the year. The number of referred open cases peaked at 504 in November 2020.

6.2 In addition to this, the service has provided open access opportunities to young people to the level of:

- 250 exciting virtual activity programmes for young people to take part in during lockdown, totalling 708 individual sessions;
- 1,521 individual young people attended these sessions over the year, who attended 3292 times in total;
- 124 street-based sessions in the Autumn 2020 (they weren't introduced until October 2020 and had to be suspended in December 2020) and during those sessions, officers made contact with 2785 young people on the streets of RCT.

6.3 For a breakdown of these figures by month, please see Appendix 2.

7. YOUNG PEOPLE'S FEEDBACK

7.1 Over the course of the year, there have been multiple opportunities for young people to provide their opinion on the issues they are facing and the provision they would like to see in the future.

7.2 Throughout June 2020, Rhondda Cynon Taf's Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS) launched its Covid-19 Response Consultation to capture the views of young people aged 11-25 on the support offered by YEPS throughout the Covid-19 Lockdown. There were 125 respondents and the results included:

- 68% stated they felt happy or very happy at that time;

- 60% stated they enjoyed or really enjoyed being at home during lockdown;
- 71% stated they felt bored during lockdown;
- 34% stated they felt lonely during lockdown;
- 29% state they felt anxious during lockdown;
- 28% stated they felt sad and worried during lockdown.
- 79% stated the worst part of lockdown was not being able to see their friends;
- 56% stated the worst part was not being able to go to school or getting help with their school work.

For all response, see the full consultation report in Appendix 3.

7.3 During the street-based sessions in Autumn 2020, staff actively sought the young people's views on future developments, with the responses including:

- Better access to information, advice and guidance;
- Youth clubs to reopen;
- Commence trips and activities in line with pre-Covid programmes;
- Resumption of the condom card scheme;
- Improved street lighting;
- Install street shelters, with benches and access to wifi;
- New skateparks.

7.4 Young people's feedback informed the service's delivery plan over the past year and will continue to influence the recovery plan from April 2021 onwards.

8. STAFF FEEDBACK

8.1 The need for change, respond promptly to critical events and advocate for young people's need has never been required more than in the past 12 months. Covid-19 has required staff to demonstrate personal resilience in the practical implementation of emergency contingency plans to manage crisis, whilst at the same time predict and plan for the longer term impact on young people.

8.2 Management were conscious of the pressure placed on staff and have provided additional opportunities for individuals to discuss the impact the pandemic is having on their workloads and their own wellbeing. Opportunities include more frequent virtual meetings, informal team time for officers to come together to share their experiences both within work on their personal lives and expanded the use of messaging facilities.

8.3 Furthermore, staff have had the chance to respond to formal questionnaires to gain service-wide experiences and use the information to better support staff going forward. In May 2020, a snap survey was promoted to all full time YEPS staff, of which 34 responded. An overview of the responses included:

- 72% responded to say they were feeling 6 or above (scale 1 low – 10 excellent);
 - Many felt positive and relaxed about the opportunity to work from home;
 - Staff were excited to be involved in new projects and lead on innovative ideas;
 - Some stated they felt isolated, trapped and bored at home;
- 59% responded to say that they were enjoying the alternative way of working more than the previous way of working (rated it 6 or above);
- 66% stated they enjoyed the flexible working hours and virtual meetings;
- 63% stated that working from home was beneficial/productive for them;
- 59% stated they felt they could be more creative;
- 36% stated they felt anxious about having to work in different ways and areas of the service than they normally work.

As part of the survey, staff were asked what areas of the new ways of working should be continued when lockdown is lifted. Responses included:

- Maintain an element of virtual work between staff (meetings) and with young people;
- Working with other agencies more regularly than previously able to;
- More regular staff 'check ins';
- More opportunities for home working.

Staff were also asked what areas of the new ways of working should NOT continue after lockdown is lifted. Responses included:

- Virtual work should be balanced with face-to-face work as remote working is not always beneficial;
- Supervision sessions to be in-person, not virtual.

