

# Young Inspectors' REPORT 2020



## Report on support services during lockdown for Camden children, young people and care leavers

### 1. Who are the Young Inspectors?

Every year, a team of Young Inspectors undertake research into the views of other Camden service users and professionals about the services provided by partner agencies responsible for safeguarding children.

The Young Inspectors are young people aged 16 to 25. They are selected by interview and are involved in designing and conducting each inspection. The strength of the Young Inspectors is that they can apply their own experiences and knowledge of the service to the inspection.

### 2. What was the aim of the report by Young Inspectors?

The aim of the Young Inspection was to find out about the experiences of direct work and support services during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and to make recommendations for further lockdowns and post-lockdown. This includes a focus on:

- Children, young people, care leavers and parents / carers: experience of direct work and support from services during lockdown
- Experience of child protection and LAC review meetings during lockdown
- Social workers and personal advisors: experience of providing support to children, care leavers and families during lockdown
- Re-thinking aspects of direct work and safeguarding practice to support families after the lockdown, including retaining some of the new and innovative ways of working developed during lockdown.

### 3. Why is the Young Inspection focusing on the support services for children and young people during lockdown?

The coronavirus lockdown announced in March 2020 posed many challenges for the social work service, children and their families. In spite of the unexpectedly difficult circumstances, services responded promptly to the challenge to ensure that the safeguarding of children and the meeting of their needs remained at the centre of the response.

This Young Inspection provides an opportunity to:

- Examine and study how services have responded to this crisis and how families have experienced the support offered
- Highlight innovative approaches taken by the social care service
- Review some of the publications and research recommendations on supporting vulnerable children and families during the pandemic.

### 4. How did the Young Inspectors collect the information?

The process of gathering information included the following:

- **Obtaining feedback** from children aged 5-17, care leavers (aged 18-25), parents, carers and social workers using questionnaires
- **Online Interviewing** of professionals including: CAMHS clinical psychologist, head and deputy head of the Virtual school, team managers from the children in need and looked after children services, child protection officers and looked after children Independent reviewing officers.
- **Online focus groups with young people** including unaccompanied asylum seekers
- **Desktop research** of the latest publications reporting on the impact of lockdown on vulnerable children and care leavers such as:
  - **University of Oxford research** - *Children show increase in mental health difficulties over COVID-19 lockdown (June 2020)*
  - **British Association of Social Workers** – *The challenge of child protection during lockdown (June 2020); Top tips for virtual direct work with children and families during COVID-19 (June 2020)*
  - **The Guardian** - *All my safety nets went overnight: how COVID-19 is isolating student care leavers (June 2020)*
  - **Children's Commissioner for England** – *Putting children first in future lockdowns (August 2020)*
  - **Research in Practice** - *Child protection and risks from COVID-19: Home visits and the challenges of social distancing (June 2020).*



# Key findings

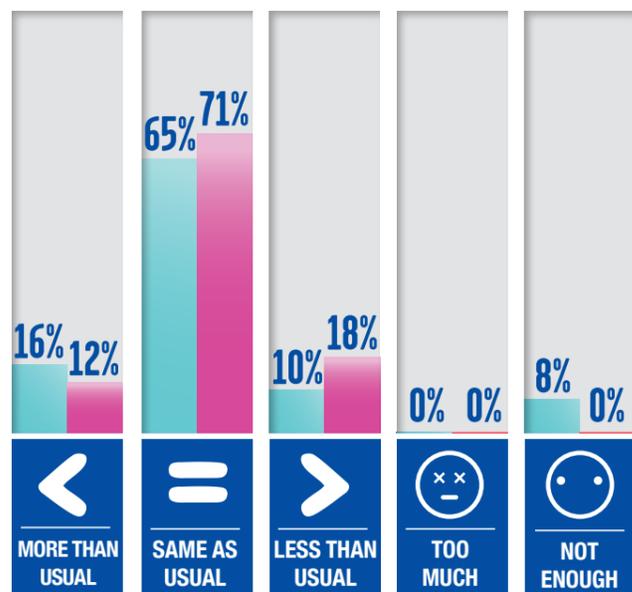
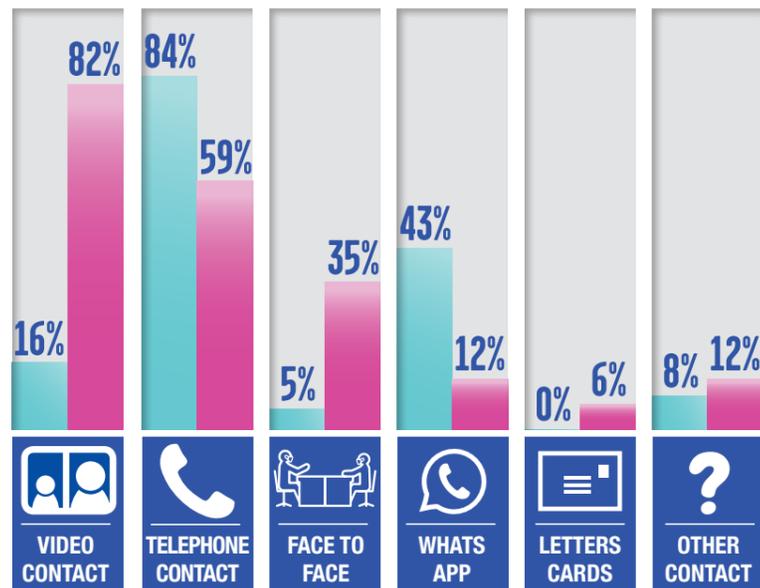
## 1 COMMUNICATION AND CONTACT WITH SERVICES DURING LOCKDOWN

1. How did your social worker or PA keep in touch with you?

Other comments

- email
- facebook

Care leavers  
Children and young people



2. How do you feel about the amount of contact you have had with your social worker or PA during lockdown?

Care leavers  
Children and young people



3. Please say what you liked or did not like about the virtual contact with your social worker or your personal advisor during lockdown.

I liked it because:

- it is quick
- I didn't have to be there
- I met my new social worker
- I like face to face and video contact
- I got to stay home with my grandmother
- I had more contact with my social worker than usual
- I know I can always contact my social worker
- it was good to see her and talk to her on the phone.

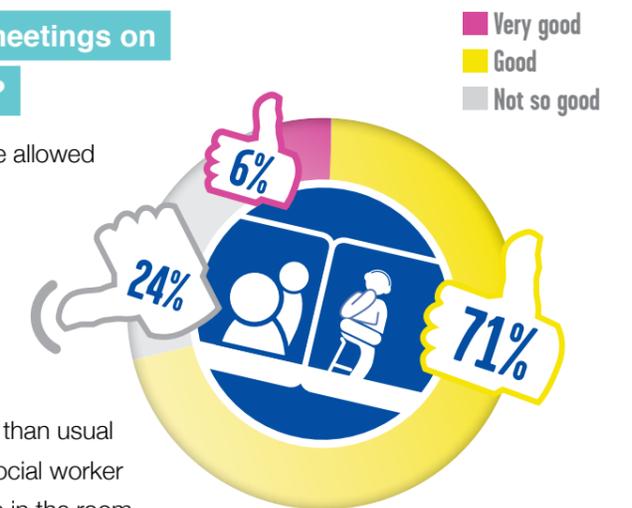
I did not like it because:

- it was 'awkward'
- it was too much contact
- it is boring talking over the phone
- I did not feel I could express myself as well as when talking in person
- I preferred doing things with my social worker in person.



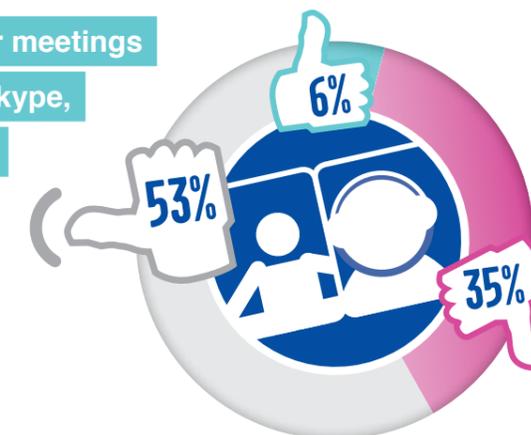
4. What was your experience of meetings on video link (Skype, Zoom, Teams)?

- I could see and talk as no home visits were allowed
- Not as much fun as calling my friends
- It was exciting and new
- It was a little awkward
- I hate Zoom
- I could see the faces while talking
- It was good because it was more efficient
- I got to meet lots of different people, more than usual
- I don't mind how I have contact with my social worker
- It was easier because we didn't have to be in the room with everyone.



