



**COVID: THE EFFECT ON YOUTH**

**2021**

**Annual**

**Report**

# Message From The Chair

Appendix 1

Hello, my name is Archibald Bean and I am the Chair of the Medway Youth Council. This year has been very difficult for everyone but in particular young people who have had all areas of their lives disrupted and changed.

Due to the pandemic, we had to take a different look at the way our Annual Conference was run which led us to create COVID: The Effect on Youth (the report of which you are reading).



We have faced many challenges and obstacles however I am glad to say that we gathered nearly 400 responses from young people throughout Medway with very detailed and informative responses, as well as creating a mental wellbeing support pack and a successful event with local decision-makers and representatives.

I hope you find the information and data that we have gathered useful and take into consideration the further actions and recommendations we have made.

# Who Are We?

The Medway Youth Council is an organisation of passionate young people from all across the Medway towns, dedicated to giving young people a voice across Medway and promoting their role in our community.

Medway Youth Council is supported by Medway Youth Service. We are a wholly inclusive organisation, representing a wide range of young people, aged 11-18, from a variety of schools and youth groups.

We campaign on behalf of young people with regards to prominent issues such as transport, mental health, and bullying.



Normally the Medway Youth Council holds an Annual Conference, which grows out of a consultation we carried out with young people from across Medway. However, in light of the pandemic, the Medway Youth Council had to think differently and we did just that drawing on the pandemic to inform the content and how we delivered this project.





# What Is COVID: The Effect On Youth?

COVID: The Effect on Youth is an alternative to the Medway Youth Council's annual conference and looked at how COVID has impacted young people's mental wellbeing and their futures.

What were our aims?

We wanted to help and support young people with their mental wellbeing, and signpost support organisations that could help them. We wanted to interview young people to understand directly how COVID has impacted their mental wellbeing and future opportunities.



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## COVID: THE EFFECT ON YOUTH

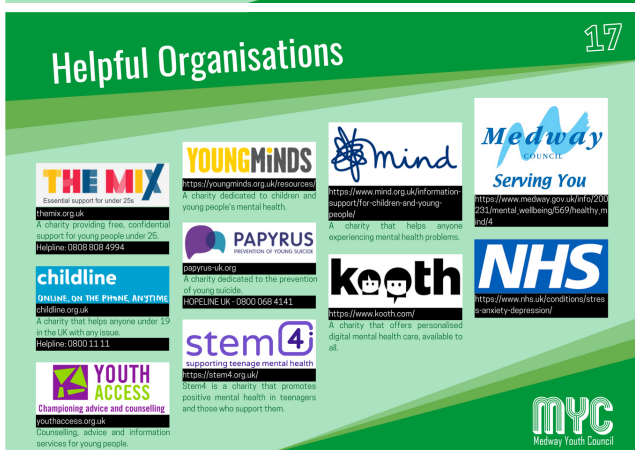
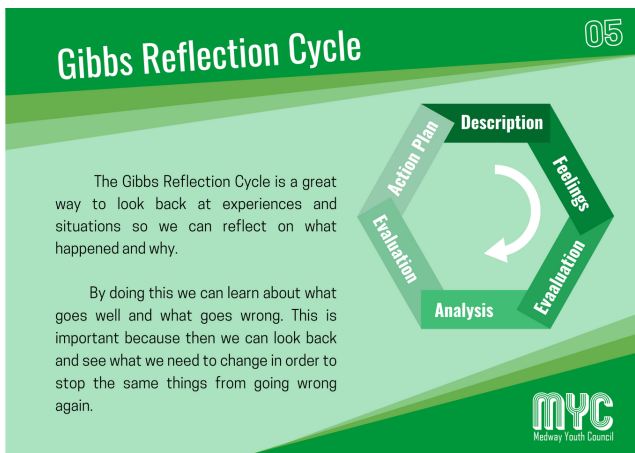
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2021

The Medway Youth Council created a mental wellbeing support pack which was distributed to young people across Medway.

It was created to help assist young people with their mental wellbeing and to signpost organisations from which they could receive support.

Alongside the mental wellbeing pack, the Medway Youth Council produced online content and promoted services that young people could use.