9. RECOVERY PLAN – NEXT STEPS

- 9.1 The work of the service over the coming 6-12 months will be centred around key deliverables:
- Engagement with schools to offer universal and targeted support to pupils onsite;
 - Enhanced engagement with communities, both with the young people who live there and local businesses and organisations who can offer their own services to young people;
 - Specialist support for young people aged 16 years and above, including support into education, employment and training, preventing homelessness and support to build resilience;
 - Wellbeing (including mental health) support for young people;
 - Consultation with young people and the promotion of their rights and entitlements;
 - Enhanced digital youth offer, offering information, advice and guidance, as well as universal and targeted activities via online platforms.
- 9.2 The management of change process will be complete by the end of April 2021 will deliver additional capacity in the key priority areas. This includes realigning the priorities of the service into school and community engagement; young people's wellbeing; young people's rights; and 16+ support. It also enhances the service's capacity for 1:1 work with young people as it is acknowledged that there will be more need of this targeted work as a result of Covid-19.
- 9.3 In April 2020, the service received additional investment from the Council's Cabinet to grow and the develop the community element of the service to deliver youth work 5 evenings a week and at weekends, in multiple locations. This initiated the development of the Safe Space initiative to support the creation of community based young people friendly locations, supported by local businesses and organisations where young people could get information, advice and assistance safely. Whilst put on hold during the pandemic, the development of the Safe Space initiative will continue to be implemented as restrictions ease.
- 9.4 School-based support will be a priority for the service. Youth workers will continue operate from secondary and through-school sites for part of their contracted hours. This will ensure the workers are visible and accessible to the majority of 11 – 16 year olds in RCT. The officer in each secondary school will provide targeted support to those referred to them, as well as issue-based group work, including positive

wellbeing, tackling anti-social behaviour and support into a post-16 destination upon leaving school.

- 9.5 Developing a comprehensive programme of community-based youth work is a significant priority for the service going forward. Engagement with the local community will be key to achieving this, both in terms of individuals and organisations, and the service has been reconfigured to ensure this priority can be achieved and maintained.

Street-based youth work will continue beyond the pandemic, as it has been vital in reaching young people that otherwise would not have been known to the service. The feedback from interactions with these young people will be used to inform service developments and ensure that their needs are met in the future.

Youth clubs will be reintroduced once it is safe to do so and will complement the street-based youth work as it will be provision to signpost the young people in to. The geographical location of youth clubs will be reviewed and if necessary revised in line with feedback and take up.

A full community youth offer that meets all the needs of young people across RCT cannot be met by the YEP Service alone. Therefore, a key part of this priority will be building relationships with local businesses, voluntary sector organisations and individuals to jointly plan and implement a sustainable youth work offer within each locality. These plans will be tailored to the needs within the local areas, complementing what is already available without duplication.

- 9.6 Thanks to the Council's financial investment in the service, coupled with successful grant bids, the Youth Engagement and Participation Service has commissioned two vehicles to be used as mobile youth clubs/hubs. The vehicles provide the service with the ability to bring youth support and provision to all areas of RCT, even if there are no suitable venues in the local area. They include seating areas, laptop connection, wifi and television screens (for use in playing presentations, games consoles and much more) within the heated vehicle itself, whilst also offering a covered outdoor space on the platform accessed by large bifold doors. It is a perfect space for use all year round and also covid-secure, as the doors can remain open, providing shelter from the elements with full ventilation.

These will be used to fill historical gaps in community provision, where there have not be suitable venues to host youth activities. They can

host internal activities such as general youth clubs activities, gaming sessions, arts and crafts sessions, and well are more targeted provision like one-to-one support for young people in a confidential space and pre-employment activities like CV writing, job application support and interview techniques. Within a few steps, the outdoor space allows youth workers to simultaneously host these indoor sessions alongside outdoor chill out zones, film nights, sporting and leisure activities, to name a few.

They will also act as bases for use during community events, as well as during times when an immediate response is required within a community, such as following a public incident.

- 9.7 Additional mental health and wellbeing support will be required by young people as a result of the pandemic. The number of young people actively seeking assistance from a trusted adult in relation to their poor mental health has risen significantly over the past 12 months, and as such the service has responded by enhancing its capacity within the service to be able to provide additional support. These staff work closely with the Education Psychology Service, have developed their working links with CAMHS and will continue with their own professional development to ensure they have the skills and expertise to provide the correct support to young people struggling with their wellbeing.
- 9.8 Workforce development is a key priority for the service. The aim is to ensure it is fit to support the emerging needs of young people as they recover from the pandemic, whilst also providing training opportunities for future youth workers to ensure succession plans can be fulfilled. The development opportunities will not only be offered to internal staff but will also commit to the investment of staff/volunteers in external partners/organisations for the benefit of young people across RCT, regardless of the organisation they wish to engage with.
- 9.9 The workforce development priority will include a comprehensive volunteer training programme to cultivate a skilled and flexible local workforce.
- 9.10 The work of the enhanced education, employment and training programme (prevention of NEETs agenda) will continue to be rolled out, reviewed and revised in line with the changing needs of school leavers. As part of the new 16+ Support Team, a team of officers will be involved in the delivery of a continuum of support for school leavers, from pre-employment activities, to applying and accessing college and university courses, to general life skills and support with wellbeing.

