

Petitions Committee: Making Friday part of the school weekend

Activity

The Petitions Committee ran an online survey to ask petitioners about how making Friday part of the school weekend would affect them.

This survey was conducted to inform a debate on a petition on this issue, to be held on 27 June 2022.

The survey was sent to people who signed the following petition:

[Require schools to make Friday a part of the school weekend](#)

We have summarised the key themes below and illustrated them with quotes from respondents.

Response

There were **2,865** complete responses to the Committee's survey

Responsibility for education policy

As education policy is devolved, the UK Government is only responsible for education policy for England. This would include any decision to make Friday part of the school weekend. Only responses from people who told us they lived in England are therefore included in this summary. We gave people who told us they lived in Northern Ireland, Scotland, or Wales information on how to raise their views about the school week with their local representatives.

Methodology

NVivo Pro 12 (a data analysis software) was used to identify and contextualise the most common words and phrases in responses to open questions in the survey. This allowed us to group and summarise recurring themes which were threaded throughout much of the responses.

In addition to this analysis of the data, Committee staff manually reviewed hundreds of individual comments and answers, using both subject searches and randomised selection.

Survey questions which produced statistical results have been included in the summaries of key themes.

Contents

- [About the respondents](#)

Key themes:

- [Many of the students who responded said they were struggling to cope with the school week](#)
 - [The majority of respondents were highly supportive of making Friday part of the school weekend](#)
 - [Students felt that making Friday part of the school weekend would have a particularly positive effect on their mental health](#)
 - [Students said that if they weren't in school, they would spend the most time on Fridays with family and friends, or doing homework or studying](#)
 - [Most parents felt that making Friday part of the school weekend would have a positive effect on their children, and on themselves](#)
 - [Parents said they would be most likely to change their working patterns to look after their children, if they were not in school on Fridays](#)
 - [Respondents suggested other associated changes to the school week that could mitigate the impact of making Friday part of the school weekend](#)
 - [Some respondents suggested alternative changes the Government could make to reduce the demands of the school weekend](#)
-

About the respondents

- The vast majority of respondents (92%) told us they were **students** at a primary or secondary school. 5% told us they were a **parent** or **guardian** of a student. 2% told us they were a **teacher** and member of school staff. Other respondents included **other family members or carers of students, college students**, and **members of the general public**.

Key themes:

Many of the students who responded said they were struggling to cope with the school week

- 260 (11%) of the students who responded told us students were suffering from **'stress'**

Quotes

Student: "I personally believe that getting up at 6 am every morning for school for a whole 5 days when the brain hasn't even fully woken up yet is too tiring for a young person's mental AND physical health."

Student: "Right now, when I walk through the gates of school, I get itchy skin and the bottom of my jaw goes bumpy from stress. I'm not sure what it's called but it's something about stress."

Student: "Some weekends I can't even fit homework in which requires me to have to wake up extra early in the morning or stay up extra late at night in order to get it done which leaves me exhausted for the next day. It just feels like a never ending cycle and that I am drowning in responsibilities."

Student: "The waiting list for CAMHS is over a year long, and so much of our generation has been struck with depression, anxiety and other mental health problems. Going back to school may have exacerbated these already hard problems, and so if this was put into place, it would indeed have a positive impact on our mental and physical health."