5. Do you prefer meetings by video link (Skype, Zoom, Teams)?

Yes No  
Not sure

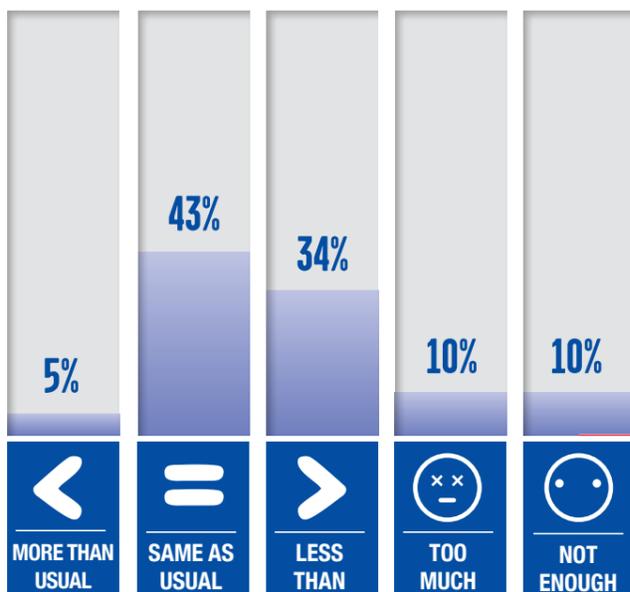
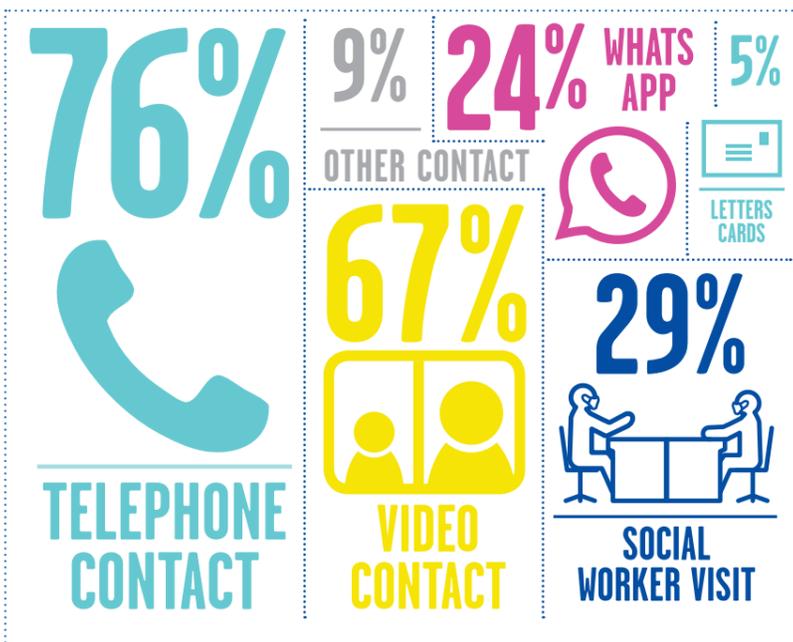




## Key findings

# 1 COMMUNICATION AND CONTACT WITH SERVICES DURING LOCKDOWN

6. How did the social worker keep in touch with your child?

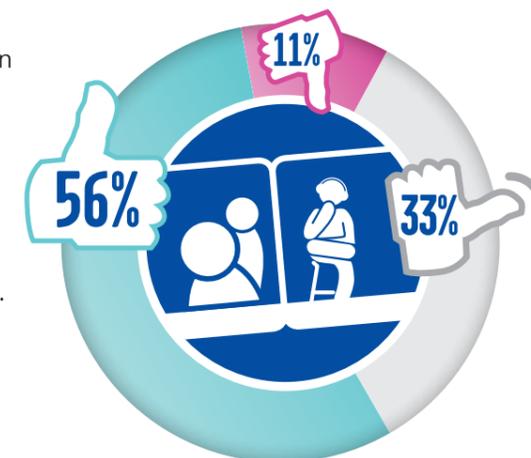


7. How do you feel about the amount of contact your child has had with the social worker during lockdown?

## 8. Do you prefer meetings by video link (Skype, Zoom, Teams)?

### Other comments

- It is good to see people face to face but it has been helpful having the option of video calls
- It is more convenient, less rushed
- It was an option that I liked
- I was happy to have interpreters
- If the technology works, it's more to the point
- Easy to attend from home but I do not like camera. I prefer face to face discussions.



Yes No Not sure



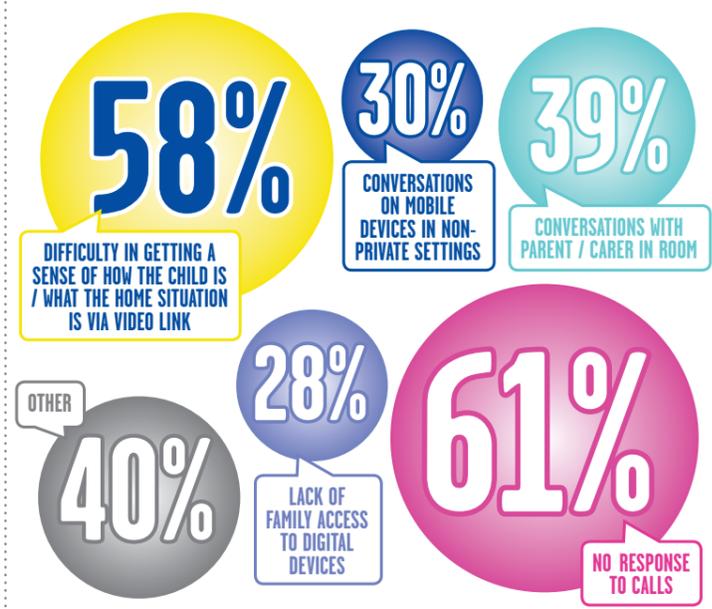
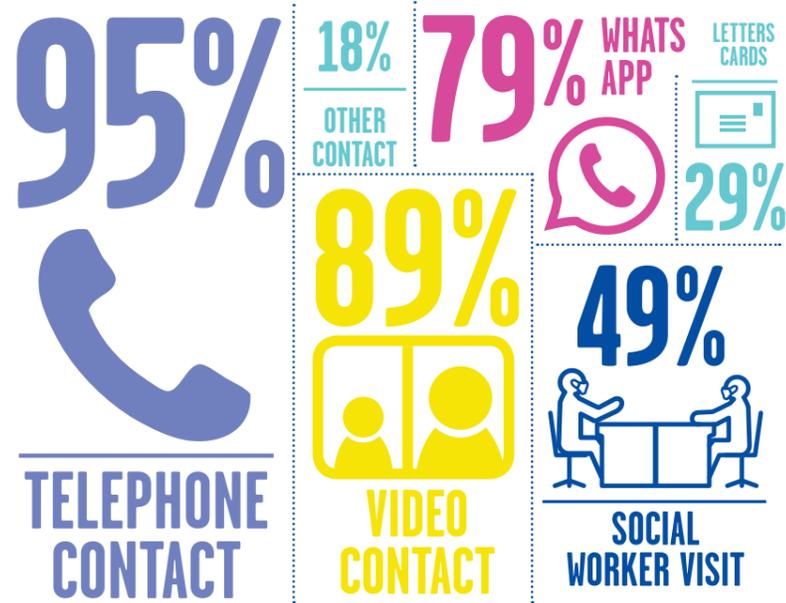
**DURING LOCKDOWN IT WAS NECESSARY TO BE SAFE AND HAVE ONLINE MEETINGS BUT IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO BE AT MEETINGS IN PERSON.**



## Key findings

# 1 COMMUNICATION AND CONTACT WITH SERVICES DURING LOCKDOWN

9. How did you maintain contact with your child and the family during lockdown?

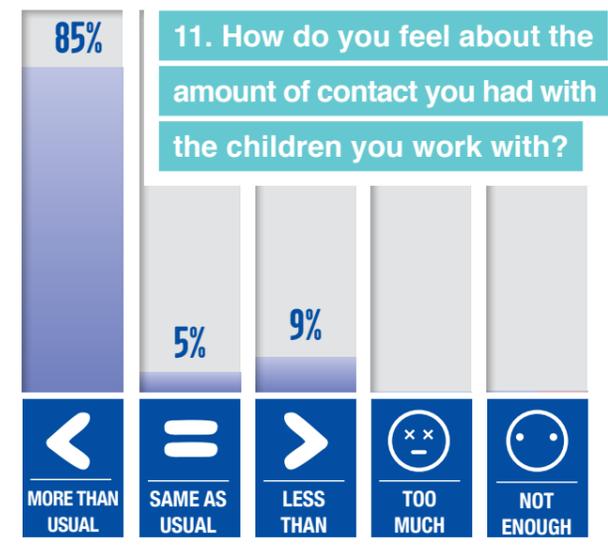
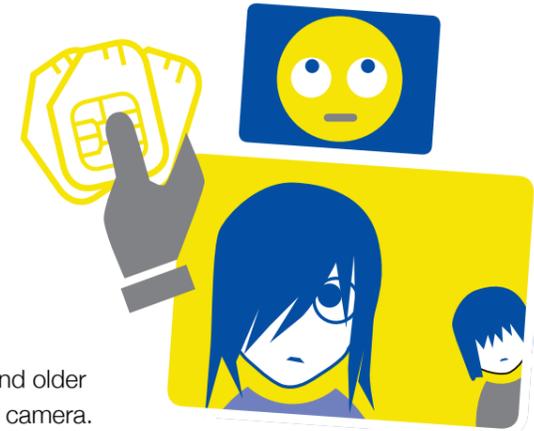


10. What has been the biggest challenge to maintaining contact with the children you work with?



### Other comments regarding challenges:

- young people having more than one SIM card
- difficult to keep child's attention online
- meeting children for the first time over the phone
- building a trusting relationship over the phone
- getting to know new children and building a rapport via virtual contact or via telephone
- getting a true understanding and picture of children's lived experiences while parents are present at home
- younger children can find online contact frightening and older young people can feel self-conscious about being on camera.



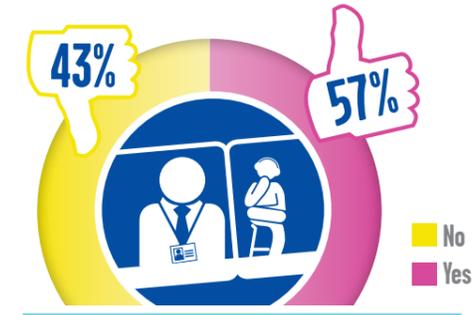
11. How do you feel about the amount of contact you had with the children you work with?