9.11 Virtual youth fora will continue to be embedded over the coming months. Part of the discussions at these fora will include their future operational model, considering young people's opinions as to whether they should be in-person or virtual meetings, or a hybrid model to allow those who are unable to attend a physical meeting to contribute. Gaining young people's views will be as important as ever as the service transitions from emergency planning into the resumption of normal practice. The service understands the needs of young people will be greater and more diverse than pre-pandemic, and in order to swiftly and effectively meet these needs, young people need to be the driving force behind the necessary service developments.

9.12 Whilst the 12-month data depicts a declining trend in the number of young people presenting to statutory services as homeless, this likely masks a larger issue within our local communities. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there many young people are currently living with friends and other family members on a temporary basis, since their relationship at home became too strained in lockdown. Furthermore, it is likely that as young people find it difficult to secure an education, employment or training destination post-July, further family breakdowns may occur.

Therefore, the service, together with key partners like the Housing teams, are developing a youth homelessness prevention strategy. This strategy ranges from early intervention provision, such as a universal education programme and identification methods to recognise those most at risk of becoming homeless to offer support at an early point, to intensive support for those presenting as homeless and either supporting their to re-engage with their families or support them into appropriate housing.

9.13 The Council has made a commitment to developing a prevention strategy, focusing on preventing children and young people taking part in anti-social behaviour and crime. Building on the initial Safe Spaces concept, this is a joint endeavour between YEPS, Community Safety Partnership and the Youth Offending Service initially, and will be widened to include additional partners such as the Police as the work develops.

9.14 Building on the Safe Space initiative noted in 9.3 and linked to the above priority is the need to improve the wider community's perception of young people. It is widely recognised that some young people's activities are interpreted to be anti-social in nature, when this is not always the case. Therefore, this priority will be focused on building relationships between different members of the community through

intergenerational projects, links with community groups and promoting of positive work and achievements of young people.

- 9.15 Following the service's involvement in the delivery of the emergency childcare hubs last summer and based on the assumption that full-service delivery will not resume before July, the YEP Service is planning its covid-compliant summer holiday programme. This will involve face-to-face activities, as well as virtual provision. This programme will continue to account for the 1:1 sessions the youth workers will still need to carry out to support their open cases, but will also provide more universal access to fun, exciting and supportive opportunities to young people across RCT.

10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Referral work with young people in need of dedicated 1:1 support has been the focus of the service's work over the past 12 months. This has included support with mental health concerns, as well as those who are confined to their homes due to shielding.
- 10.2 In times of crisis, the team have been able to request a face-to-face meeting with young people in need of it to reduce the risk to themselves and/or others, albeit in a Covid-secure environment.
- 10.3 Vulnerable young people, including those with additional learning needs, were prioritised for support in the emergency childcare hubs and summer holiday childcare provision.
- 10.4 This report, its findings and the subsequent actions are fully inclusive of all young people from across Rhondda Cynon Taf. Service developments arising from this report will have positive outcomes for all young people.

11. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 11.1 Throughout the past 12 months, all work that has been undertaken has been based upon consultation responses from young people, contribution from our internal youth workers and feedback from key delivery partners, such as Children's Services, Health and Education colleagues, as a result of their own work with young people across RCT.
- 11.2 In line with the Council's Management of Change policy and procedures, both staff and Trade Unions have been fully consulted throughout the process of service change to deliver additional staffing capacity in key priority areas.

12. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 12.1 The service has maximised the opportunities to utilise Covid-specific funding over the past 12 months to add capacity to the service when it was most required.
- 12.2 Additional capital funding was secured to purchase the new mobile youth club vehicles.
- 12.3 In conjunction with Education and Inclusion Services, the service secured funding to support young people in need of support either pre- or post-school based counselling. The funding supported the service's contribution to the Integrated Wellbeing Pathway, by allowing the appointment of an additional youth worker to offer wellbeing-type interventions to those experiencing severe anxiety about returning to, and engaging in, school.
- 12.2 Going forward, the service is confident it can meet the priorities as outlined in this report from existing budgets. The additional investment in the Service from the Council's Cabinet in April 2020 and the recent service changes allow the service developments to be implemented and the anticipated outcomes to be realised without the need for additional funding.

13. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 13.1 There are no legal implications that need to be considered concerning the report.
- 13.2 Going forward, the service will need to continue to operate in line with Covid-19 regulations to keep staff, young people and community members safe and supported.

14. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 14.1 The appropriate provision for young people aged 11 – 25 years across Rhondda Cynon Taf will make a positive contribution towards the Council's Corporate Plan vision of *'a County Borough that has high aspirations, is confident and promotes opportunity for all'*, as it will deliver against the specific priorities of *'People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone and 'Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work'*.

