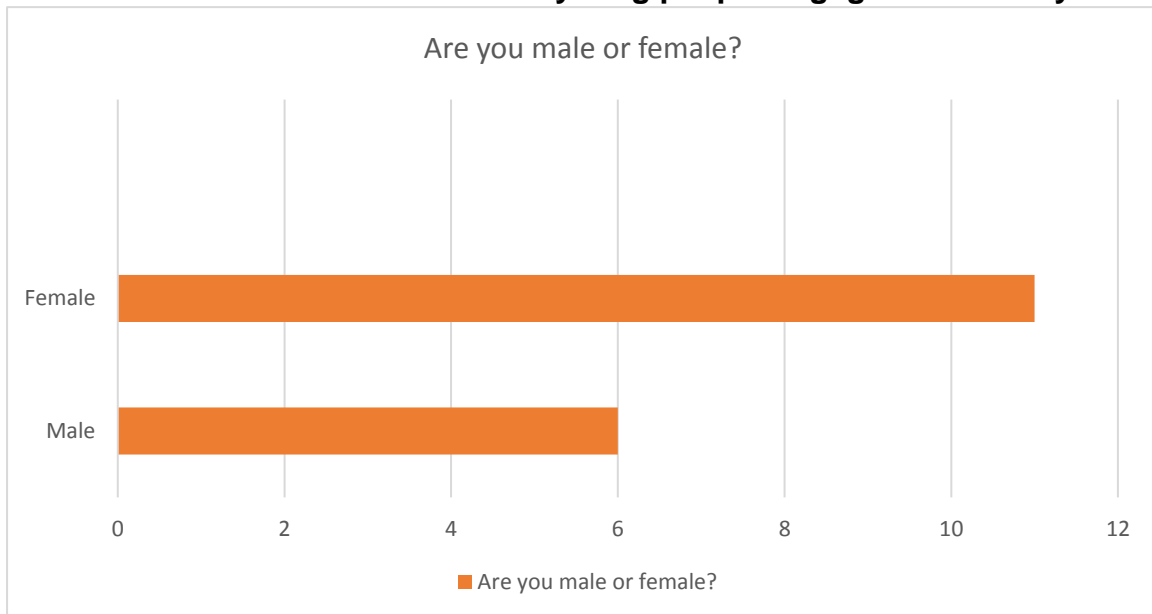


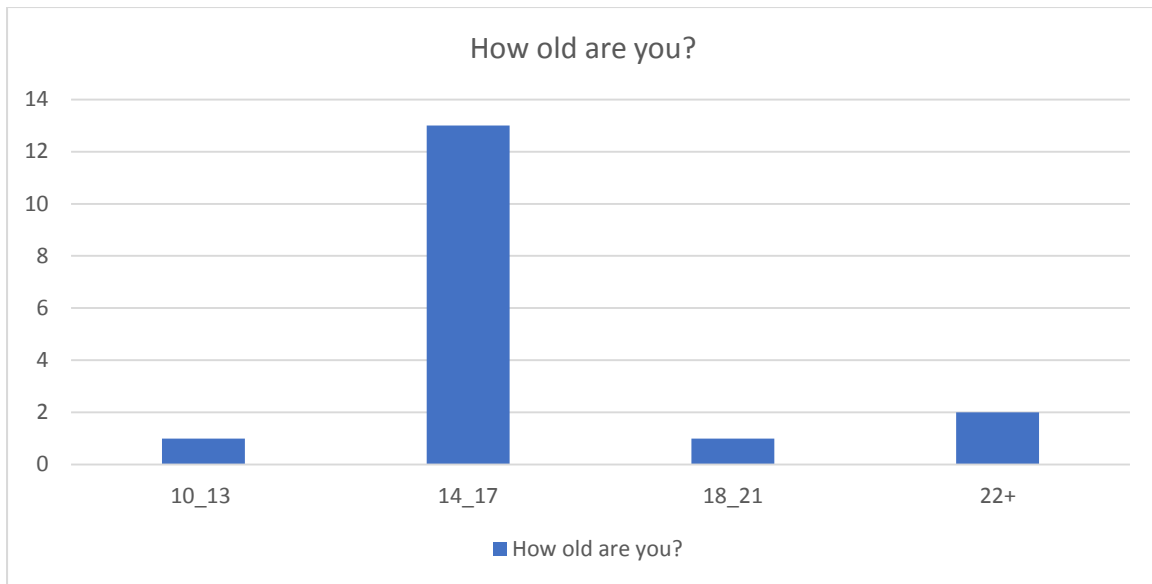
**Covid-19 Learning – Youth Voice Survey**