To access our support pack, please visit:  
[www.medwayyouthcouncil.co.uk/covid-the-effect-on-youth](http://www.medwayyouthcouncil.co.uk/covid-the-effect-on-youth)

# About COVID: The Effect On Youth Survey



The “COVID: The Effect on Youth” survey was an anonymous virtual survey conducted through Google forms collecting two pieces of personal information (year of school and start of postcode).

This was distributed to young people throughout Medway, mainly through schools and social media. The survey opened on 20 March 2021 and closed on 21 April 2021 receiving a total of 396 responses.



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## COVID: THE EFFECT ON YOUTH

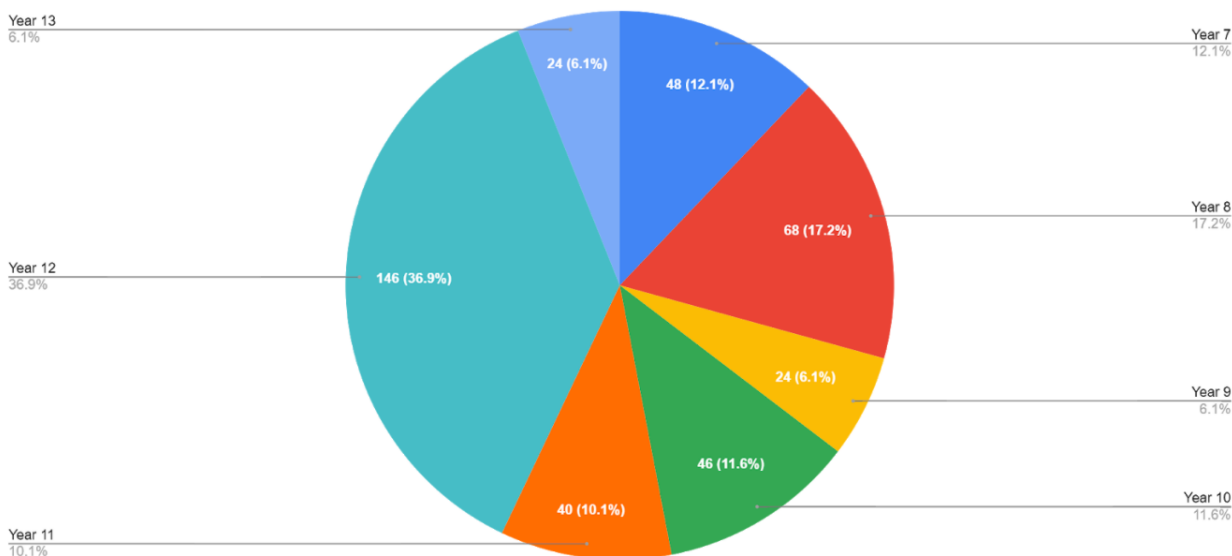
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### 2021