14.2 Young people are a key cohort of our community as they are the next generation of Rhondda Cynon Taf. As such, they are a priority group under The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. It is felt that this report, the survey findings and the subsequent developments that are occurring as a result, will contribute to all of the seven elements that the Act is aiming to achieve:

1. A prosperous Wales;
2. A resilient Wales;
3. A more equal Wales;
4. A healthier Wales;
5. A Wales of cohesive communities;
6. A Wales of vibrant culture and Welsh language;
7. A globally responsible Wales.

15. CONCLUSION

12.1 The Service has demonstrated its ability to anticipate the immediate, mid-term and longer term impact of Covid-19 on young people, through the number and range of successful projects it has undertaken over the last 12 months and the plans in place to continue to develop youth work provision over the coming months.

12.3 It is recognised that young people wish for face-to-face services to be reinstated as soon as it is safe to do so, and the service will champion the resumption of services on their behalf.

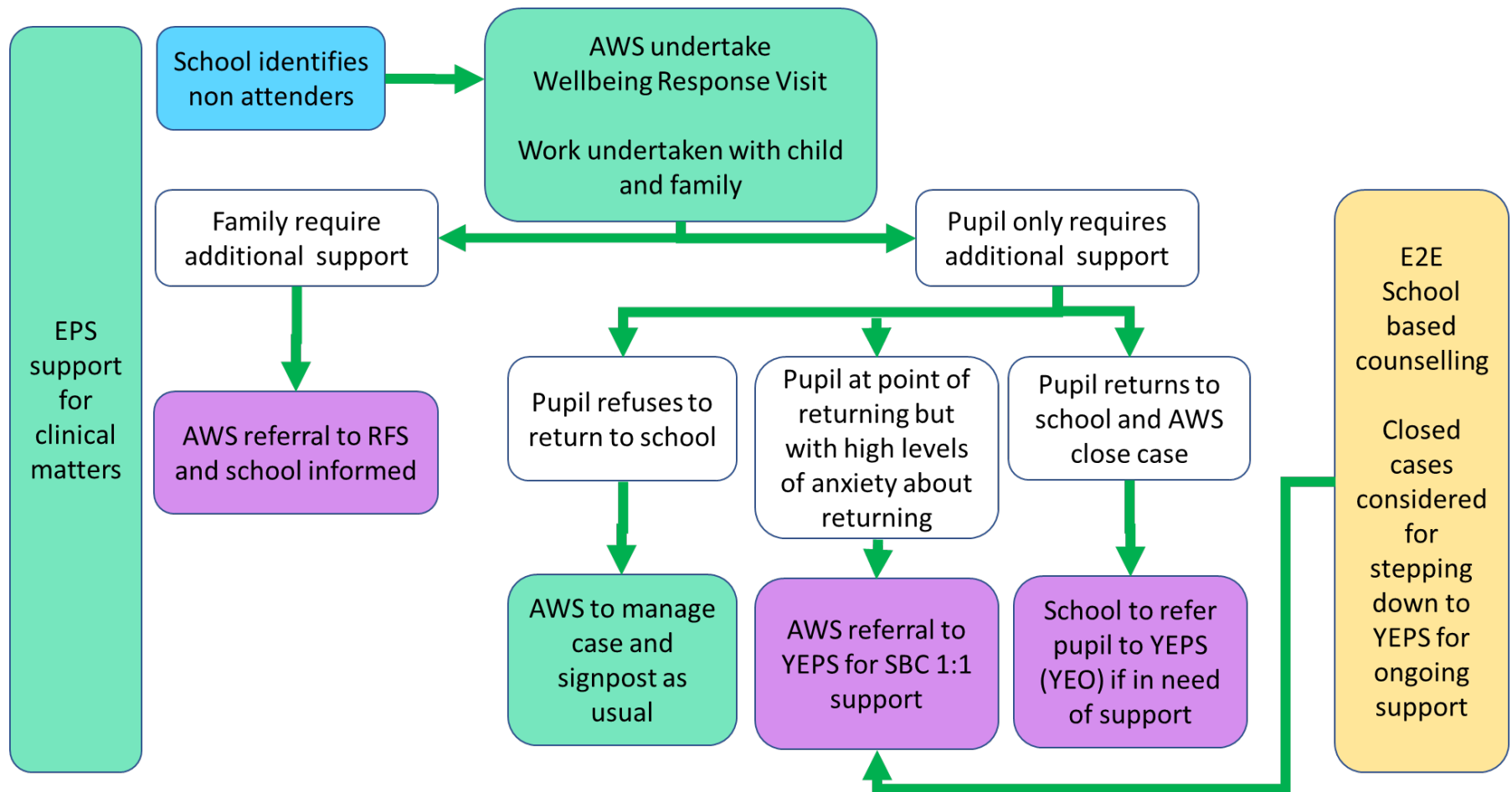
12.4 Young people have provided positive feedback on their experiences with the new virtual platforms developed during Covid-19, leading to these being mainstreamed alongside the re-introduction of in-person provision and support.