12. What did you like most about contact with children / young people during lockdown?

- video calls were fun, although the novelty wore off for young people after some time
- relaxed conversation
- more frequent contact than before lockdown, although sometimes it was brief
- greater flexibility of call times
- seeing how young people rose to the challenge of lockdown
- using more technology and WhatsApp
- learning and adapting to new ways of working
- how all partner agencies have worked together
- using young people's way to keep in contact: WhatsApp, emails and mobile calls

13. What did you like the least?

- not being able to offer face to face support
- not being able to observe the child in their home environment
- meetings with interpreters via video or telephone
- engaging with children under 5 who would often run away from the camera and lose attention
- feeling disconnected and unable to read body language and assess feelings
- not being able to help UASC with filling in forms
- not being able to develop an effective rapport with parents and children new to the service
- IT issues with connections



8. Do you prefer meetings by video link (Skype, Zoom, Teams)?

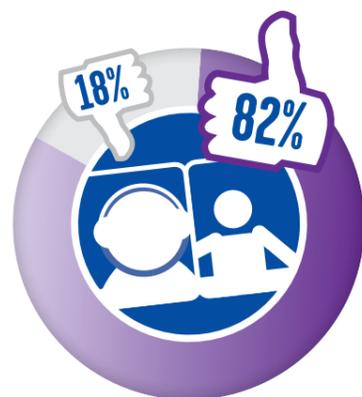


# Key findings

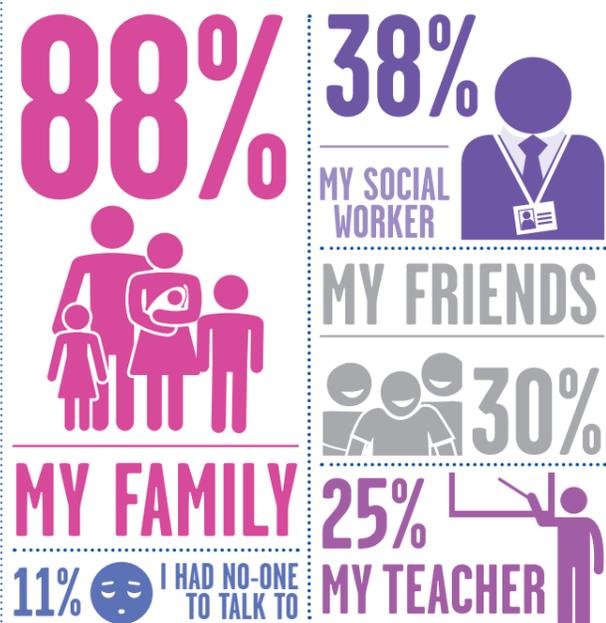
## 2 EXPERIENCE OF SUPPORT FROM THE SOCIAL WORK SERVICE

1. Did you have someone to talk to if you were worried?

Yes No



3. If you were worried about something during lockdown, who did you talk to?



2. How do you feel about the amount of contact you have had with your social worker / advisor during lockdown?

IT WAS MORE CONTACT THAN USUAL

11%

20%

IT WAS NOT ENOUGH CONTACT

0%

IT WAS LESS CONTACT THAN USUAL

0%

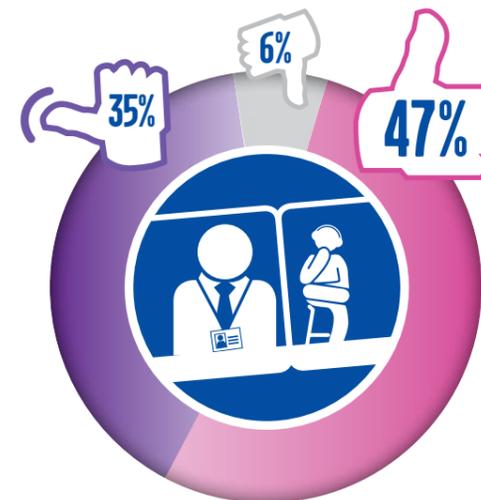
IT WAS TOO MUCH CONTACT

70%

IT WAS THE SAME AS USUAL

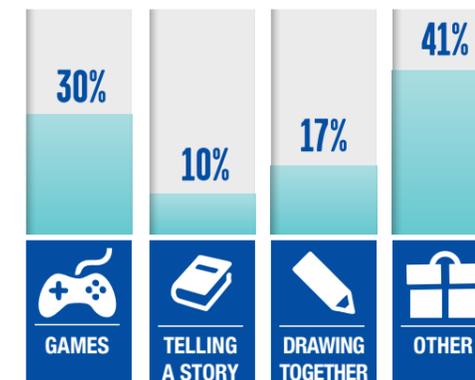


4. Did you feel supported by your social worker or personal advisor during lockdown?



Yes No Not sure

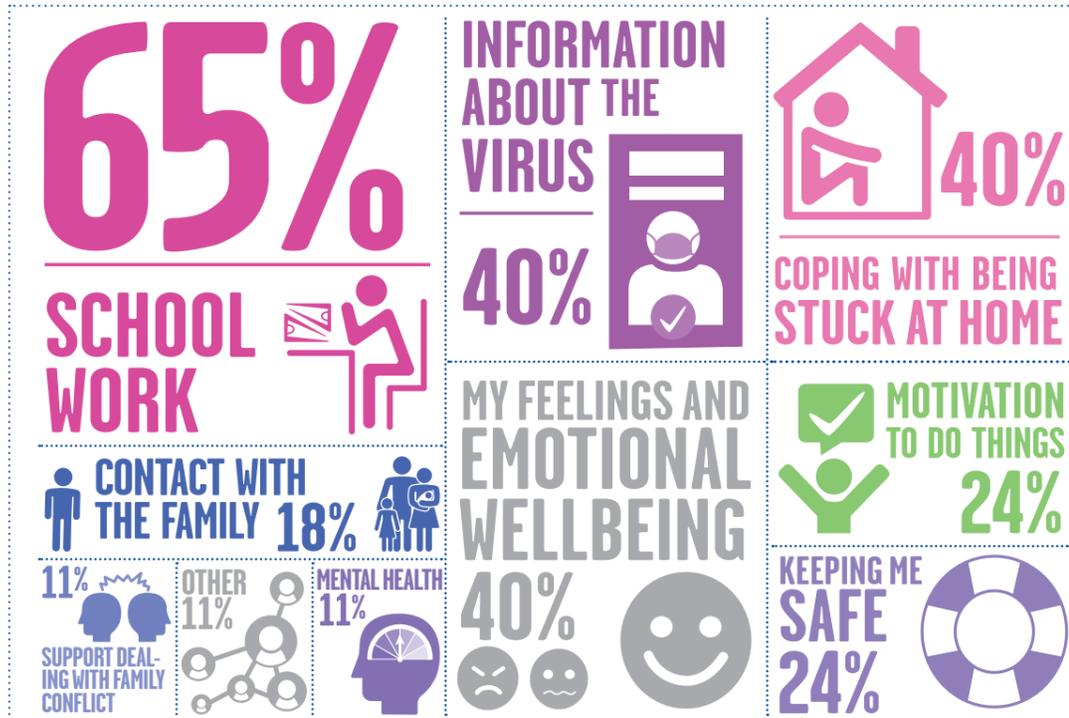
5. What activities did you do together with your social worker during lockdown?



Other activities:

- Life story work
- I received a box of activities from my social worker to have fun with.

6. What support and help did you need most during lockdown?

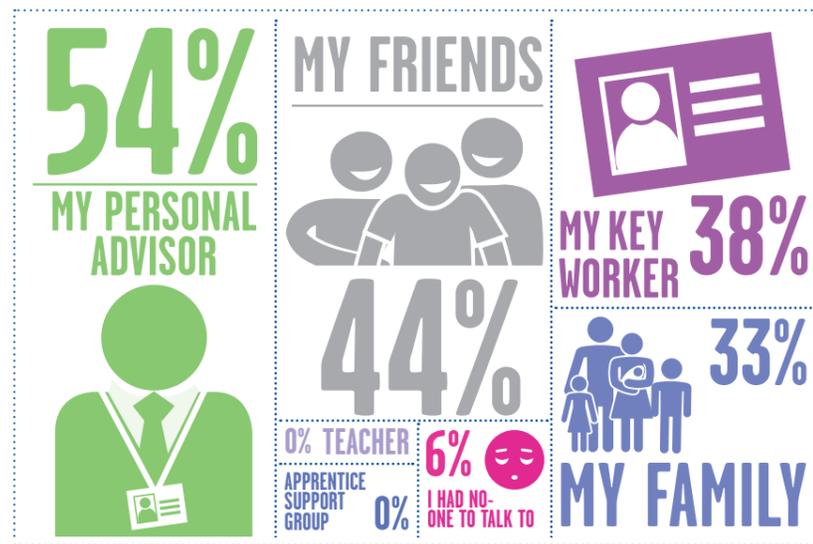




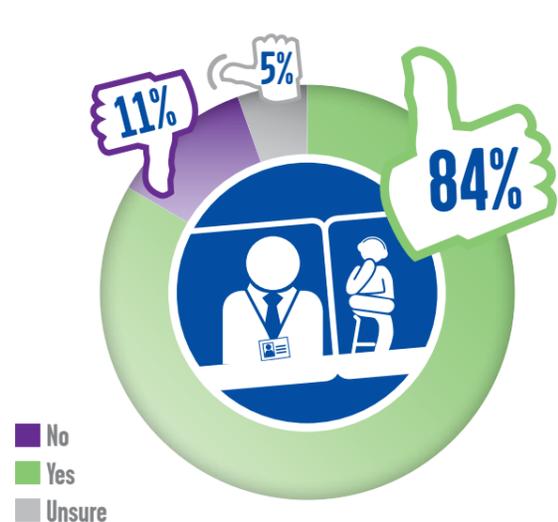
# Key findings

## 2 EXPERIENCE OF SUPPORT FROM THE SOCIAL WORK SERVICE

7. If you were worried about something during lockdown, who did you talk to?



8. Did you feel supported by your social worker or personal advisor during lockdown?



### Other comments

- If I ever had a bad day or wanted some advice all I had to do was give my PA a message and I would get a reply quickly, giving me reassurance and advice
- My PA encouraged me to continue therapy during lockdown and talked me through my concerns
- They made sure my health was stable during lockdown
- I needed a place to stay and the social worker helped me to get a place
- I had help with a change of the room in Pathways
- I had help to find a place at college
- My PA kept trying to support me with finding courses, activities to do and helped me to find a job
- I felt supported in terms of having food delivered to my door and having someone to talk to

- My PA helped me through each key step where I needed help
- My PA always stayed in contact during this pandemic, always asking about my health and education
- My social worker helped me with Universal Credit.

