

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICE

Children & Young People Resource
Packs: Starting or Returning to School
& College
September 2020



Introduction

The CYP resource packs have been developed to support educational staff to work with their children, young people, parents and carers to manage more effectively when schools reopen in September.

Schools have been open for children of key workers and vulnerable children throughout the pandemic period. In early June schools opened up more widely for other groups of children as well, including Year 6, reception and Year 1 and children taking their GCSEs. This accounts for around 33% of the total school population in GM.

It is difficult to say exactly how many of these children were in school either regularly, or occasionally, over this period. However, we do know not all those who could attend did. What is clear is there are approaching 300,000 children of all ages who, come September, will not have been in school for more than five months.

Discussions began at the Greater Manchester Children and Young People's Mental Health Board in May about support which could be given to pupils and staff, recognising the likelihood of potentially significant anxiety from children, young people and parents, throughout the summer months as we move towards September.

Education colleagues at all levels, and in many localities, have been working closely with schools in their areas and the GM Children and Young People's Mental Health Board was keen to understand what the Greater Manchester community could do to add value to this, by:

- Supporting education colleagues to manage potential future mental health issues by reducing the anxiety of children, young people, their parents and carers and staff
- Normalising the 'new normal' of socially distanced learning environments
- Showing that feeling anxious was a normal reaction
- Providing quality assured resources to enable schools and colleges to work with the children, young people, parents and carers to support a wider safe return to learning

The initial ask was to produce a set of collated resources for primary, secondary, SEND and further education taking. As we were doing this it became clear that whilst there were many resources aimed at supporting education staff to work with children, young people, parents and carers there were no resources available where children and young people were talking to their peers. We decided to produce the films to sit as part of the resource packs and we have children and young people talking directly to their peers, addressing the issues and worries that were raised in the consultation.

Defining the issues

The first step was to ask a range of stakeholders what the main issues were:

- Organisations - GM: Mental health trusts; Education colleagues; GMCA school readiness team; local commissioners; SEND and Special Schools; CAMHS; VCSE through the GM VCSE leadership group; Mental Health In Education Partners (Anna Freud Centre, Place2Be, Alliance for Learning, Youth Sports Trust)
- Existing research from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health's [COVID-19 - research studies on children and young people's views](#)
- Children and young people's voice: Bee Heard; 42nd Street; Buile Hill school; SEND schools; Bolton college; Hopwood Hall; GM mental health youth execs; Youth Focus North West led consultation

We then collated the responses and sense checked these with colleagues

66% Expressed worries about going back to school in September - mostly about safety, social distancing and catching COVID-19

GMHSCP survey

83% Expressed concerns regarding the future – employment, academic progress and results, the economy

GMHSCP survey

80% of young people agreed that pandemic had made their mental health worse (41% said the pandemic had made their mental health “much worse”)

GMCA COVID-19 Recovery Insight Report 20 July 2020 edition 10

STUDENT CONCERNS

From primary school children to college students, we asked what their concerns and worries were.



CURRENT STRUGGLES

66% of students are worried to return to school due to safety, social distancing and catching COVID-19. Other concerns include:



"I don't have a routine anymore so I'm finding it hard to keep track of days, and my sleep schedule is awful."

-  Lockdown
-  Lack of routine
-  Sleep issues
-  Bereavement
-  Lack of motivation
-  World events

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

- Strong feeling that support from school and college was really valuable.
- Referral to community mental health support by GP for sleeping issues and symptoms of stress helped.

"I have had support from the college mental health team who have helped me to manage my anxiety."





AFFECTED COMMUNITIES



Elderly, homeless and those with underlying health conditions



BAME, and disadvantaged communities



LGBTQ+ facing emotional challenges in their own homes



"I've actively been helping the homeless by giving them food and water on hot days. I've also been actively reposting BLM posts, pride posts, and knocking on neighbours' homes to see if I can help and shop for them if they are high risk."

WORRIES ABOUT THE FUTURE

83% of students expressed concerns regarding the future:



Loss of loved ones



Job security



Family health



A second wave



Education



Missed opportunities

Your voices helped us to create these back to school and college films and resources. Visit the website (or links) below for more:

hub.gmhsc.org.uk/mental-health/further-education/

hub.gmhsc.org.uk/mental-health/primary-schools/

hub.gmhsc.org.uk/mental-health/secondary-schools/



"I'm worried that my grades will have a massive drop due to the time away from school."

Concerns about the current situation – during lockdown

Struggling with lockdown	Lack of normal routine	Sleep issues
Bereavement	Lack of motivation	Worries about what's happening here and across the world
Existing family issues harder due to being at home all the time	Isolation	Missing college life
Can't go to Mosque – where we'd get comfort and peace	People not sticking to the rules	This will go on forever

“ I'm finding it difficult to find things to do, being alone all day, limited time with loved ones, feeling trapped, feeling stressed, feeling bored, uncertainty about future, not being able to see family and worried that things will never go back to normal

“ My father has passed away from COVID-19 after fighting on the NHS frontline (North West Ambulance Service).

“ Will it ever be normal again?

“ I don't have a routine anymore so I'm finding it hard to keep track of days and my sleep schedule is awful.

Returning to school/college

Worries about socialising with other learners just in case they have it

Worries around the safety measures that the college has put in place for our return and will it be safe enough – big issue

Fears of using public transport – people not following the rules

Is it too soon?