12.5 The priorities cannot be achieved without competent and effective staff, hence the service's commitment to workforce development.

12.6 Partnership working will be key to achieving the service priorities, and work with schools, community partners and other local authority services will underpin their successful implementation.

APPENDIX 1

Integrated wellbeing support – return to school



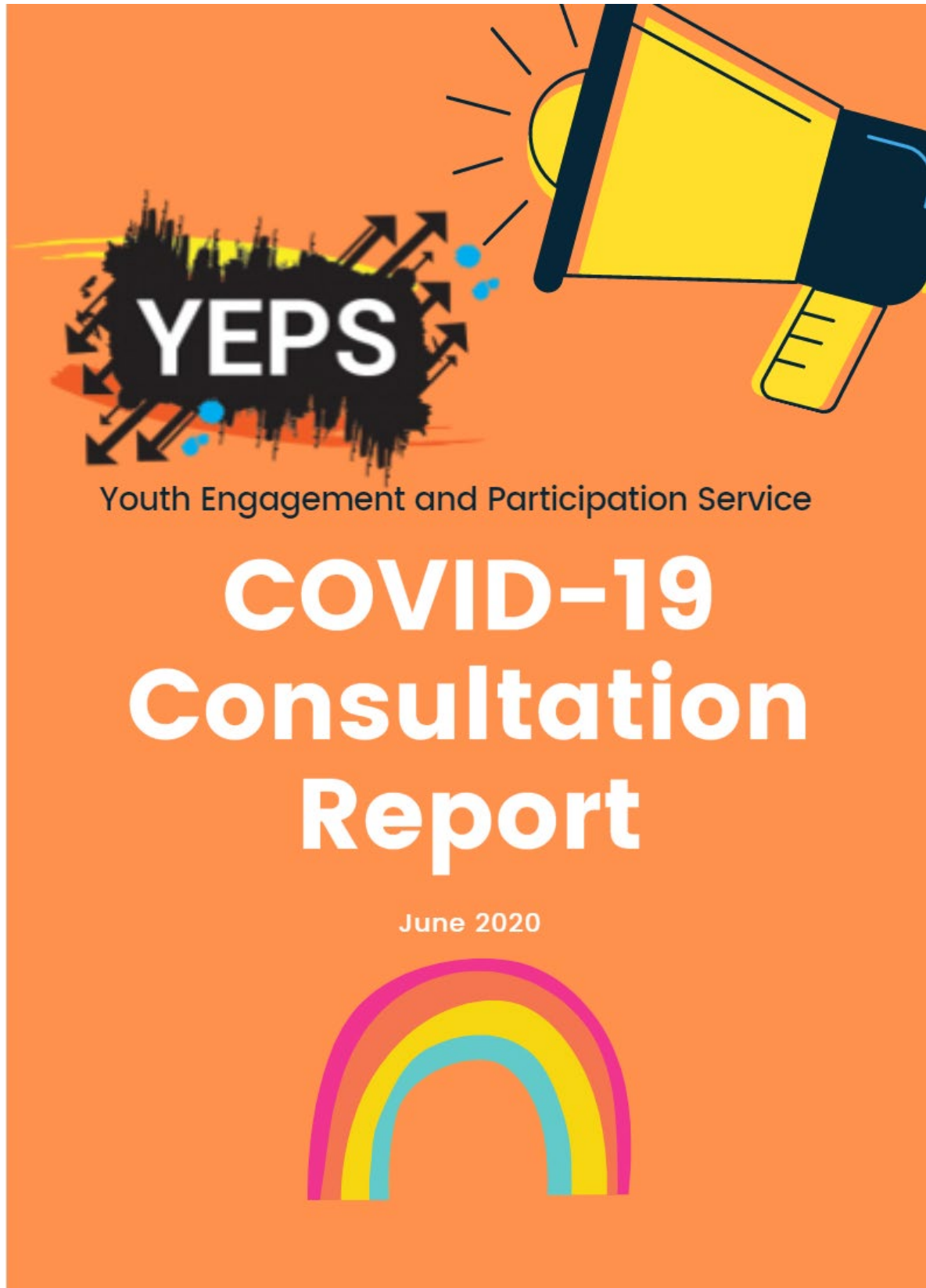
APPENDIX 2

YEPS Activities 2020 / 21				
Month	Activities	Sessions	Participants	Contacts
Apr-20	24	91	190	301
May-20	22	81	133	319
Jun-20	21	82	114	261
Jul-20	22	72	113	338
Aug-20	15	41	67	213
Sep-20	8	14	47	67
Oct-20	22	37	143	234
Nov-20	11	43	110	234
Dec-20	18	30	135	158
Jan-21	31	78	165	509
Feb-21	36	119	174	552
Mar-21	20	20	130	106
TOTAL	250	708	1521	3292