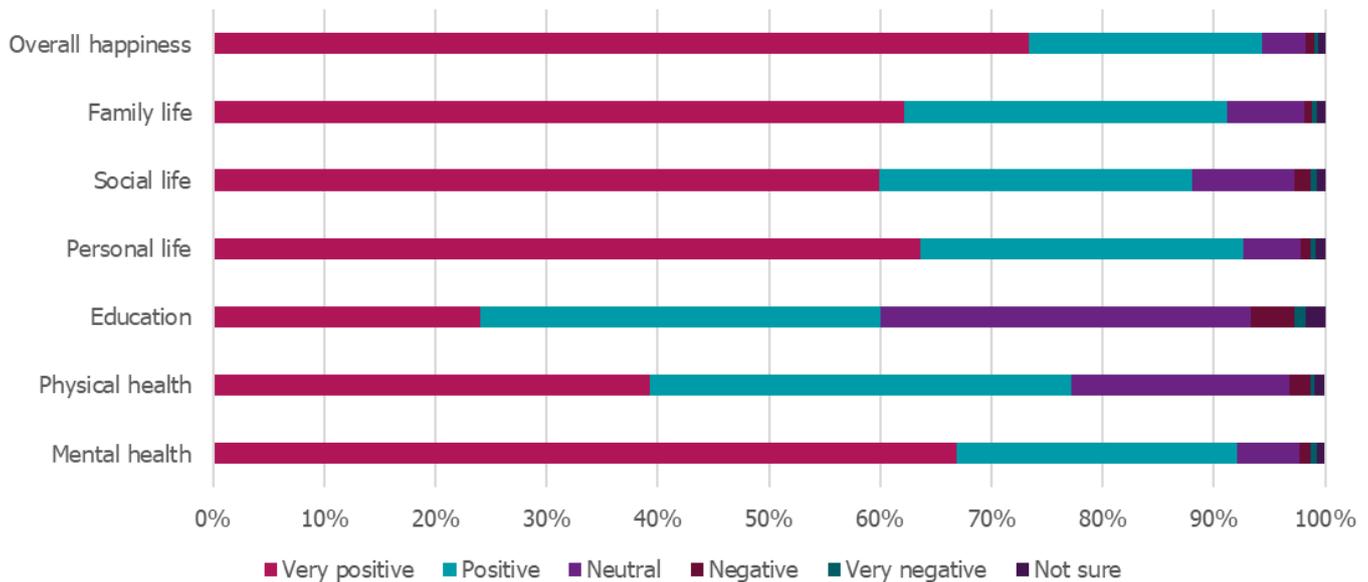
The majority of respondents were highly supportive of making Friday part of the school weekend

- The majority of respondents (74% of students, 82% of teachers and staff at a primary school, 79% of teachers and staff at a secondary school, 80% of parents, and 69% of other respondents) thought that making Friday part of the school weekend would be a **'great idea'**

Students felt that making Friday part of the school weekend would have a particularly positive effect on their mental health

- Most students who responded felt that making Friday part of the school weekend would have a 'very positive' effect on most aspects of their lives [See Chart 1], particularly their:
 - **'overall happiness'** (73%);
 - **'mental health'** (67%); and
 - **'personal life'** (64%)

Chart 1: What effect students felt schools being closed on Fridays would have on their lives



Quotes

Student: "An extra day would be great as I could actually enjoy 2 days off as if I never went to school on Saturday. Would make me much happier and less grumpy going back to school on a Monday, making me more enthusiastic to learn."

Student: "If Fridays were a part of the school weekend I would feel so relieved and happy as I can get a longer break from all of the stress, peer pressure, bullying etc and it would allow more 'me time' as some call it."

Student: "I at one point had to take GP recommended mental health days off from school, I found that on the days I was at school I was more focused, more excited to learn and more positive about my education in general."

Student: "If people were to have Friday as a day off, they would be able to spend the day completing homework, or learning activities that schools don't teach, like household

maintenance, they'd be able to have a better sleep schedule as it is proved that especially for teenagers it is better for them to go to bed late and wake up later in the day; they'd be able to socialise and spend time with the people who matter most."

Students said that if they weren't in school, they would spend the most time on Fridays with family and friends, or doing homework or studying

- On average, the students who responded thought they would spend the most time on Fridays 'with **family**' (83% said they would do this 'always' or 'often'), 'with **friends**' (81% 'always' or 'often'), or '**doing homework or studying for exams**' (73% 'always' or 'often') [See Chart 2]
- More than half of the students who responded told us they would spend

significant time taking part in **'activities such as music and arts, or learning another language'** (51% 'always' or 'often')

- A significant minority said they would spend the time doing a **'part-time job'** (31% 'always' or 'often') or doing **'volunteer work'** (27% 'always' or 'often')
- A smaller number of students told us they would be likely to spend significant **'time alone'** (15% 'always' or 'often') on Fridays if they weren't in school

money or, if they worked on Saturday and Sunday, they could move one of the days to Friday and then have part of their weekend free."