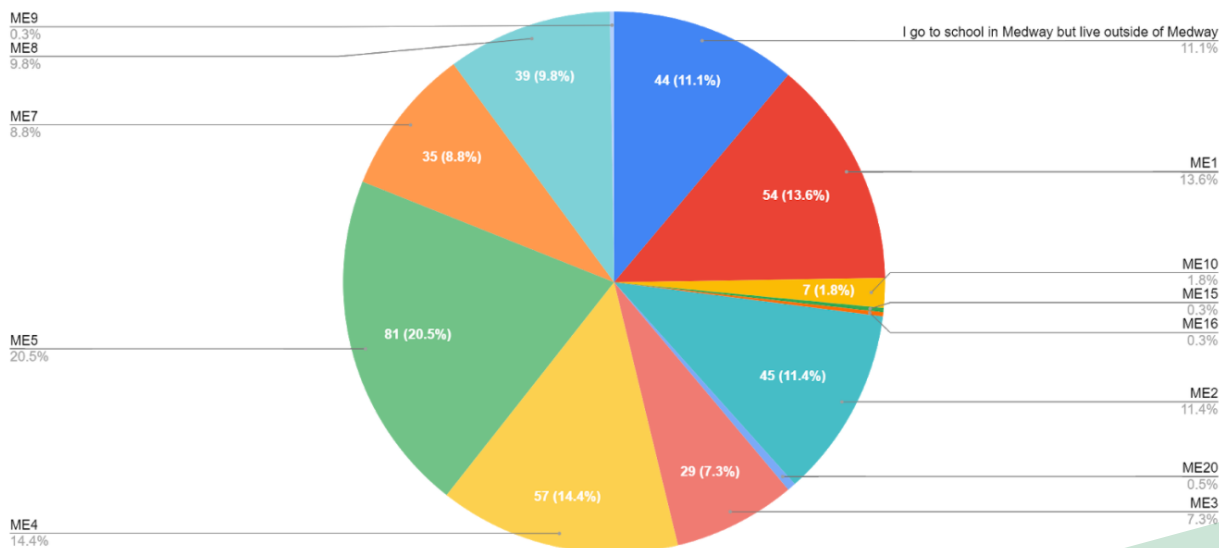
# Year Group & Postcode Distribution



## What Year Group Are You In?



## What is the start of your postcode?







# How Has The Mental Wellbeing Of Young People Been Affected By The Pandemic?

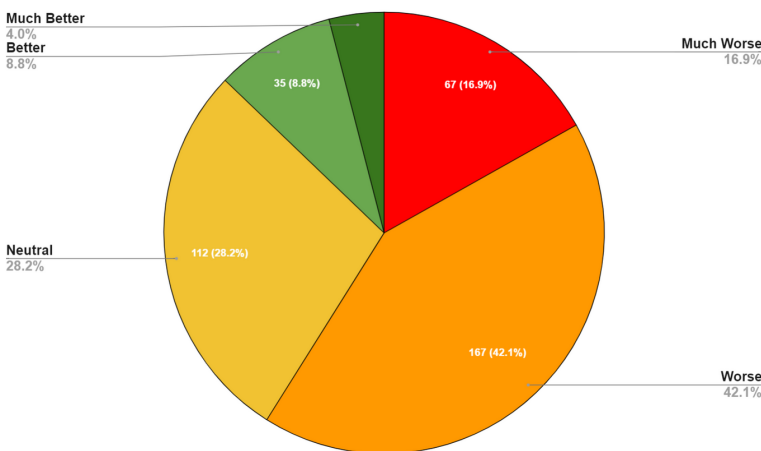
Causes of worsening mental wellbeing which we found from our survey included:

- Confusion over exams
- Lack of social interaction
- Family issues (death, divorce, greater responsibilities)
- New insecurities (Eating disorders, social anxiety)

Causes of improved mental wellbeing included:

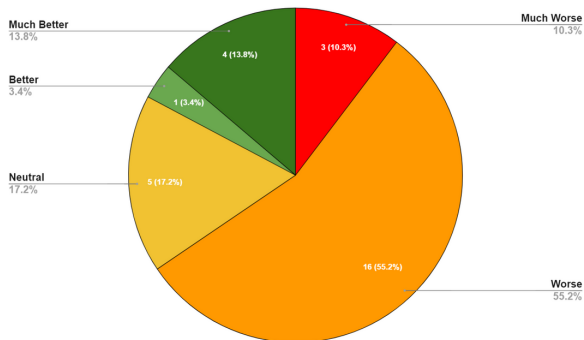
- Extra free time for hobbies
- More family time
- Self reflection/extra time to think about future

Medway Total - 397 Respondents

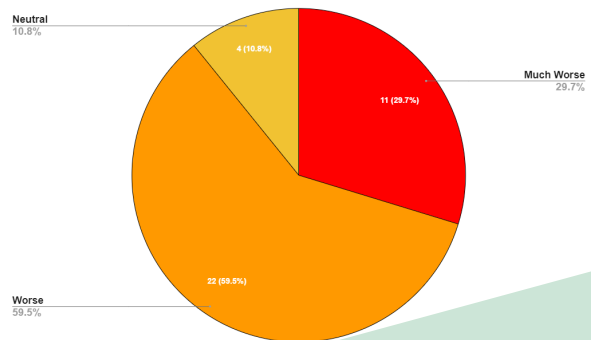


Young people's recommendations to improve mental wellbeing were exercising, meeting new people online, talking to friends, limiting exposure to social media, creative activities, finding new hobbies, Kooth and therapy if appropriate.