Street Based Youth Work		
Month	No. of Sessions	No. of Contacts
Oct-20	34	590
Nov-20	60	1751
Dec-20	30	444
TOTAL	124	2785

Referred Open Cases (1:1 Support)		
Month	Open Referral 2020/21	New Referral 2020/21
Apr-20	375	25
May-20	295	19
Jun-20	299	52
Jul-20	309	37
Aug-20	295	22
Sep-20	334	65
Oct-20	440	159
Nov-20	504	142
Dec-20	469	59
Jan-21	463	57
Feb-21	462	76
Mar-21	416	75

APPENDIX 3



INTRODUCTION

Throughout June 2020, Rhondda Cynon Taf's Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS) launched its Covid-19 Response Consultation to capture the views of young people aged 11-25 on the support offered by YEPS throughout the Covid-19 Lockdown.

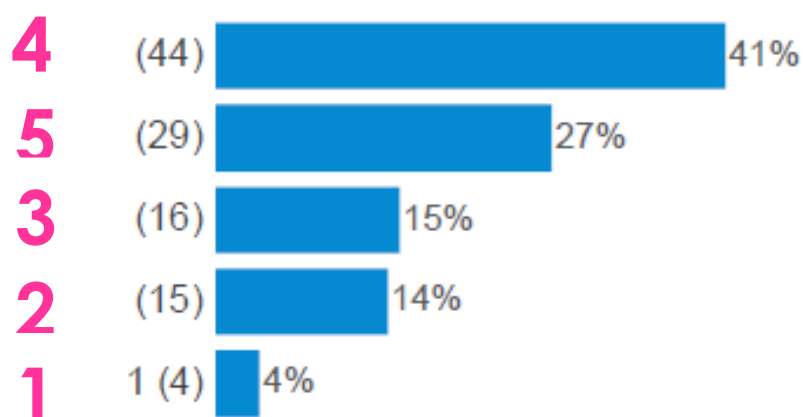
The aim of this report is to outline the results of the consultation, which will be used to inform the future planning for YEPS of its online presence and support in the months ahead following the Covid-19 Lockdown.

Further information, and an opportunity to discuss this further with a youth worker within YEPS can be found at our young person's website Wicid.tv

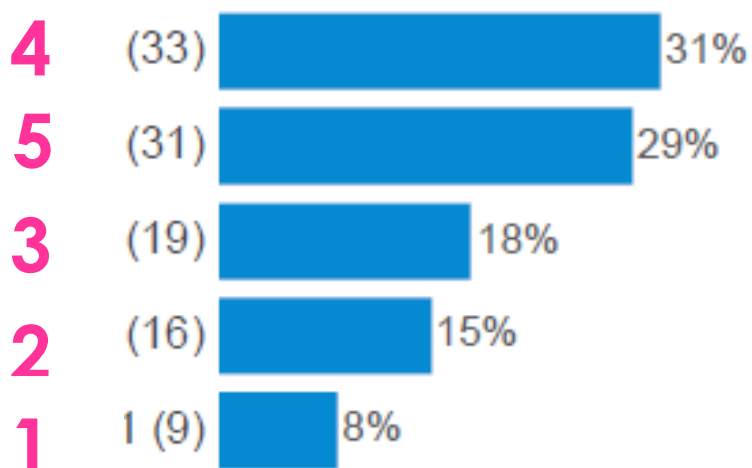
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Youth Engagement and Participation Service would like to thank the 125 young people who took the opportunity to complete the survey and all those who supported with the delivery of the consultation.

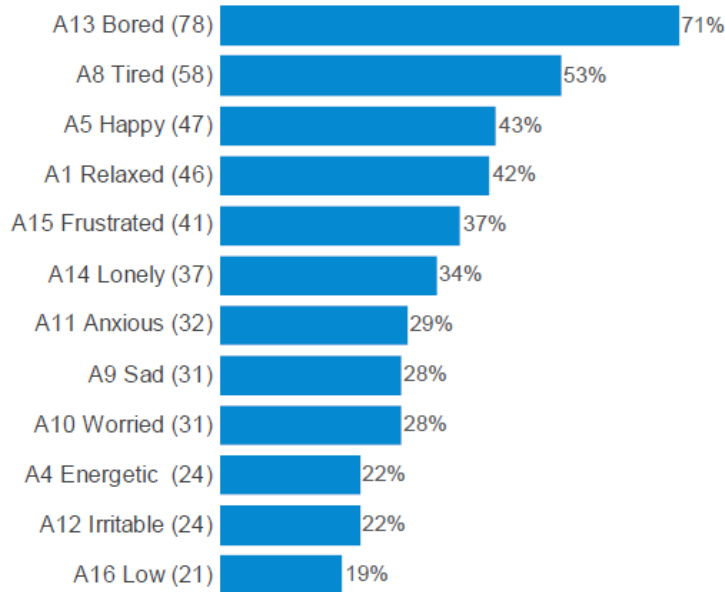
1. How are you feeling today?