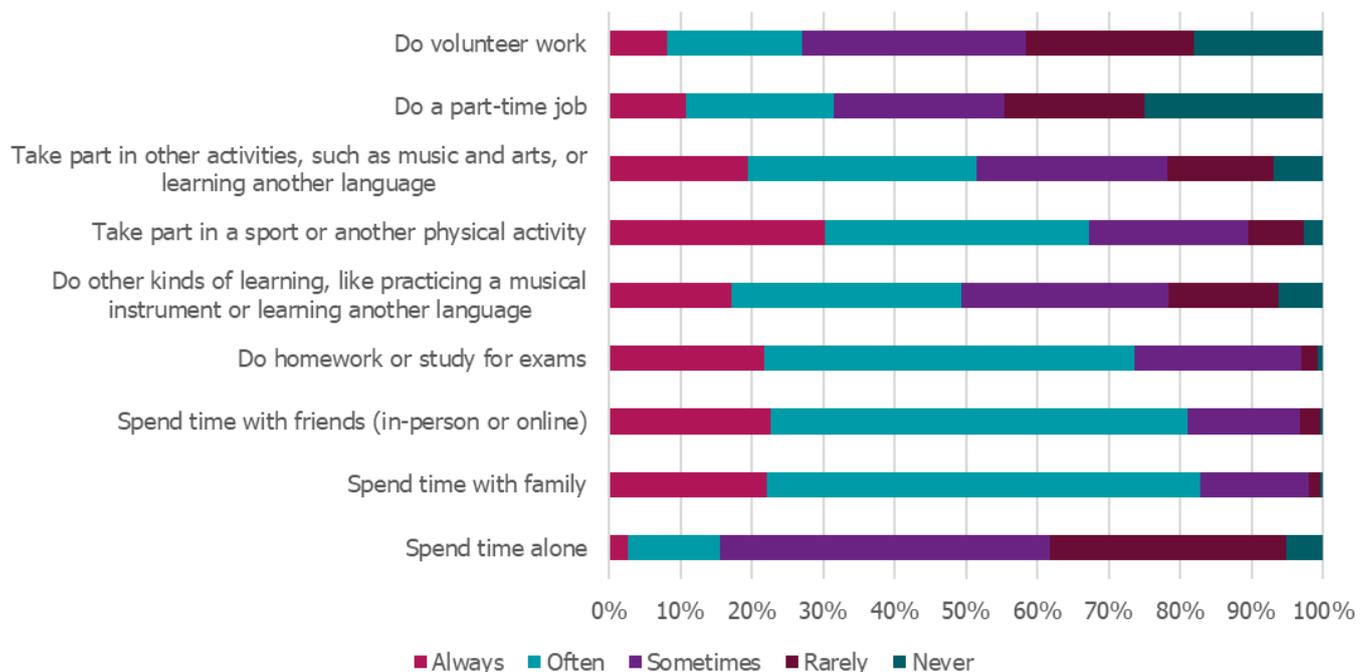
Student: "Many people will have family living in different parts of the country. Having Friday off would enable them to visit more frequently and have a 2 night stay to fully secure there gathering. This could reduce stress and anxiety within students because often it is hard when your family live far away."

Student: "Students in secondary schools get a lot of homework and it would be nice to have a full day to complete homework or even socialise with friends and exercise."

Quotes

Student: "I think it could benefit older students that have jobs. I think this because they could work on the Friday and earn more

Chart 2: How students would spend Fridays if they weren't in school



Most parents felt that making Friday part of the school weekend would have a positive effect on their children, and on themselves

- While the majority of parents who responded felt this would have a positive impact on them personally, they told us it would have a **greater positive impact on their children** [See Charts 3 and 4]
- However, some parents expressed concern about the potential impact on teachers’ ability to deliver the curriculum, and on students from less affluent backgrounds

Quotes

Parent: “I believe my child would benefit from spending quality time with her family and adults promoting secure attachment rather than peer led attachment. My child would benefit from learning from cultural environments rather than only assessment-