**Introduction**

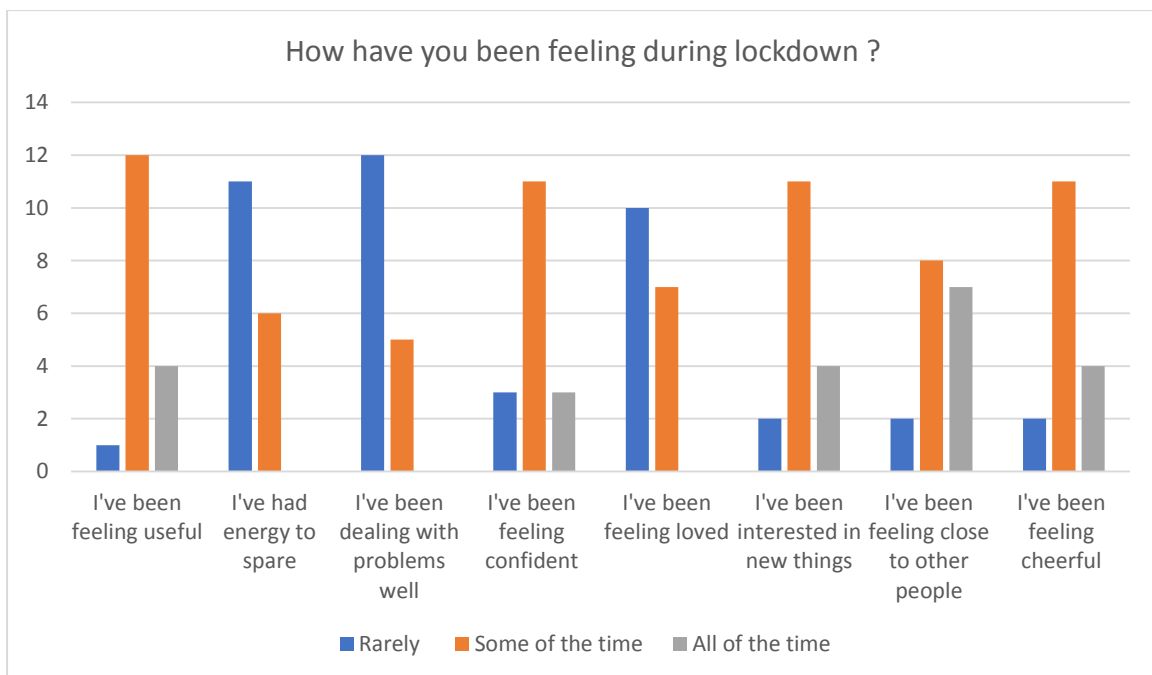
1. During COVID-19 children and young people have needed to manage a unique situation, with many restrictions placed upon them, and they have not been able to continue their lives as normal. We want to learn from our young people about how they have felt during this time, so we can agree ways to support them as we emerge from such tight restrictions and move to a new normal.
2. In the summer, as part of this work, the Families and Children's Commissioning team surveyed the young people who form the Wiltshire Youth Union (including Children in Care Council (CiCC), Members of the Youth Parliament (MYP's), and the Care Leavers Forum). We received 17 responses from the members, and the results are below.