Concerns about corridors, schools being too small to enable social distancing

Worries about fellow students not obeying the rules – big issue

Worried about family members who are shielding/vulnerable

Concerns about bullying especially from a Chinese student

How possible it is to socially distance within school

“

I am worried of being sent home again as I am classed as a vulnerable person. I want to be in college.

“

How will I know I am safe?

“

I've found it hard at times working from home and I've missed the social aspect of college life; seeing friends, etc.

“

Can't wait - wants some normality back

“

I just want to get back to normal life again, seeing friends at college and staff too

“

I won't be able to go near people and I feel a bit nervous



Mental health support

Many were receiving support from school/

*Using a sleep app
Headspace*

Referral to community mental health support by GP for sleeping issues and symptoms of stress

Improvements to be made- contact people sooner

Learner was referred 2-3 weeks ago but has not heard anything from community mental health support yet

Strong feeling that support from school and college was really valuable



I have had support from college mental health team who have helped me to manage my anxiety



Intervention has been put in place and now great progress and looking back realised what impact being away from college, friends, extended family and being able to go out has had



CAMHS have been consistent and support with any issues I have faced especially during this time



It's been really nice to talk to someone and its better when its not everyday so that you have more things to talk about, the week I have just had etc.



It has helped me to feel a lot better, it has definitely given me coping strategies for and the future. FaceTime/Zoom could be an option to improve.



Volunteering

Wide range of responses about the volunteering that's been possible

Existing volunteer work being stopped due to the pandemic

Volunteering is more important now

“

I have been working with my Youth Cabinet to start projects etc and have been working with the charity Youth Mental Health Matters, which I'm a part of and working on a Mental Health Awareness Week Campaign. and even took part in an Our Streets Now Video on Public Harassment.

“

Unable to do volunteering at Salvation Army

“

Helping to deliver groceries and books for neighbours

“

I've been taking part in helping youth strike for climate and other eco groups to grow online and prepare for the post lockdown Future

“

I joined environmental organisations such as FFF digital strikes and youth strike mcr. I've also been doing work for the us programme.

“

All previous work I was doing stopped

“

I've actively been helping the homeless by giving them food and water on hot days, I've been actively reposting BLM posts, pride posts, knocking on neighbours' homes to see if I can help and shop for them if they are high risk etc



Effects on other communities

Older people and those on their own- would hate to have no support	Elderly, homeless and those with underlying health conditions have been more affected than others and may require more support	People in care homes
People in care homes	People with mental health difficulties	BAME have been worse hit, maybe socio-economic changes to see if anything can be done to prevent this in future
LGBTQ+ people could be experiencing family who are particularly against the part of that community that they belong to and verbal and emotional abuse in their homes because of this	Lack Lives Matter mentioned a few times	



Felt like my personal home community created a sense of involvement and inclusivity. Neighbours were looking out for each other and easy to feel a sense of unity within network of neighbours and friends



The elderly as they were utterly neglected even if in the media it seems as otherwise. Such as putting people with COVID 19 in care homes with the most vulnerable because there is no room in the hospital.



Closeted queer people have been cut off from support networks that would previously have supplemented their families, less counsellors and therapists are available for non-neurotypical or struggling people



This is a global pandemic and everyone together to protect each other.

Worries about the future

The uncertainty of everything	Family employment	Own employment chances
Finishing course	Not getting the grades needed how this will impact on future	Family members getting ill/dying
Job security for themselves and family members	Falling behind with schoolwork	Worries about catching up
Loss – no exams, international volunteering, holidays, missed work experience	Out of control – poor government response and how people are behaving will lead to a second wave – big concern raised by many	What lasting differences there will be on social events and whether or not we will ever return to normal
Worries about it never being normal again	Concerns about the economy	

“ Will I still get to go to college? What if I don't get what I could've in exams? What if colleges don't want me anymore, what if colleges get cancelled. So many what ifs

“ The thought of having to take exams after missing out on months of content scares me

“ My main concern has been applying to uni and A level exams next year, and the future of predicted grades etc. it's been my main focus since I started sixth form and for it all to be left open and no real answer has led me to be incredibly anxious

“ I'm worried that I have missed so much school now and I won't be able to catch up because I have missed out on so much education.

“ Things are not going to be the same.

“ I'm worried that my grades will have a massive drop due to the time away from school

“ the fact that nothing has been clarified makes the situation scarier

“ I'm worried about reintegrating back into society.

Developing the packs

We then collated the resources and our Expert Reference Group (GM Resilience Hub) reviewed them all before we included them in the relevant pack. Resources are grouped into types eg teaching materials, resources for parents etc and are a mixture of information leaflets, short films, advice and guidance, signposting to social prescribing activities etc. There are three packs: primary, secondary and FE – all packs include SEND specific materials where available.

As the situation and related guidance can change rapidly, we've been looking at ways to produce the information. To avoid long lists on the website we've produced the packs as interactive PowerPoint decks that are now on the mental health website

- [Primary School](#)
- [Secondary School](#)
- [Further Education](#)

They are being updated on a regular basis so we're advising people not to download local copies.

We've also produced four short films (primary, secondary, SEND and FE) reassuring children & young people and their families about precautions being taken and showing them how the new normal looks. All films feature children and young people and cover the issues raised by children and young people during the consultation. The films and relevant YouTube link are included in the relevant pack. The films and resource packs are available to schools, colleges, Local Authorities etc across Greater Manchester.

GET IN TOUCH

gmhscp.gmmhprogramme@nhs.net
<https://hub.gmhsc.org.uk/mental-health/>

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