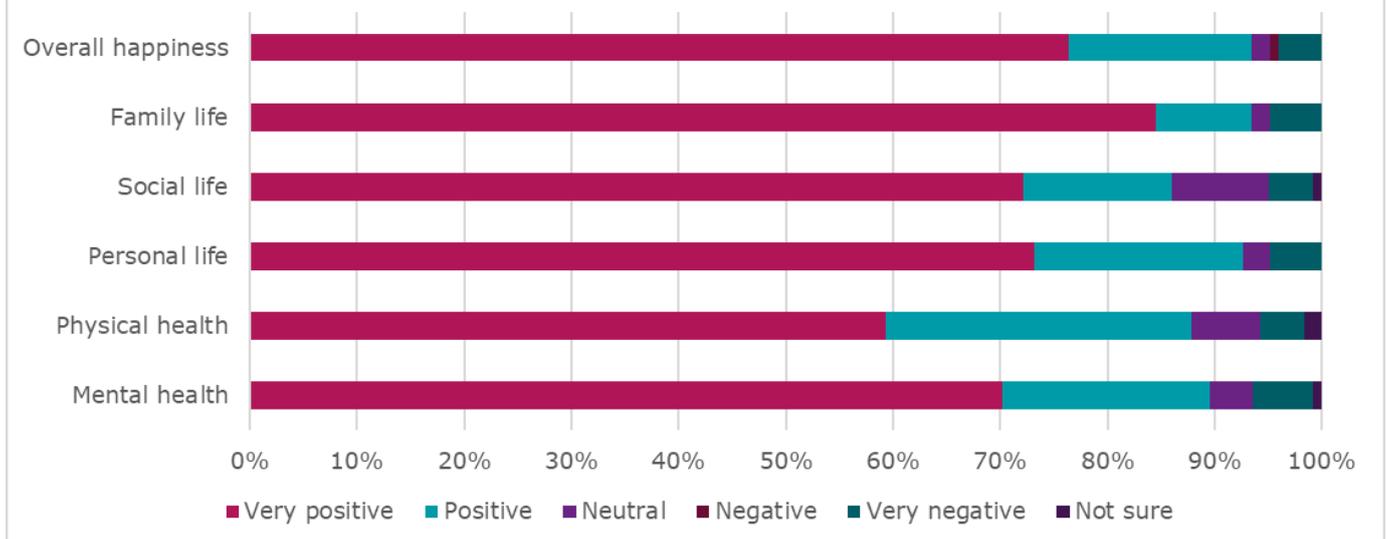
based learning giving a rounder sense of self and making room for time out to focus on emotional wellbeing.”

Parent: “If education was more student-led and less rigidly based around fitting in with adults' work patterns (which are outdated and based on an industrial work landscape, which we no longer have), and if it were actually designed more around what children need, we'd have a healthier society and happier families.”

Parent: “Having a longer weekends would give them an opportunity to experience more positive life experiences, and help them cope with the pressures of school by being active and engaged in broader activities away from a negative and pressurised environment.”

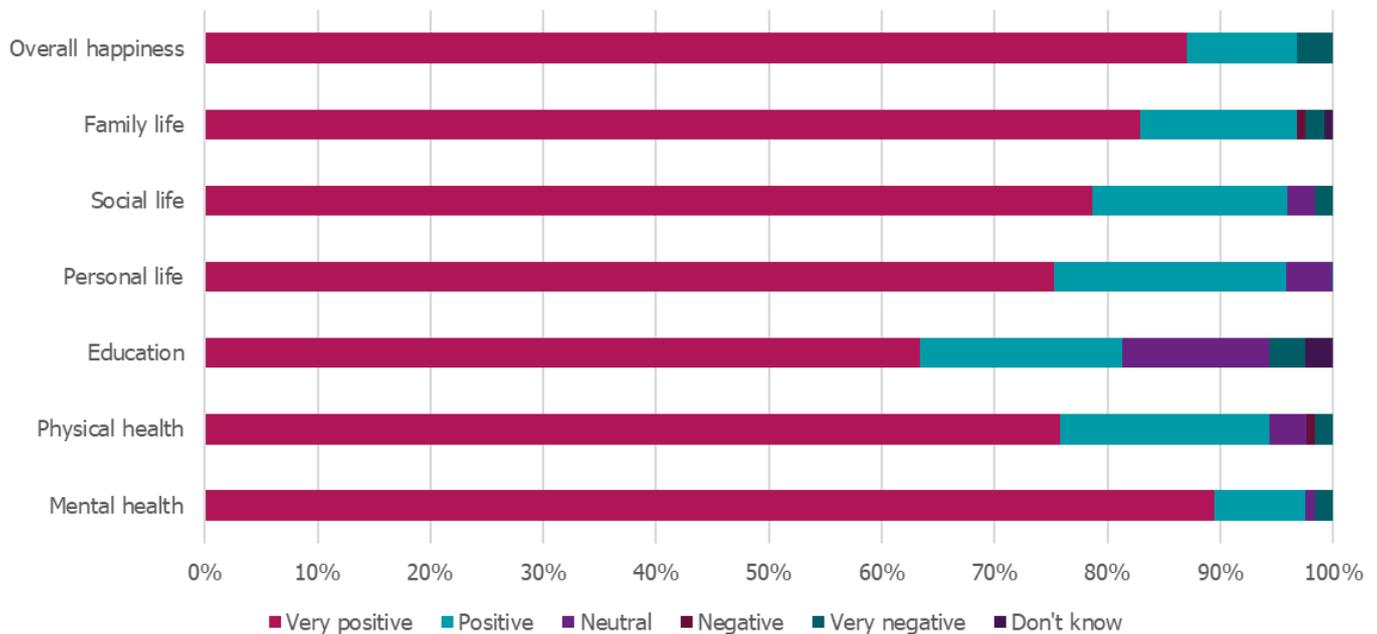
Parent: “[If Friday was part of the school weekend and] schools would not be able to finish the syllabus of whole year, then it will be more stressful for teachers, students and parents. As it is they are having holidays every 6 weeks so that is more than enough.”