### 9. What do you think would have made the support better?

- Meeting in person if it was allowed
- Help to find a job after the lockdown
- I need more ongoing help with my mental health
- Help with things such as books, laptop, learning support
- Meeting my PA in person but it was not possible due to COVID-19
- Financial support because £57 per week was not enough money during lockdown.

10. What support and help did you need most during lockdown?

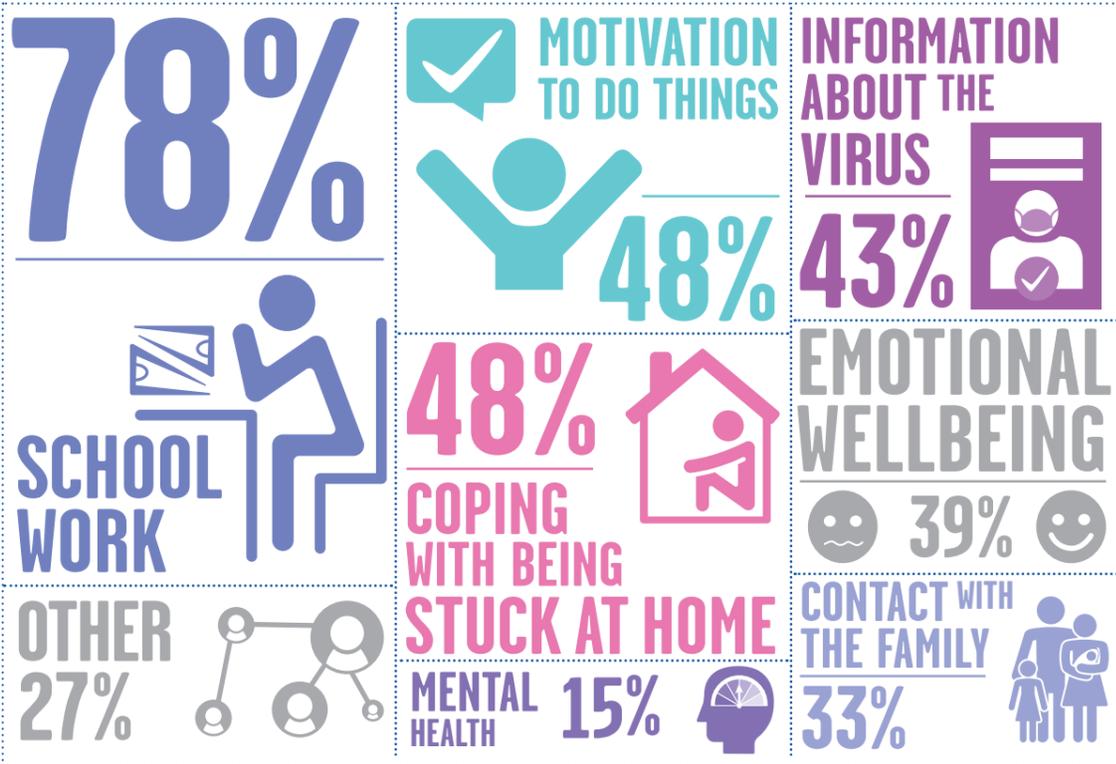




## Key findings

# 2 EXPERIENCE OF SUPPORT FROM THE SOCIAL WORK SERVICE

### 11. What support and help did your child need most during lockdown?

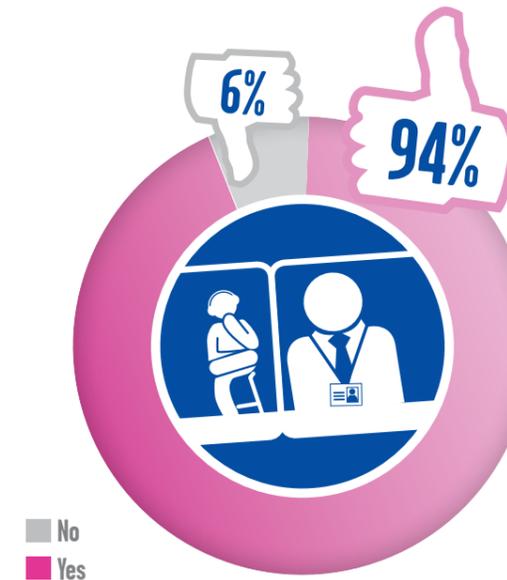


#### Other comments

- Zoom sessions with teacher, therapy sessions and engaging with some activities at home regularly
- Reassurance that things would get back to normal when lockdown eased up
- Flexible use of Direct Payments helped a lot as none of the respite or short breaks were going on.



### 12. Did you feel supported by your child's social worker or personal advisor during lockdown?



#### Other comments

- I was supported by my social worker and the fostering team
- I knew that my social worker was always at the end of the phone if I needed her
- There was regular contact
- My social worker was always available and supportive
- Social worker kept in regular contact with us and tried to ensure that we understood what was taking place
- Social worker listened to my worries.

### 13. What do you think would have made the support better for you and your child?

- Face to face contact with social distancing
- Intrusive and at times overbearing
- Social workers have done everything that they possibly could do during the lockdown
- If the contact was more immediate to help me reinforce lockdown rules to the child
- More short contact via phone/Zoom for about 10-15 minutes
- To have been based in the borough where our social worker is based. She could have supported us differently and we could have accessed more services
- Supportive letter from the team leader and telephone call with social worker
- Some space to be more like a normal family. There was so much contact that it clashed with what we wanted to do as a family.

### 14. What did you like most about the contact with your child's social worker during lockdown?

- A mix of face to face and online contact is a good balance. Less important issues can be dealt with by phone/email/Skype and more important issues should be dealt with in person
- Having time and space to talk about what happened before going into the refuge
- They listened to my suggestions of what I thought would be helpful for my child
- The children were happy to get their laptops
- The fact that even during COVID-19, the meetings were taking place
- That social workers were still there for any issues to be resolved
- To know that there was still support if needed
- It was ok but I prefer face to face contact
- Being able to be on the phone at any time
- Virtual meetings were easier than face to face.



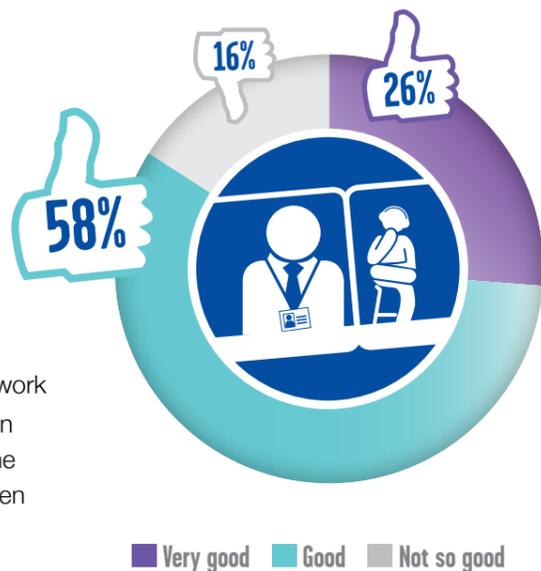
# Key findings

## 2 EXPERIENCE OF SUPPORT FROM THE SOCIAL WORK SERVICE

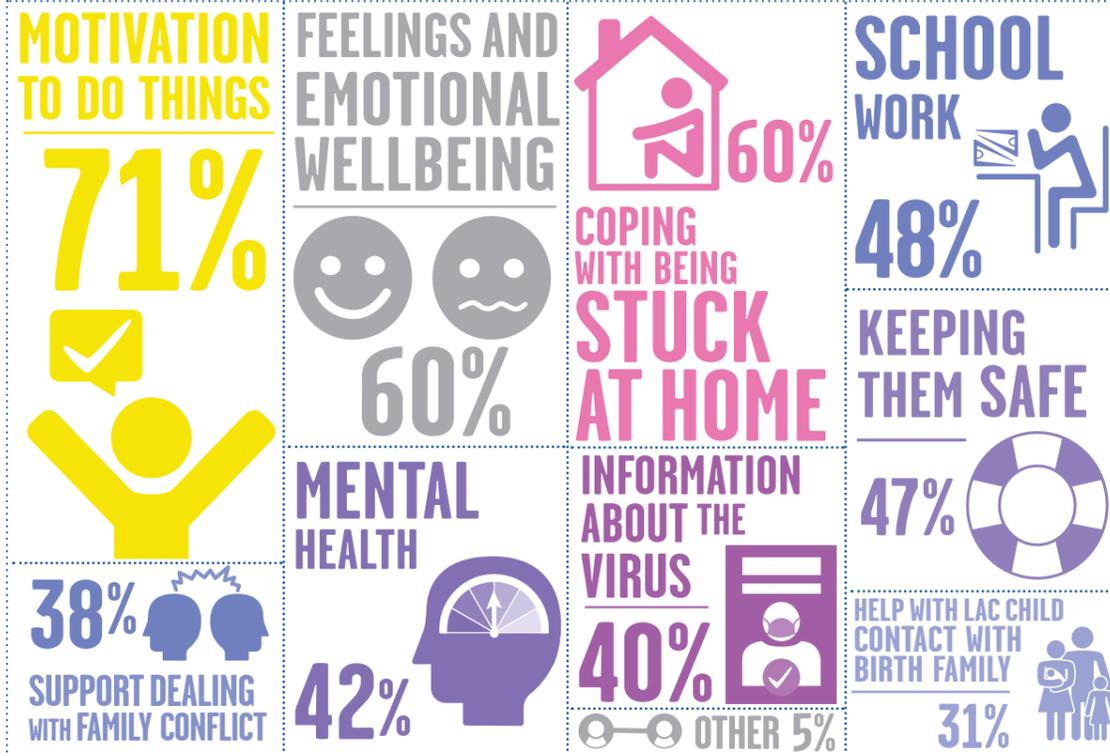
15. If you had a child protection meeting, looked after children or children in need review during lockdown, we would like to know what your experience was.