ME3 - 29 Respondents

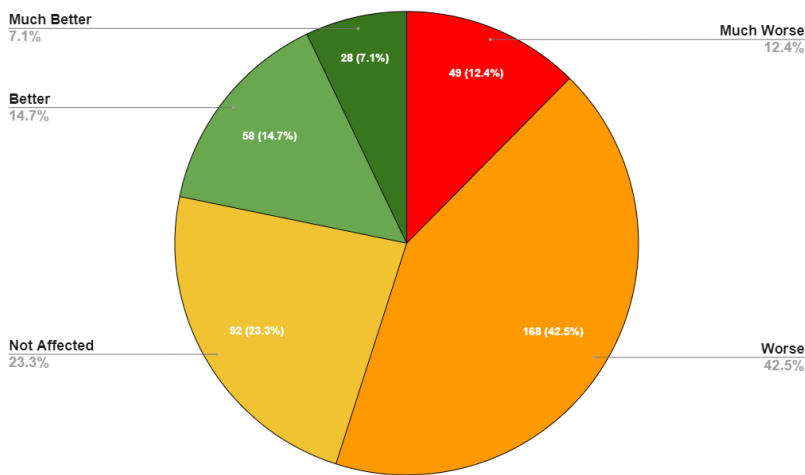


ME8 - 38 Respondents



# How Has The Mental Wellbeing Of Young People Been Affected By The Closure Of Schools?

Medway Total - 396 Respondents



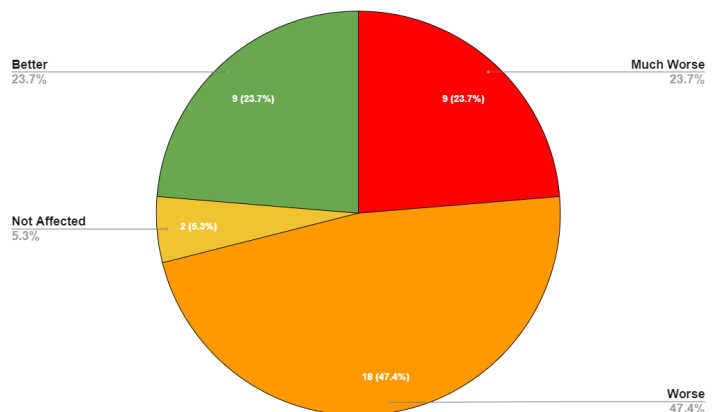
Causes of improved mental wellbeing included:

- Teachers checking in on students
- Seeing family more
- Greater sleep and free time
- Screen breaks in lessons
- Regular walks/exercise
- Working at your own pace (greater independence)
- Being able to listen to music

Causes of worsening mental wellbeing included:

- Uncertainty surrounding grades
- People felt teaching was uncompassionate (too much work, strict, mock exams schedules not being flexible)
- Missing social contact/friends
- Harder to get any mental wellbeing support needed