**Results from Wiltshire children and young people engagement survey**



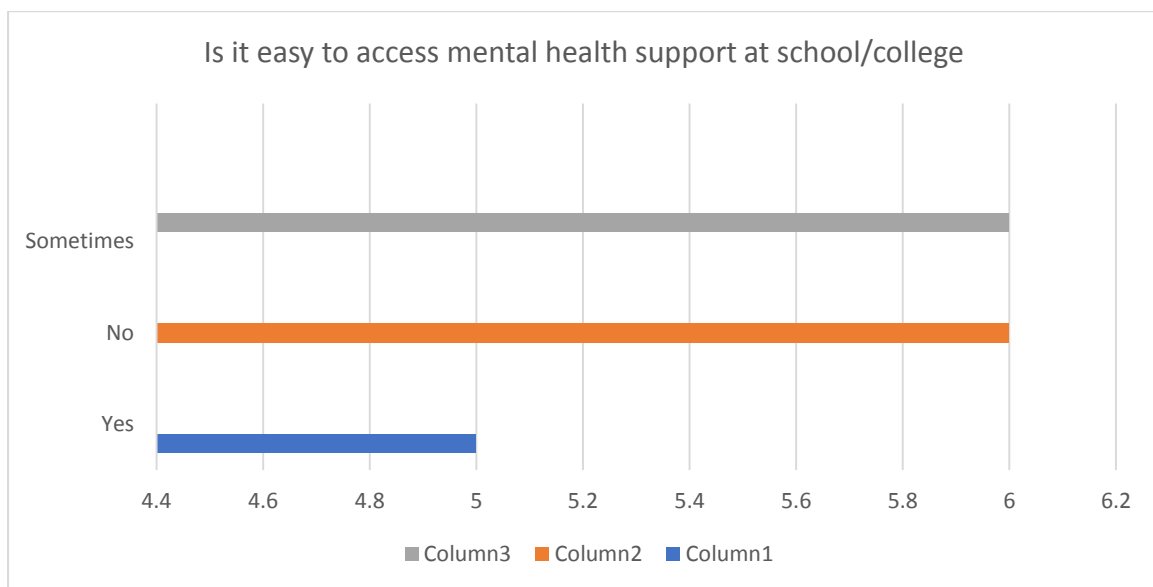


3. As you can see, we received responses from more females than males, and the majority of respondents were between 14 – 17 which is in line with the overall gender and age range of the members.