### Other comments

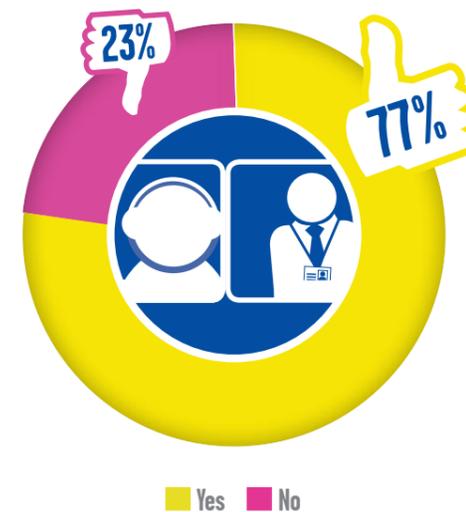
- It was different but ok though I would prefer face to face meetings
- It was fine if the technology worked
- Good contact with the social worker
- Meeting was conducted very thoroughly and it was a positive experience
- It was easier, as didn't have to travel to London
- I could convey my thoughts to a professional network
- It was difficult to have an interpreter involved when using Teams. The social worker called me after the meeting to ensure that I understood what had been discussed and if I wanted to add anything.



16. What support and help did the children you work with need the most during lockdown?



17. Have you had a child protection meeting, looked after children or children in need review during lockdown?



### Other comments

- Younger children can find online contact frightening and older young people can feel self-conscious about being on the camera
- Getting to know new children and building a rapport via virtual contact or via telephone.

18. What was your experience of meetings over video link?





# Key findings

## 2 EXPERIENCE OF SUPPORT FROM THE SOCIAL WORK SERVICE

### 19. Please say why your experience of video meetings was good.

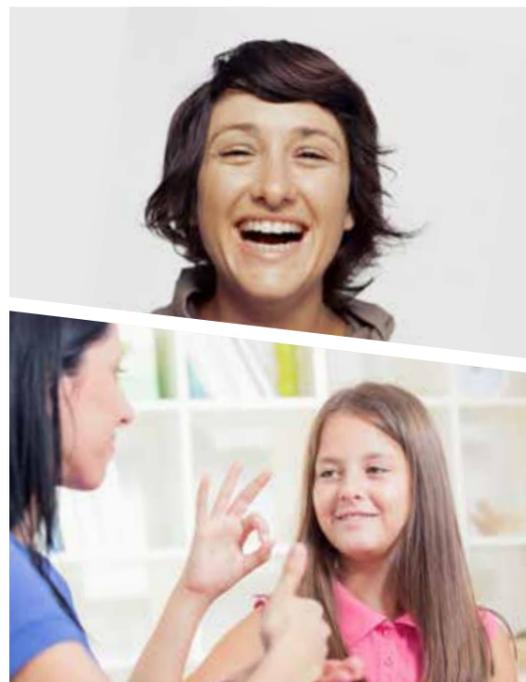
**It was very good or good because:**

- Great to see the young person fully engaged in conversation
- Meetings were usually well attended partly due to not having to travel for meetings
- Professionals are available quicker at shorter notice when meetings take place virtually. The information shared in these meetings is very succinct and purposeful
- Good attendance by key professionals and family members
- Some young people prefer this format and contribute better than in a face to face meeting
- Younger children enjoy video time but find it difficult to focus for a longer time.

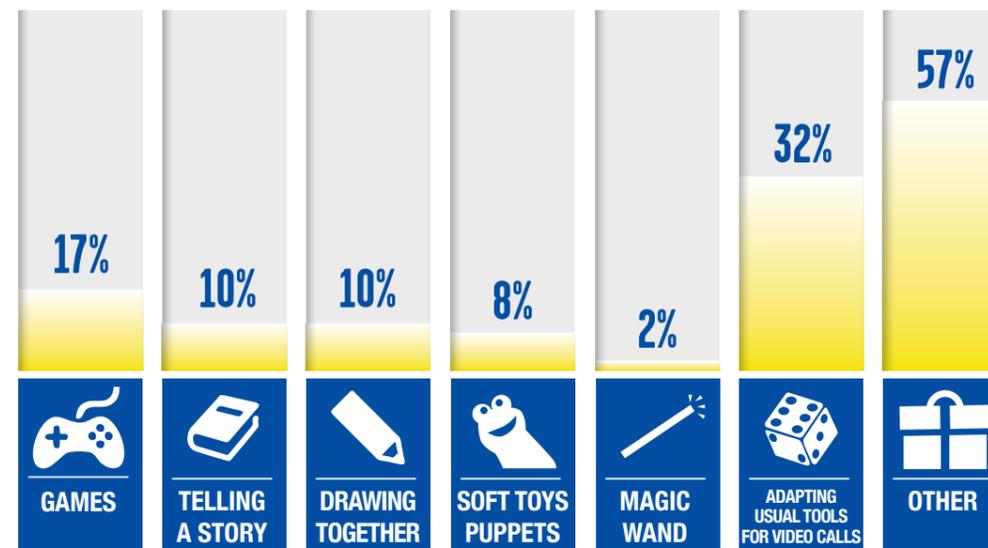
**It was not so good because:**

- Challenges with using interpreters
- Conducting initial child protection conference remotely can make it difficult for parents to understand what it really means. It requires additional follow up calls with parents
- Reviews for looked after children are an opportunity to see the child with his or her carers and the interaction between them. This was lacking in online reviews
- Hard to have difficult and sensitive conversations via video or phone with young people and families and ensure that their voice has been heard and understood
- Difficulties with WiFi bandwidth and internet connections

- Not all children and young people and adults feel at ease with online interactions. It varies between different age groups
- Very difficult to read body language and cues
- It is hard to give emotional support via video link
- Families whose first language was not English found it difficult to engage with different services such as health, welfare.



### 19. What direct work tools have you used during lockdown to maintain support for your children and young people?



**Other tools used by social workers during lockdown:**

- reading books together
- playing with toys on the video link
- joint work with another social worker for risk mapping on the video link
- sending creative activity packs to children.





# Key findings

## 3 EXPERIENCE OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND WORK DURING LOCKDOWN

1. Were you attending school or college during lockdown?

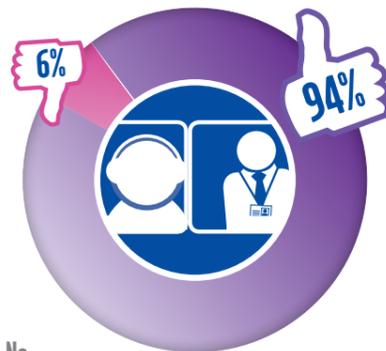


■ No  
■ Yes

If no, please say why:

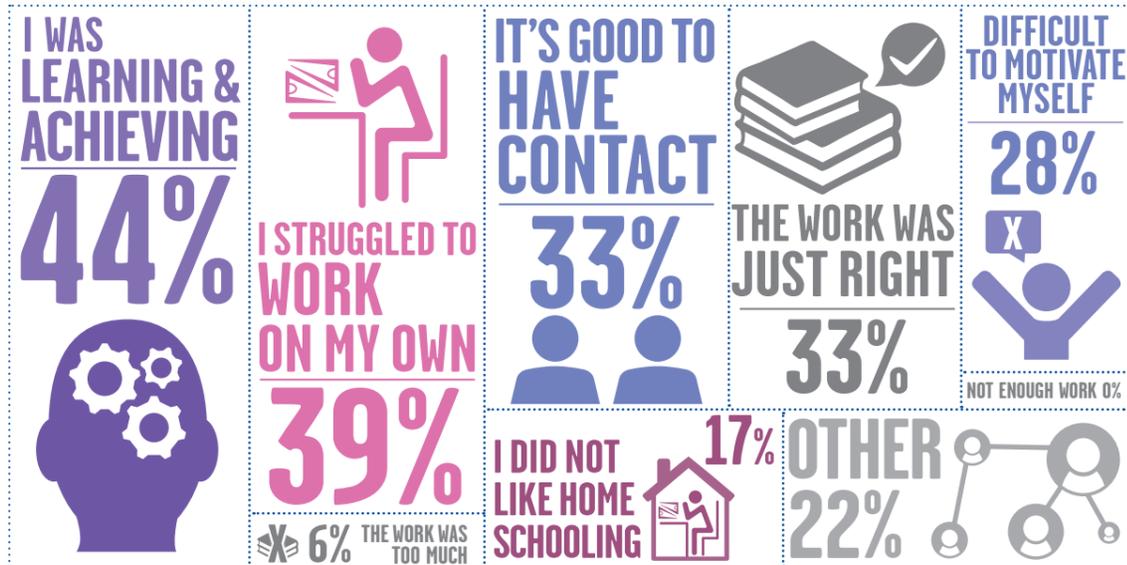
- I prefer to work at home, it is safer
- I was not attending school due to my health problems
- I was not going to school because my school is too far to travel to during lockdown.