2. How much have you enjoyed being at home during lockdown? (5 really enjoyed – 1 not enjoyed at all)



3. Which words best describe how you have felt at home during lockdown?



Other (please specify)

Depressed	Scared
Eager to get back to a normal routine	Depressed
Calm	Not motivated

4. What have you enjoyed about being at home during lockdown?

A2 being able to spend more time relaxing / doing the things I like (75)	62.0%	A3 trying out new hobbies/activities (44)	36.4%
A1 spending time with family (74)	61.2%	A5 being able to stay in touch with YEPS staff and take part in YEPS activities / provision (26)	21.5%
A4 being able to learn / do school work in my own time (51)	42.1%	A6 other (please specify) (7)	5.8%

Other (please specify)

Sit ups challenges

FaceTime friends and family members

FaceTime friends

Nothing

seeing friends going on walks

SEEING MY FRIENDS

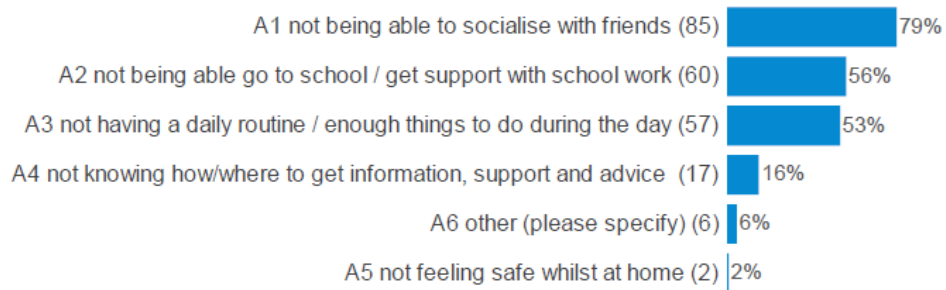
I have been inspired by a tv show called 911 and 911 lone star. I'm inspired to be a firefighter.

Alone time.

Nothing really

playing with friends in hub

5. What have you have found difficult about being at home during lockdown?



Other (please specify)

Not being able so see family

Bored

being with my family all of the time

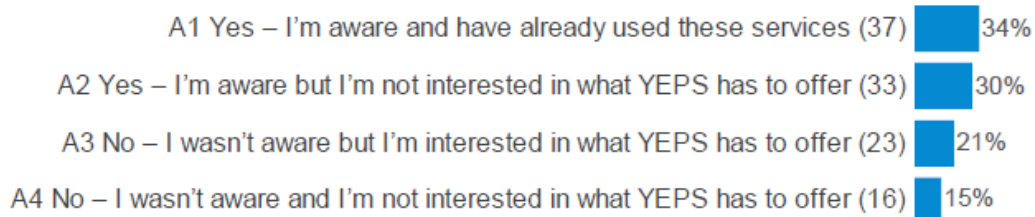
Worrying about family and friends.

School was a place where I could socialise without the pressure to.

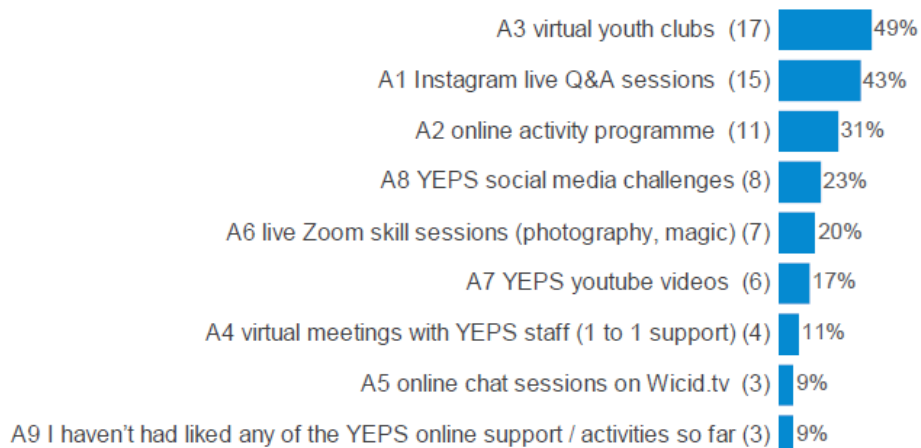
How my caring duties have increased more than I am use to

I can't get focused at home

6. Are you aware that YEPS are offering online support and activities for young people during lockdown on the Wicid.tv website and social media channels?