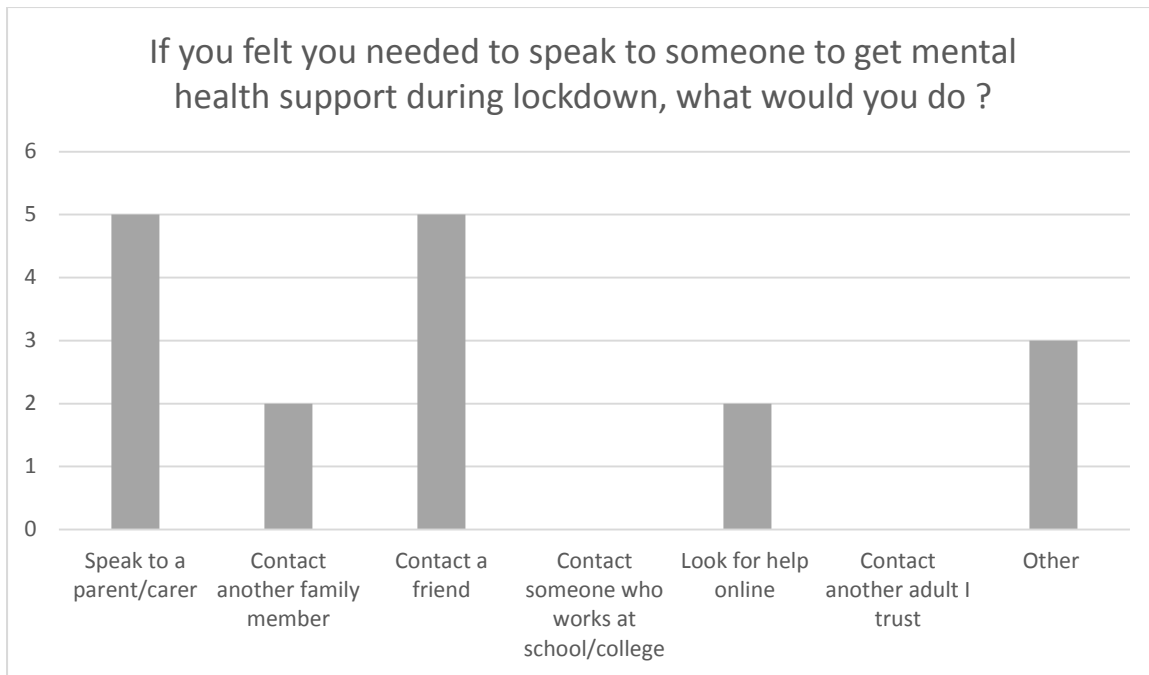


4. The children and young people were asked a range of questions in relation to how they were feeling during lockdown, which was the most testing time during COVID-19, where movements were restricted the most.
5. The results of the survey suggest relative confidence and positivity from the majority of young people who responded, with most of them feeling useful, confident, cheerful, and interested in new things, and with almost half feeling close to others all of the time. However, there are three main areas where the responses from young people were less positive and include 'I've had energy to spare', 'I've been dealing with problems well' and 'I've been feeling loved'.

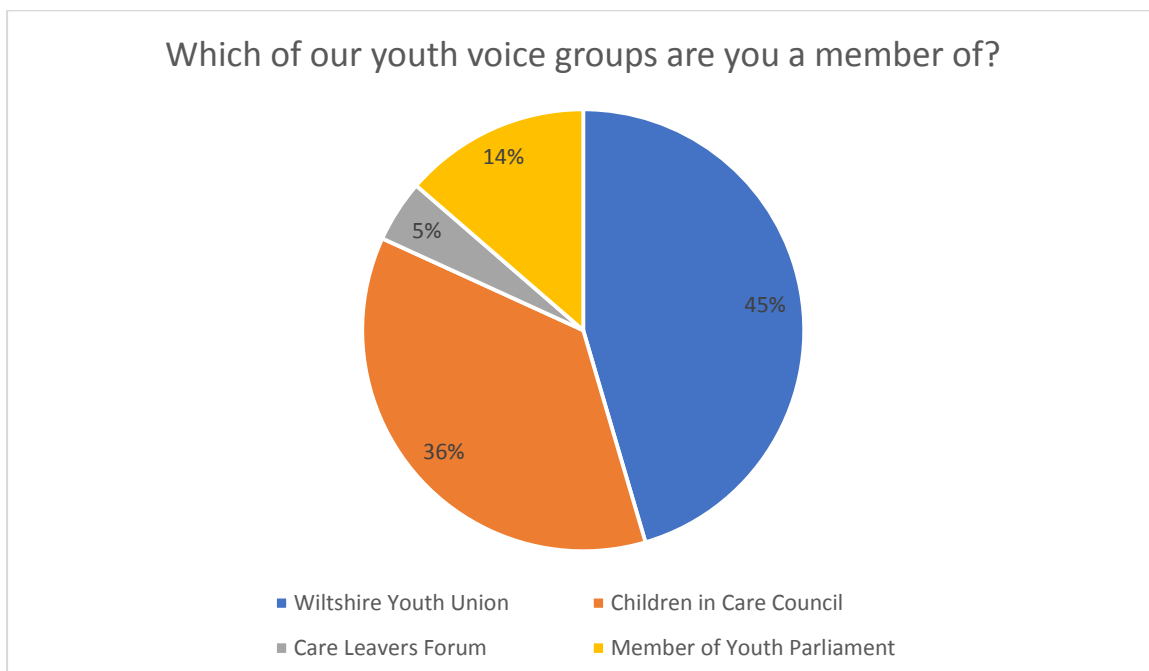
6. It could be said that 'not having energy to spare' is indicative of a wide range of people during lockdown of all ages, however this could lead to young people feeling cooped up and bored. The feedback on the other 2 areas suggesting the majority of children and young people were rarely 'dealing with problems well', and rarely 'feeling loved' are of particular concern.
7. We have explored the results further with young people since the results were received, so we can better understand what has led to these feelings, and there are further details at the end of the report. We are working together with our operational teams, and our children and young people to improve these areas and enable these young people to deal with challenging situations better in the future, especially if there are further lockdowns or restrictions.