2. Have you been doing school or college work online during lockdown?

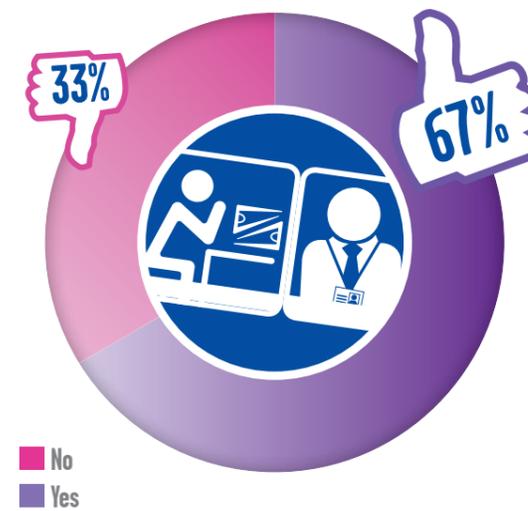


■ No  
■ Yes

3. If you have taken part in home schooling or online lessons, please say how you felt about schoolwork online?

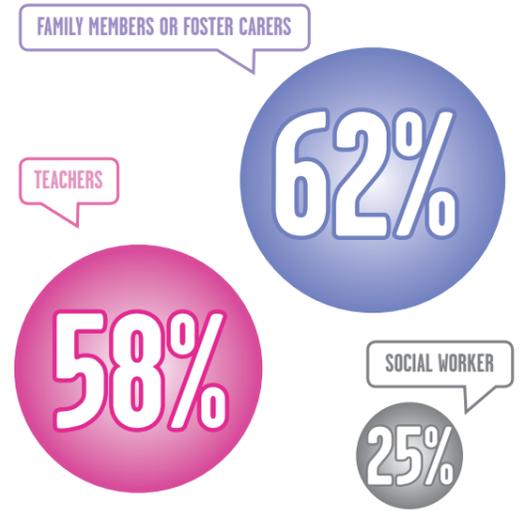


4. Did you feel you had support with home schooling?



■ No  
■ Yes

5. If yes, who did you have the most support from?

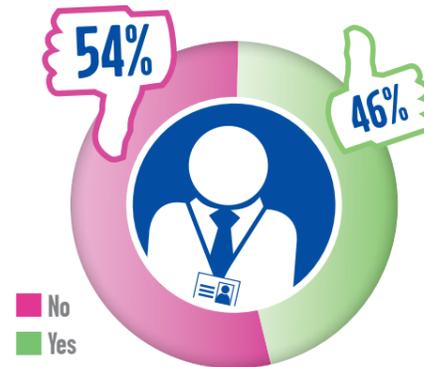




## Key findings

# 3 EXPERIENCE OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND WORK DURING LOCKDOWN

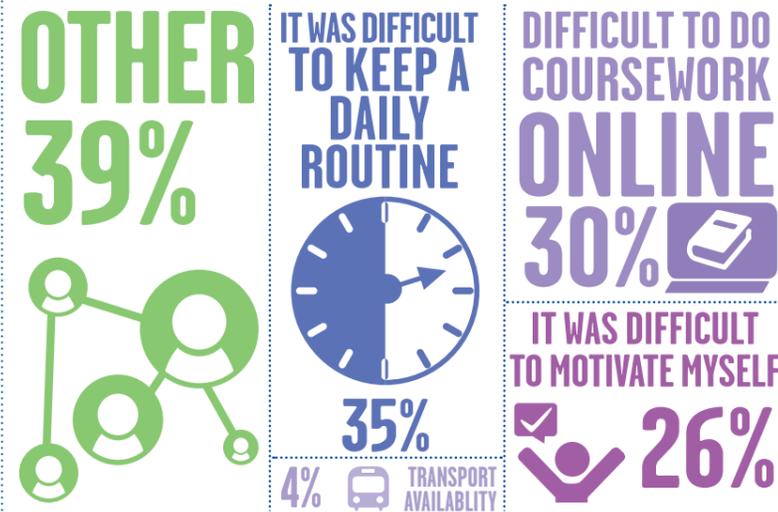
6. Have you been able to continue with college, apprenticeship, training or university during lockdown?



8. If you were in employment before the lockdown have you been able to continue working during lockdown?



7. If no, please say why.

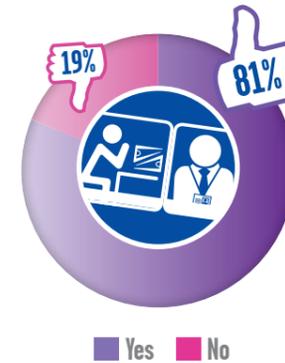


**Other reasons why young people could not continue with education, apprenticeship and training during lockdown:**

- university applications were on hold
- could not do practical assessment of the course
- closure of nurseries and I had to take care of my child
- there was no online option for the football coach course college was closed.



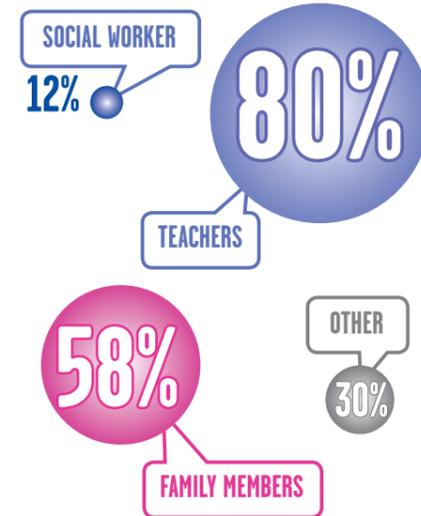
9. Has your child been doing school work or college work during lockdown?



10. Do you feel your child has support with schooling?



11. If yes, who did he/she have support from?

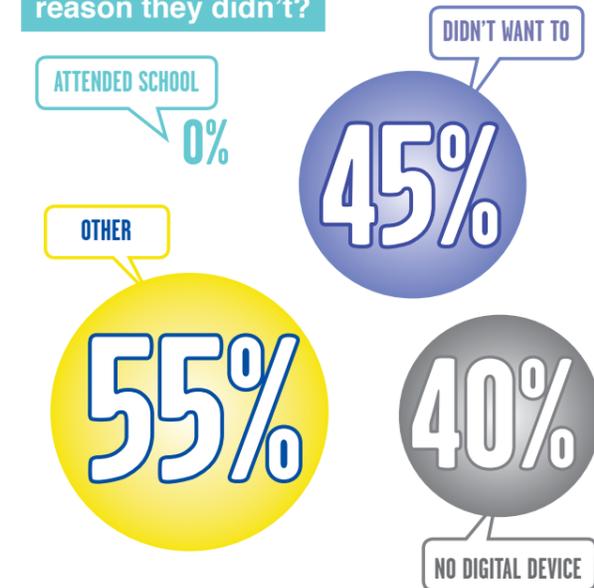


## FEEDBACK FROM SOCIAL WORKERS AND PERSONAL ADVISORS

12. Did most of the children you work with do school or college work online during lockdown?



13. If no, what was the main reason they didn't?



**If no, please say why:**

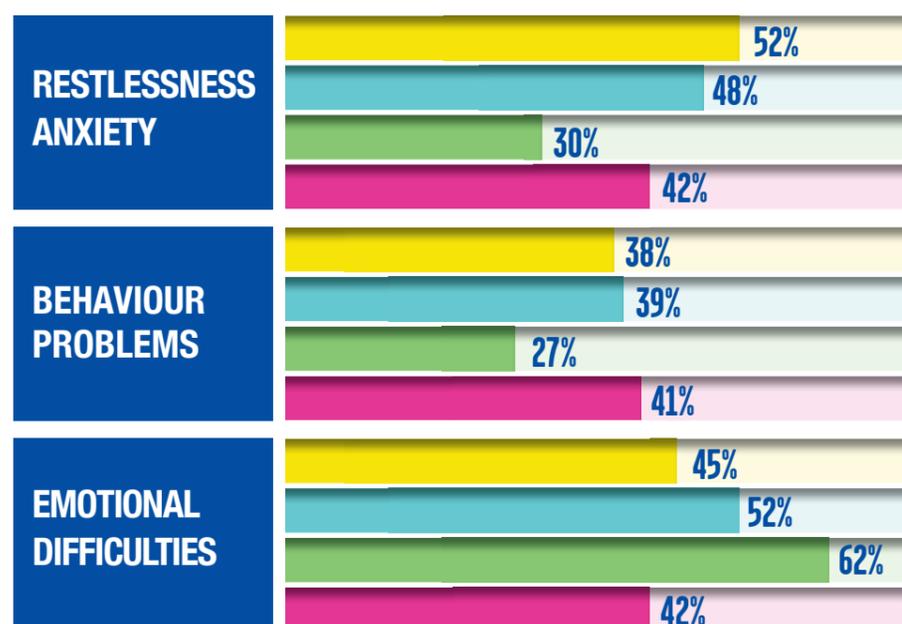
- Missing / absent from placement
- Lack of motivation and structure
- Limited support from their family.