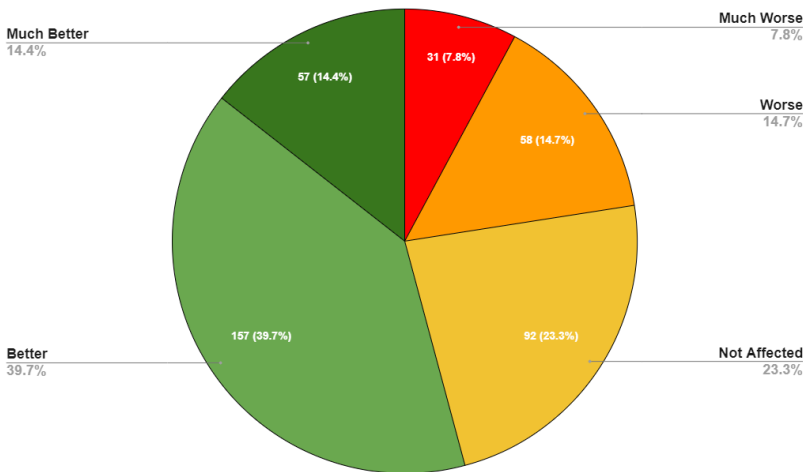
ME8 - 38 Respondents





# How Has The Mental Wellbeing Of Young People Been Affected By The Return Of Schools?

Medway Total - 396 Respondents



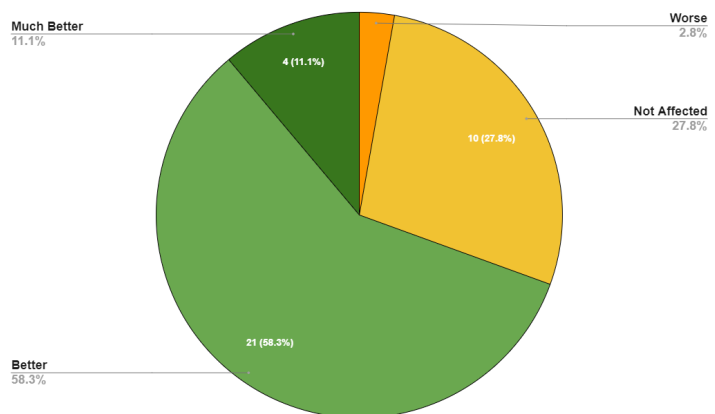
## Causes of improved mental wellbeing included:

- Being more productive
- Seeing friends/teachers in person
- A more structured routine
- Subjects like Drama, Art, Physical education resuming
- Less uncertainty

## Causes of worsening mental wellbeing included:

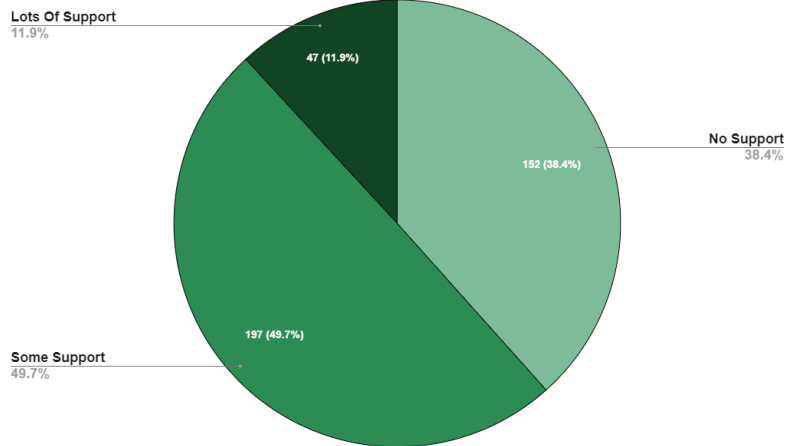
- Reduced sleep and free time
- Academic struggles
- Face masks which can be distracting
- Fear of COVID
- Social struggles (interactions with other people)

ME7 - 36 Respondents



# Have Young People Had Access To Mental Wellbeing Support During The Pandemic?

Medway Total - 396 Respondents



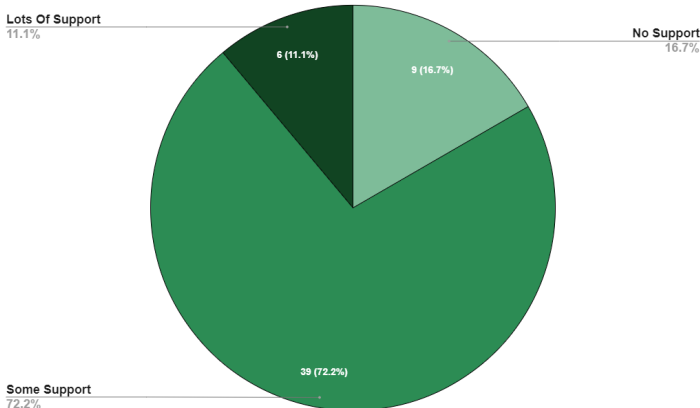
Mental wellbeing support young people want:

- Greater support for those with mental health disorders wanted
- Help with meeting new people and socialising

Mental wellbeing support used by young people during the pandemic:

- Headspace
- Support from teachers and school
- Therapy
- Kooth
- Personalised school checkups
- Counselling
- Childline/NSPCC
- NHS
- Talking to friends and family
- CAMHS