8. The responses suggest that accessing mental health support in school has not been easy. Young people in the past have stated that they are often unsure on who to go, and the results of this survey echo those comments. Only 5 young people reported that accessing mental health services was easy.



9. It is interesting to note that no young people responded to say that they would choose to contact their school or college, or another trusted adult for mental health support, but preferred to speak to a parent or carer, or contact a friend. This reflects on the previous question, when the young people stated that accessing mental health support at their school / college was not easy in most cases.



10. The table above shows the breakdown of the groups that the young people who responded are members of.

## Experiences During Covid-19

11. As part of the survey, we asked young people to let us know some of the positives and negatives of their Covid-19 experience, and their responses are below.

### What have been the positives of the lockdown period for you?

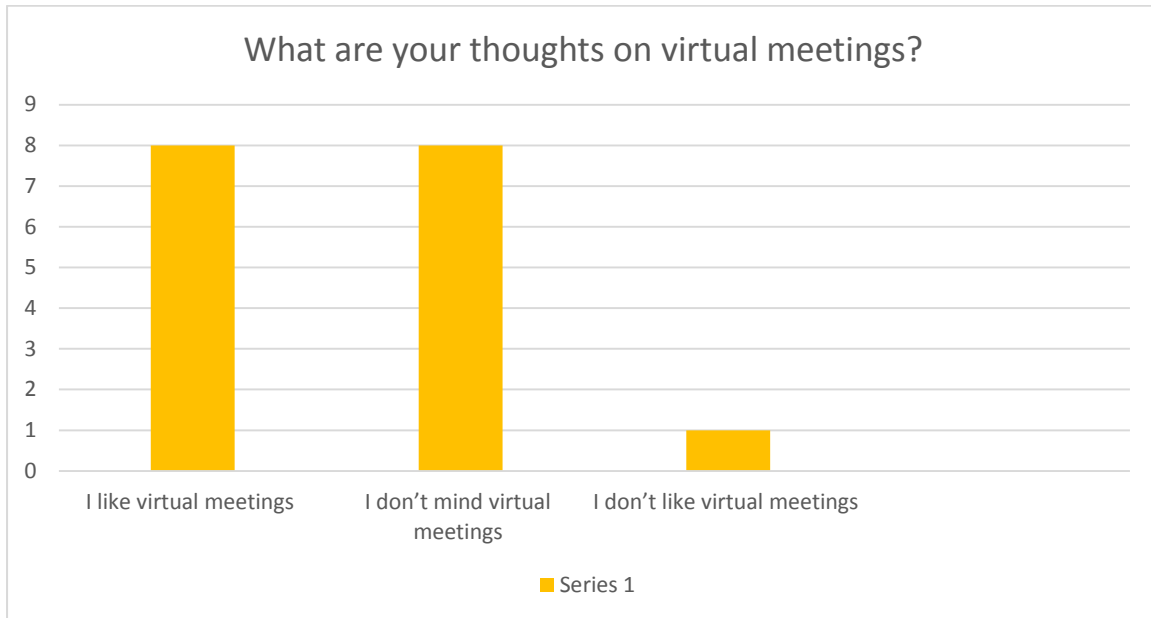
- ✓ I've spent a lot of time running
- ✓ Having virtual meetings with friends
- ✓ Developing new habits like cycling
- ✓ A chance to focus on my mental health
- ✓ Being able to have some down time to organise my flat and see my boyfriend whilst following government guidelines
- ✓ Being at home and being able to relax and go out when it is sunny to play in the garden
- ✓ I have been able to increase my capacity in volunteering and take the time to discover new interests
- ✓ Going back to work
- ✓ More time to spend with family
- ✓ I've been making stuff
- ✓ I've been able to have some down time
- ✓ Having time to be creative and record my album without having to think about revising
- ✓ I have been able to get higher grades through school work
- ✓ More time to focus on what I want to do in the future
- ✓ Having more time to reflect on what I was doing and mechanisms to cope
- ✓ Getting back at school for 2 days a week so I can see my friends and do sport get more quality time with family and getting more training in for races when I return