# Key findings

## 4 EMOTIONAL WELLBEING, BEHAVIOUR OR ATTENTION DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED DURING LOCKDOWN

1. Have you or your child experienced any of the following as a result of the lockdown?



2. Please state why, in your view, there has been an increase / decrease in children's experiences of emotional, behavioural or attention difficulties.

### Emotional wellbeing

Observed causes of an increase in emotional difficulties

- an increase in parental stress and stress at home
- changes of routine and support from school
- missing out on consistent contact with people who are important to children
- lack of positive feedback from school
- missing out on the safe space due to school's closure
- pre-existing condition
- recent traumatic experiences of UASC
- difficulties with completing school work at home.

### Emotional wellbeing

Observed causes of a decrease in emotional difficulties

- no peer pressure at school and from friends
- spending more time with the family
- thriving on attention from carers/parents.

### Restlessness

Observed causes of an increase in restlessness and attention difficulties

- interruption of social activities
- interruption of education and school routine
- reduction of physical activities
- fear of the virus
- not understanding change of routine for children and young people with ADHD.

### Behavioural problems

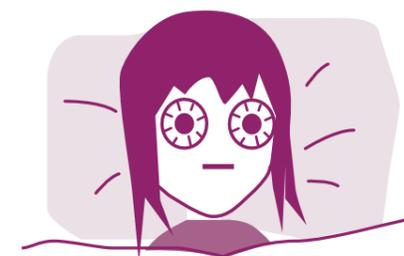
Observed causes of behaviour problems

- change of sleeping pattern and lack of routine
- stress around health risks
- lack of outdoor / extracurricular activities
- challenges of online learning
- increased feeling of vulnerability
- not understanding change of routine for children with ADHD or learning difficulties.

### Feedback from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) team

For looked after children and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

- The team had a major spike in referrals at the beginning of the pandemic
- The UASCs were struggling with lockdown, as for many it re-triggers traumatic experiences
- The older children have presented with low mood, anxiety, low self-esteem and withdrawal from social support
- Placements which may have not been easy before lockdown have become more disrupted
- Relationships within their homes become more intense and stressed.





# Key findings

## 4 EMOTIONAL WELLBEING, BEHAVIOUR OR ATTENTION DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED DURING LOCKDOWN

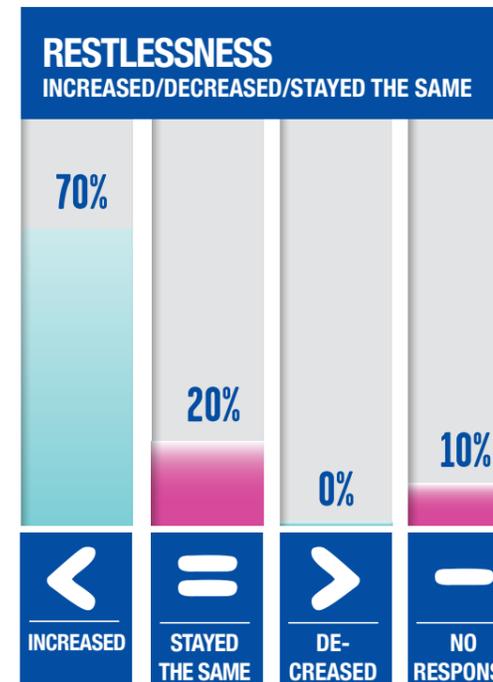
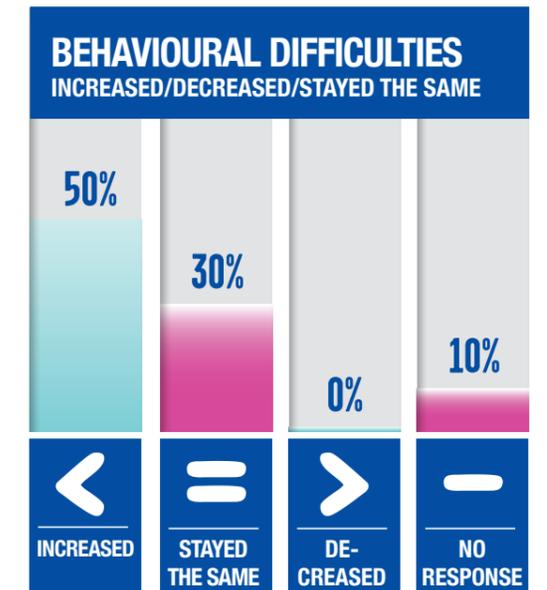
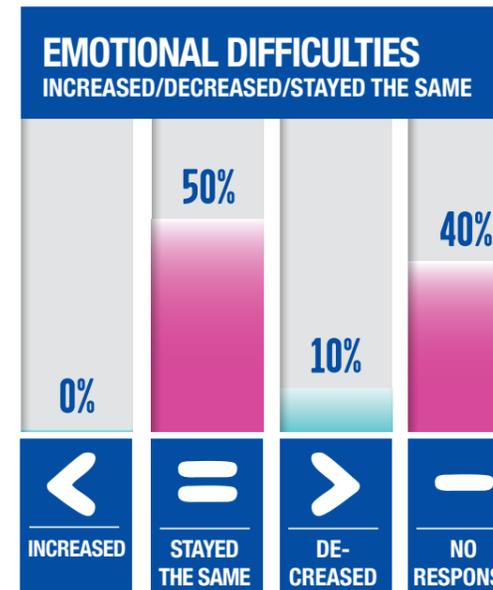
### Other comments:

- Emotional difficulties have increased - having a routine makes it easier to deal with anxiety or depression
- Being alone had a massive effect on my behaviour and attention difficulties
- Anxiety levels have increased for our special needs child due to **disruption of the daily routine**
- Behaviour and restlessness have **decreased** once we were able to establish a new routine
- Our child's behaviour and attention difficulties have increased due to **lack of social interactions**
- Emotional difficulties have decreased as the child seemed more settled in her placement. Restlessness and attention difficulties did not decrease
- Emotional difficulties and behaviour problems have increased.

**BEING ALONE HAD A MASSIVE EFFECT ON MY BEHAVIOUR AND ATTENTION DIFFICULTIES.**



## 2. How has lockdown affected children's emotional wellbeing and behaviour?

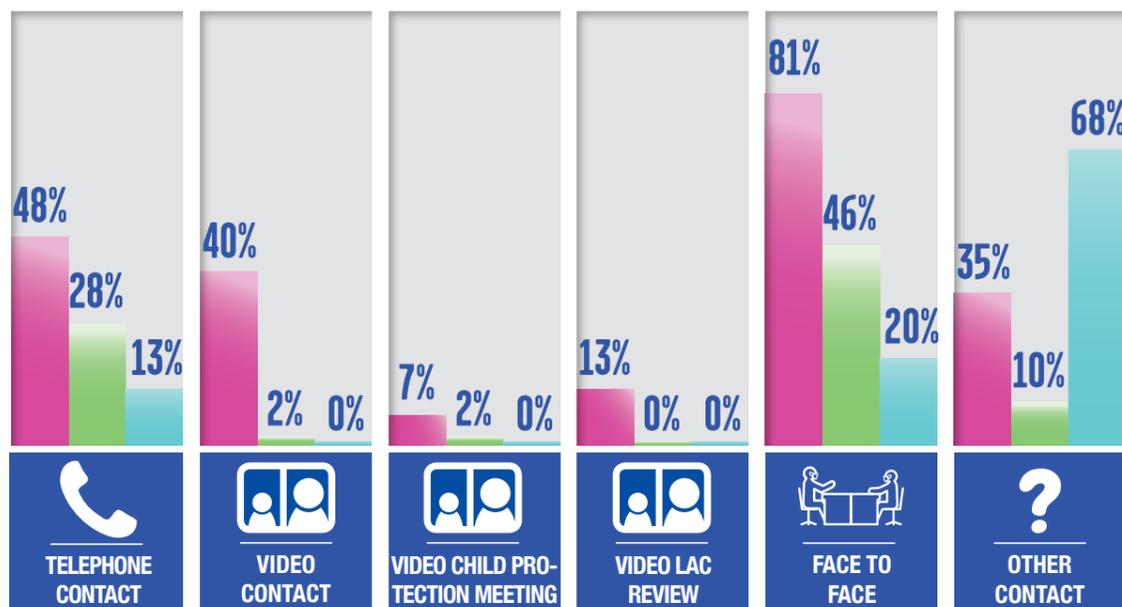


# Key findings

## 5 SOCIAL CARE SUPPORT AFTER LOCKDOWN

### 1. How would you like your social worker or PA to keep in touch after lockdown?

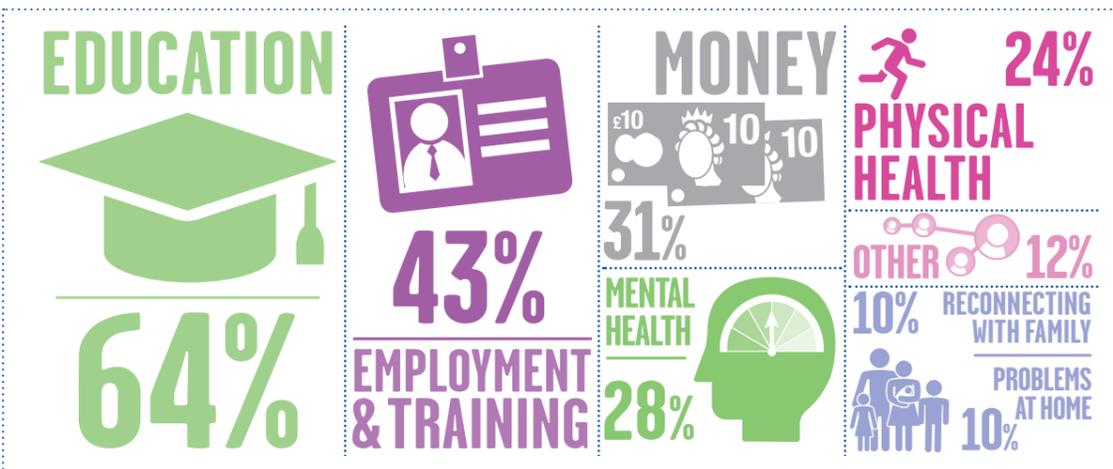
Children and young people  
Care leavers  
Parents/carers



### FEEDBACK FROM CARE LEAVERS



### 2. What help or information do you think you will need after lockdown?



## Top tips

### FROM YOUNG PEOPLE ON HOW TO MANAGE FUTURE LOCKDOWN

#### Managing a future lockdown

- Have a daily routine
- Stay active and do physical activities
- Have hobbies and interests
- Learn mindfulness to help you with your mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Keep social contact with friends
- Keep contact with family
- Have a plan of what you would like to achieve
- Get back to education, training, apprenticeship
- Ask for help and information
- Find something new to do every day
- Continue your school and college work during the lockdown.