ME1 - 51 Respondents



# How Much More Or Less Have Young People Learnt During The Online Learning Period?

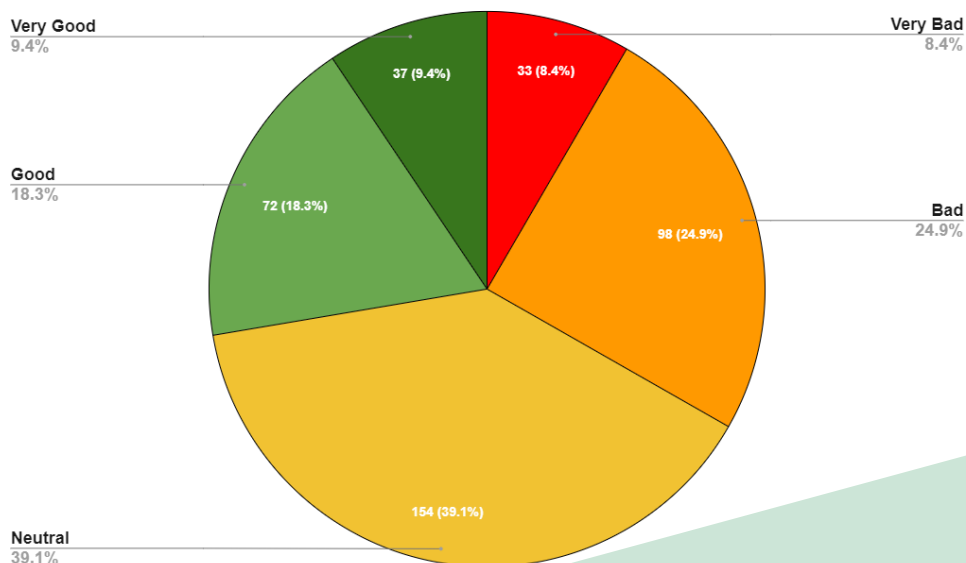
## Positives of online learning:

- More comfortable learning environment
- Greater independence
- More sleep
- Higher level of organisation
- Greater access to tools online
- Gave students time for reflection
- More time for family
- Lesser costs (no traveling, school meals)

## Negatives of online learning:

- Easier to become distracted
- Many felt they learnt considerably less
- Hard to manage workload
- Lower teaching quality due to reduced feedback and attention
- Hard or impossible to do practical subjects like PE, DT, Art
- Struggling to always access online lessons due to technical difficulties (WiFi)
- Headaches, migraines and sore eyes among other symptoms from prolonged screen exposure

Medway Total - 396 Respondents



# How Young People Feel Their Futures Opportunities Have Been Affected By The Pandemic?

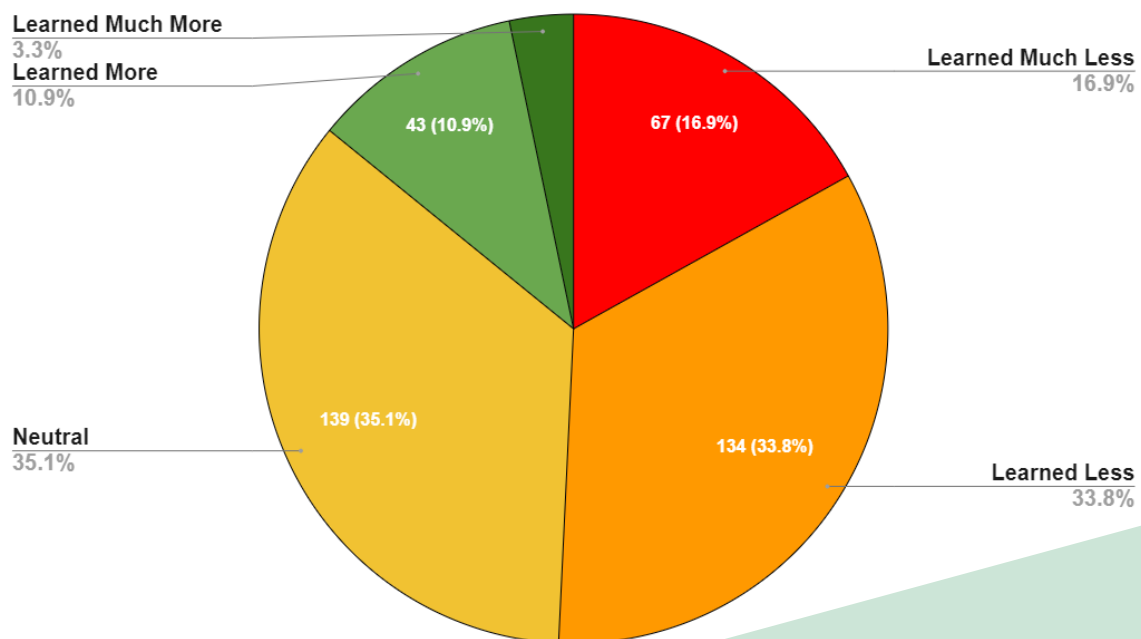
## Reasons for greater opportunities:

- More time to think about the future
- Improved work ethic as a result of independence
- Online opportunities

## Reasons for fewer opportunities:

- Missed out on learning and learning time
- Not studying as hard due to lack of motivation
- Missing out on key life skills
- Worried about getting lower grades
- Missing out on opportunities after school such as work, apprenticeships, universities, volunteering, summer school

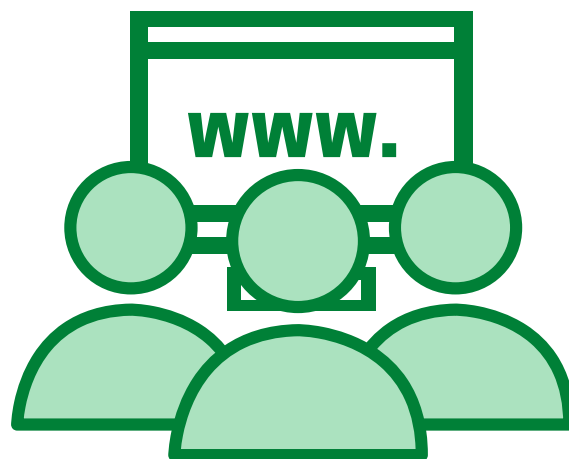
## Medway Total - 397 Respondents



# What Young People Feel Should Continue Post Pandemic?

Things students wish to continue after the pandemic:

- Greater mental health and wellbeing awareness
- Cleanliness and increase in general hygiene in schools
- Recording lessons
- Use of Microsoft Teams as a platform
- Using computers more actively



# Q&A Event

On 30 April 2021 the Medway Youth Council hosted its Q&A Event for COVID: The Effect on Youth. Chaired by the Chair Archibald Bean, its panellists were:

**Tina Lovey** - *CEO of the Rivermead Inclusive Trust*

**Cllr Potter** - *Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools*

**James Harman** - *Head of Children's Services Commissioning*

**Daniel Ratcliff** - *Skills & Employment Programme Manager*

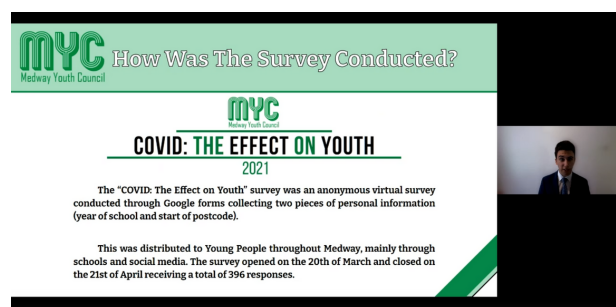
The event was attended by members of the community virtually and they were able to ask questions to the panel.

**The link to all the paraphrased questions and answers are:**

[https://twitter.com/MYC\\_MEDWAY/status/1388175252576952323?s=20](https://twitter.com/MYC_MEDWAY/status/1388175252576952323?s=20)

**To watch the event please go to:**

[bit.ly/2QGCVqy](https://bit.ly/2QGCVqy)







# Summary And Further Actions

In response to the findings of COVID: The Effect on Youth, we put forward the following suggested further actions:

**MYC is going to continue to work with mental wellbeing organisations to support them in reaching out to young people throughout Medway as the impact of covid continues.**

**MYC is going to continue to share the results and findings from COVID: The Effect on Youth to schools and other relevant organisations to help them to reflect and ensure that the past experiences expressed in the survey are learnt from for the future.**

**MYC recommends that schools have frequent private feedback with students where students are able to discuss their mental wellbeing as well as any concerns they may have.**

**MYC recommends that schools and youth groups should be encouraged to have dedicated sections on their websites promoting mental wellbeing resources. Students experiencing mental health issues should be supported.**

**MYC recommends that the positives of online learning experienced during the pandemic should be built into learning experiences in the future, eg: recording lessons to assist with revision.**

If you would like to contact the Medway Youth Council, please contact our Youth Worker Karen Yusuf at: [karen.yusuf@medway.gov.uk](mailto:karen.yusuf@medway.gov.uk)

[www.medwayyouthcouncil.co.uk](http://www.medwayyouthcouncil.co.uk)



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