### What have been the negatives of the lockdown period for you?

- ✗ I'm not getting contacted by my school as often as I want
- ✗ Not being able to see friends in person
- ✗ Not clear about what's happening with school
- ✗ Not able to see friends
- ✗ The schedule is far too relaxed without attending school in person
- ✗ Being in a psychiatric hospital
- ✗ Not being able to see my friends and sometimes family. Having to stay inside.
- ✗ Not being able to travel to family and meet in person, until recently
- ✗ Staying in with family
- ✗ Missing friends and routine
- ✗ I've been locked in my house and not being allowed to see my friends for 3 months
- ✗ I have been in a mental health inpatient hospital
- ✗ Not being able to see my friends and go to cafes etc
- ✗ I've been very bored
- ✗ Missing friends/family, not being able to go out much

- × GCSEs being cancelled, being stuck inside, feeling down and lost
- × Feeling upset, angrier, feeling like I will give up on school work and not do well at GCSEs

## Meetings



12. Our young people have responded well to virtual meetings and are used to communicating digitally with other people. As a result of their responses above, we will be having regular virtual meetings with our youth voice groups. Young people suggested they enjoy virtual meetings and like to use them as a chance to catch up with other members. The social aspect of meetings is important to young people, so we will make sure that there are still opportunities for them to meet face to face and will be discussing the structure of future meetings with the groups involved.

## Follow Up

13. Further meetings with the young people involved in the survey were held in the Autumn, to discuss the main areas of concern in the survey, and other areas of the survey. We wanted to better understand why young people had these feelings and wanted to support them in improving these feelings.

14. **'Dealing with a problem'** proved to be challenging for young people and we explored this further. Young people suggested that they would usually seek support from their friends or family, but this was a lot more difficult for them during the lockdown period. Despite being able to connect with people virtually, young people highlighted the importance of face to face contact with their friends and family and a lack of this during the lockdown period made it difficult for young people to deal with some problems. Some of the young people who are still in school said that there was a lot of support put in place

at their schools especially from the pastoral teams however the level of support dropped off during the summer holidays:

*'There was a lot interaction with school at the beginning of lockdown and it was really helpful for me to be in regular contact with teachers'*

15. **'Feeling loved'** was also an area of concern for young people, and their feedback to this was similar to why they felt they found it hard to deal with problems, during lockdown, with the lack of interaction making young people feel isolated from their friends. Although contact was constant during the early stages of lockdown, some felt that this dropped off significantly as lockdown went on. On a more positive note, other members shared that being in lockdown with family improved their relationships and brought them closer together:

*'A lot of my interaction is in person at school and there are people who are in the same situation, a lot of people who do socialise this way have missed out'*

16. There were various reasons why young people felt they **did not have energy to spare**. A common reason that was mentioned by young people was that adjusting to being at home all the time was difficult. For some young people it was demotivating, and they felt there was nothing to feel excited or energised about. However, their views towards this question changed as some lockdown restrictions were eased. Other young people felt that the lockdown was refreshing and gave them energy and they used it as a chance to learn a new skill/hobby:

*'I had more energy to do things, it was a good opportunity to pick up new skills that that I usually wouldn't have time for'*

17. During our meetings with young people discussing these results, we asked **'what do you need now?'** to understand what support Wiltshire Council and schools could provide to our young people to help improve their emotional wellbeing and mental health. One care leaver felt they didn't know what support was available to them and they were excited after hearing about the care leavers app. Since the meeting the care leavers app has been launched and promoted across teams and it is available to download on android and apple devices. Young people once again highlighted the importance of virtual meetings and stressed they would like these to continue as they are.