## Support

### HAS THE LOCKDOWN HIGHLIGHTED ANY ADDITIONAL TRAINING OR SUPPORT YOU THINK SOCIAL WORKERS AND PERSONAL ADVISORS WOULD BENEFIT FROM?

Feedback from social workers and personal advisors has highlighted the following areas of training and support:

- Impact of lockdown on mental health and poverty awareness
- Building emotional resilience while working in private spaces
- Building effective relationships using virtual contact
- Being able to identify signs of stress via video call. Understanding of how to safely approach domestic violence when the perpetrator is in the home.

#### Direct work

- Ideas/tips/techniques/ on online resources on virtual direct work with children and families
- Work equipment/software to support virtual work and meaningful engagement.

## Messages

### FROM SOCIAL WORKERS AND PERSONAL ADVISORS

#### Messages

Based on your experience of supporting children and young people during lockdown, what would you like to change in the way we work with families after lockdown?

- Inclusion of the option for virtual work alongside face to face
- Consider conducting meetings online such as panel meetings, strategy meetings and core groups
- Involve young people in the midway review with the social worker and independent reviewing officer
- Consider online consultation forms
- Use of creative online tools for direct work and virtual direct work
- Use more technology in order to engage children and families
- More sensitivity about the pressures and challenges that living together 24/7 presents in families
- Maintain face-to-face contact in assessing children's emotional wellbeing and assessing children's experience of stability.

# Rosie

I enjoyed meeting the team and working together with other young people. It was interesting interviewing professionals and learning how they had to adapt to working differently during the COVID-19 lockdown. My dream is to become a social worker and it was good to learn how they adapt in times like these and are still able to help children. One of the most valuable things about the project was hearing from young people and children who felt that they were well supported. It was great to hear that! I found it challenging working from home as I get easily distracted.

**Young Inspectors team co-leader**



# Jenny

Working as a team is always fun. Joking and supporting each other through the project makes it a lot more enjoyable. Working on the project mostly online had its challenges. However, communication was a lot easier than I thought it would be. Working online was a whole new experience and allowed me to learn how to use different formats and learn new skills. Every time, in the most positive way, I am really happy about the care and work that social services has put in to help young people. I have always wanted to work and help others and bring awareness to important issues. This project always allows me to work on new and current issues for children and young people. The most valuable thing for me was highlighting issues for young people in care who are easily pushed under the radar and putting it in the report for people to read, understand and learn.

**Young Inspectors team co-leader**

# Tasmin



I enjoyed working with the other team members, because the communication between all of us was really good and flowed easily. This project was also a new learning experience for me. I learnt a lot about the care system. I did not know how many different roles there are for the service Camden provides. It was challenging to keep working online, taking notes and doing interviews with managers and social workers through video conferences. It was a first time for me. The reduced physical contact we have had within our group was also something new and I needed to adjust to. I find it is easier to work with others in person compared to virtually and through emails. My time keeping and organisation skills have definitely improved because of the project. I am also more aware of the service provided for looked after children and how decisions and meetings are handled. The amount of consideration and focus that is pushed towards the young person or child surprised me. I did not know the amount of work social workers had and the network around them involved with their young person. COVID-19 and lockdown has resulted in services finding different ways of working and of supporting children and families. It has also brought to light issues such as digital poverty. This project has made me appreciate how easy it is for me to communicate and adapt to different personalities, from other team members to the professionals we interviewed. My personal targets have slightly changed after knowing more about the support and service that is there for me even after leaving care. What I found most valuable about this project is the knowledge that I have learnt from the past two weeks and the opportunity to be a part of something that could help not just young people and children, but staff as well.

**Young Inspector**

# Levon



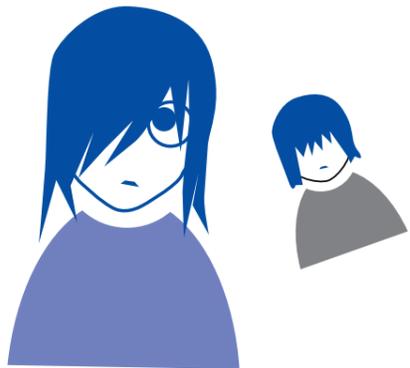
The things I found most enjoyable about doing the project focused on being part of a group to accomplish a singular goal. Finding out essential information and learning new facts, that I had never even considered before, makes being part of the Young Inspectors team exciting. It also compelled me to think about the way we view our social services team and children in need in a different light. My main problem was time-management and meeting young people. At times it was difficult to get online in time for the meeting. I am also shy in large groups of people I don't know. The new skills that I have learnt are time-management, working as a team, critical thinking, analysis and organising meetings. The project has changed my perception of the social work service. Some of the information I gathered regarding children in care and the struggles of being quarantined, were things I had already known from my Children in Care Council meetings. However, I had not expected that there would be so much stress, activity and pressure on social workers working in the background to ensure that vulnerable children and children in care were able to attend school, get tuition, be safe and have contact with social workers. The most valuable thing about the project is that this report will be used to make a change and make improvements within the social care system.

**Young Inspector**

## KEY THEMES



*'Unaccompanied children found lockdown particularly difficult.'*



**YOUNGER CHILDREN SEEMED TO PREFER FACE TO FACE CONTACT, WHILST TEENAGERS FOUND TELEPHONE/ VIDEO CONTACT SATISFACTORY.**



# KEY THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Emerging themes

The coronavirus lockdown posed many challenges for the social work service, children and their families. In spite of the difficult circumstances, services responded promptly to the challenge to ensure that the safeguarding of children and the meeting of their needs remained at the centre of the response.

All staff interviewed by the Young Inspectors team spoke highly of the level of commitment of colleagues across the entire service, including the Virtual School and the CAMHS team working with looked after children. Partnership working was perceived to have continued with a high level of engagement.

The Young Inspectors team identified the following emerging themes:

1. Feedback received from children, young people and care leavers tells us that they felt supported by their social workers and personal advisors during lockdown and that they received either more or the same level of contact from them as usual.
2. Feedback from parents and foster carers highlights appreciation of the type and level of support they have received during this difficult and challenging time.
3. There is a good case to consider holding meetings via video link as an option for child protection, looked after children and child in need reviews. This is based on the feedback received from children, families and staff on how the wide range of devices were used in communication with children, young people and families during lockdown.
4. The preferences of children and young people with regard to communication with social workers depended on their age group. Younger children seemed to prefer face to face contact, whilst teenagers found telephone or video contact satisfactory.
5. Feedback from care leavers highlighted the following areas they needed most support with: financial assistance, mental health, motivation to do things and coping with isolation.
6. Responses to questionnaires, feedback from young people and national research suggests that younger children experienced an increase in emotional difficulties, while teenagers had fewer emotional difficulties but increased restlessness, poor attention, behaviour and low self-esteem issues. The increase of restlessness and behaviour difficulties has also been observed in children with learning needs by parents and social workers.
7. Unaccompanied children appear to have found lockdown particularly difficult due to the isolation they felt as a consequence of not having contact with their family and community support groups. Also, for many UASC it triggered memories of traumatic experiences.
8. The CAMHS LAC mental health team provided increased support to foster carers and key workers in Pathways due to the need to address issues of heightened anxiety levels during lockdown.
9. Online video meetings and one-to-one contacts with children and parents raised new challenges for social workers in terms of managing confidentiality and the need to be aware of who else might be in the room with the child or the parent they were talking to.

# KEY THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key recommendations for support services post-lockdown arising from this inspection are:

- 1 To provide an option of using video / online links with children and young people, where appropriate and where it a choice of the child and family.
- 2 To consider conducting some meetings with professionals online, such as panel meetings, strategy meetings and core groups and to consider hybrid review meetings, with some participants online and others in the room.
- 3 To consider how children and young people can be encouraged to participate in child protection meetings, including a video call option to hear their voice in decision-making.
- 4 To support care leavers to re-connect with their activities and commitments, including getting back to education, training and employment.
- 5 To review the support provided by Pathways and Pathways key workers.
- 6 To raise awareness of the impact of lockdown on the mental health of children, young people and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.
- 7 To provide accessible information for young people on relaxation techniques and mindfulness.
- 8 To provide tools and resources for social workers to help build their own emotional resilience.
- 9 To provide more training for social workers on using technology for creative tools in direct work with children.



If you would like to be a **Young Inspector** or would like to know more about the project, please email [elzbieta.chandrasena@camden.gov.uk](mailto:elzbieta.chandrasena@camden.gov.uk) or contact us via [www.backchatonline.org.uk](http://www.backchatonline.org.uk)