7. Which YEPS Online support/activities have you liked so far?

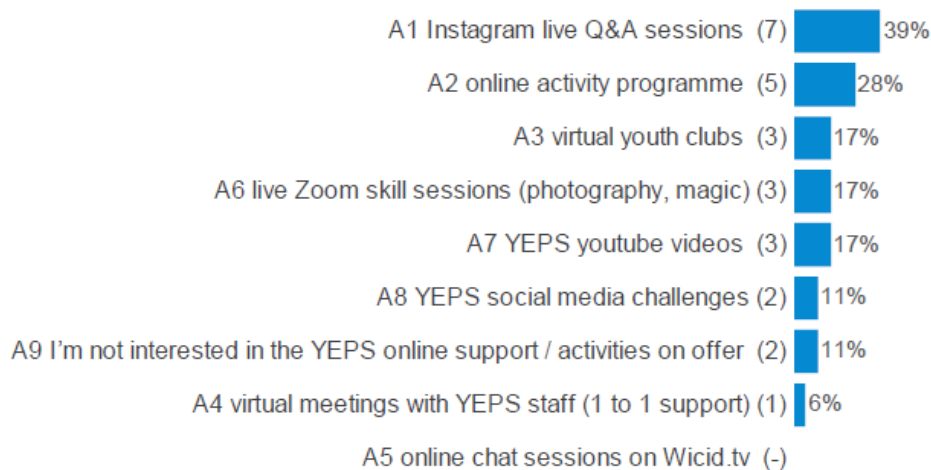


Comments:

Keep up the good work

I have also been doing the squat challenge

8. Which online support/activities would you like if changes or improvements were made to how they are delivered?



Comments:

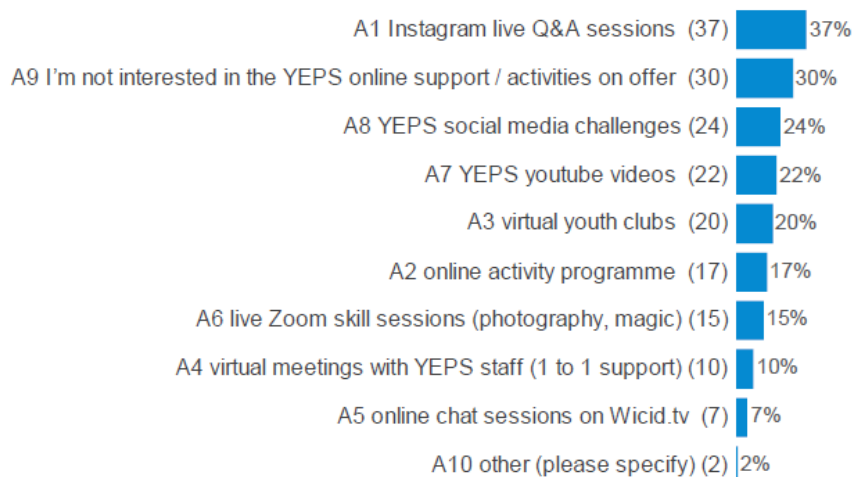
N/A

Also sit ups was good

To make sure we know when the online classes are so we know when to join as on the Instagram stories it just says what we are doing not when it is

To let us know when it is and what's the code on virtual youth club or on Instagram story

9. Which online support/activities would you like YEPS to continue to run after lockdown has lifted?



Other (please specify)

Stuff like the challenges

Fitness

this would help if you kept online meeting with pupils as they could be struggling in the holidays

Online prevision

it isn't that im not interested, i just don't feel the need to use them

We would like to be creative and continue to develop the support we provide online, however it is important that we hear from you as young people about what you would like to see. Please share below your ideas of what additional support/activities YEPS can provide throughout lockdown and into the future.

Dal ati gyda popeth rydych yn gwneud!

Perhaps YouTube live-streams where something like Kahoot is this played.

Drama and singing lessons

Challenges /goals of the week

I would like to see virtual youth club continue

I would like yeps to offer online classes on YouTube because they are something fun for us to do if we are bored and if someone can't make it to the youth club or after school clubs they can still take part but in their own time

I would like yeps to offer online meetings one to one as they could feel alone or stressed and they can get in touch with you in the holidays

Art competition

Email links

Some activities I would enjoy would be trips to adventure places e.g Llangranog or Rock UK

I dont know really

I think there is loads provided already

I am unsure because I haven't seen everything that YEPS is providing for people my age

zoom drawing, show pets/videos with pets

no.

crafts and workouts

Making sure you check up on people whether they look like their okay

Session on cycling such as bike maintenance.