18. As a result of the survey being shared with colleagues within the Council, including operational colleagues and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs), there has been a raised awareness of the needs and feelings of children and young people, and teams are working to make sure that they feel better supported. The information has also been shared with schools to raise awareness of the challenges faced by children and young people.

19. As part of ongoing work, Wiltshire has also launched an App for care leavers. This is being used to share information with young people, and to exchange messages between workers and young people. There is also the facility to obtain views of care leavers through a survey function on the App, which will help to ensure that we continue to shape services to meet the needs of our young people and improve their outcomes. A user group has also been developed, where care leavers are able to work with the council to develop the App to ensure it meets their needs.

### **Members of the Youth Parliament (MYPs)**

20. In July 2019, the British Youth Council announced that:

Following a consultation with LAs, the Steering Group have decided to extend the 20/21 Members of Youth Parliament (MYP) term by one year. It will now run from March 2020 - February 2022. Obviously if any of the young people decide to withdraw from their current position an election would be required, but there is not any intention to hold further elections for 2021.

### **Service Changes**

21. The budget and responsibility for Youth Voice is transferring from Commissioning to the Service for Quality Outcomes for Children and Families, alongside our IRO service. We are creating a new Child and Youth Voice Team to take forward this agenda and ensure it is at the heart of all services for children across the Council.

22. We are recruiting to two new permanent posts; a Child and Youth Voice Lead and a Child Voice Support worker who will be managed by an Operational Lead under a 6-month secondment which is intended to become permanent. We hope to have staff in the new posts by the end of February when we will be in a position start to implement our plan for Youth Voice that aims to achieve the following 5 strategic objectives

- I. Engagement and participation of young people is maximised in the youth groups and forums such as the Youth Union, Children in Care Council and Care Leaver's Forum.
- II. Young people are empowered and enabled to have a strong voice and are supported to research other young peoples lived experiences, perceptions and insights across Wiltshire to shape service development of the Council and its partners.
- III. Young people are involved in scrutinising and inspecting services across Wiltshire.
- IV. Young People are supported to work directly with leaders and decision-makers to influence change from senior levels and cascade through the organisation



- V. Deliver on Wiltshire Council's commitment to listening to young people and making sure they are at the centre of services for children and young people
23. By taking a co-production approach, we will continue to develop a strong culture of listening and participation in Wiltshire, that enables children and young people from a diverse range of backgrounds to influence positive change within the organisation. We will support children and young people to influence decisions made about services delivered to them, empowering to have their say and make a difference.

### **Oxford University Survey**

24. During May-June 2020, Wiltshire schools were able to take part in a modified version of our [Health and Wellbeing Survey](#), adapted by collaborators at the University of Oxford and Foster and Brown to the challenges of COVID-19 and school closure.
25. The survey involved schools from counties including: East Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, South Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, and was for pupils in years 4-13 and had 3 versions for different ages: (years 4-7, years 8-11, years 12-13)
26. The aim of the survey was to help inform schools of how lockdown is impacting the well-being and learning of their pupils, and results were similar to the survey of our Wiltshire Youth Union members.
27. This version of the survey is part of a study that has been approved by the University of Oxford Research Ethics Committee, [details can be found here](#).

### **Conclusion**

28. It is apparent from the responses we have received that many young people have been coping well during Covid-19, although a number of challenges have also been identified. This has prompted further discussions with the young people to better understand what the Council can do to make them feel more supported and able to overcome the challenges they face. A key issue is to ensure that there is easy access to mental health support when young people need it.
29. It is hoped that a combination of the new Care Leavers App, a raised awareness of the issues across the organisation and schools, and the new Youth Voice team will be able to help young people cope with life better, and support them to achieve more positive outcomes.