Chart 3: What effect parents felt schools being closed on Fridays would have on their lives



Parent: "I know many children rely on school as a lifeline for food, respite from difficult home environments and for childcare for working parents who have low paid work."

Chart 4: What effect parents felt schools being closed on Fridays would have on their children's lives



Parents said they would be most likely to change their working patterns to look after their children, if they were not in school on Fridays

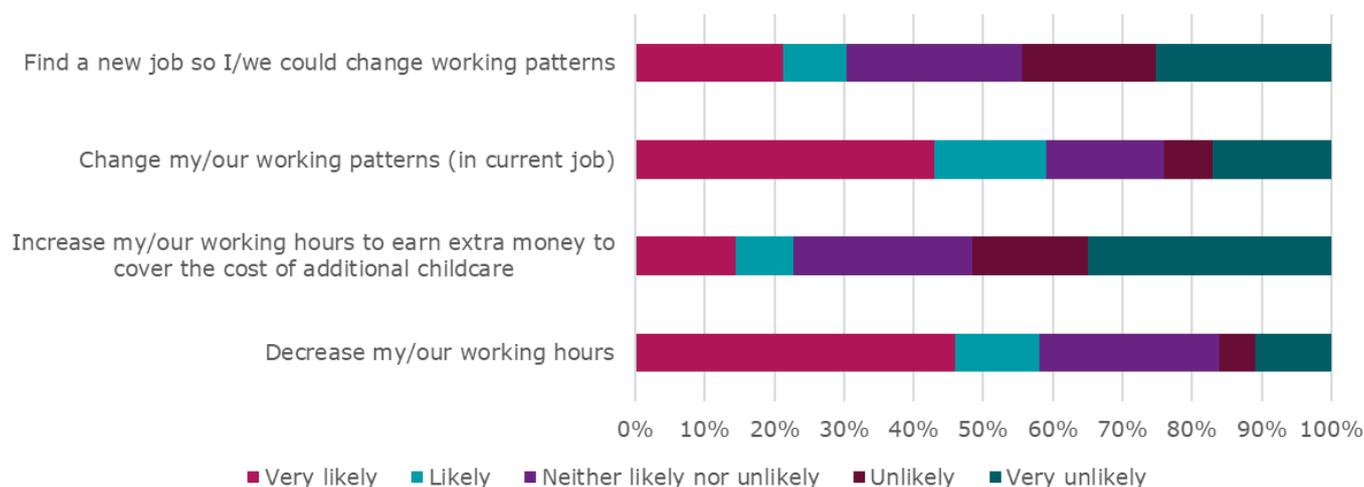
- Parents told us they would be most likely to **'change their working pattern'** in their current job (59% said they would be 'very likely' or 'likely' to do this), or **'decrease their working hours'** (58% 'very likely' or 'likely'), so they could look after their children on Fridays [See Chart 5]
- Parents told us they would be least likely to **'find a new job'** that allowed them to change their working patterns' (30% would be 'very likely' or 'likely' to

do this) or **'increase their working hours'** (23% 'very likely' or 'likely')

Quote

"We changed our working week to 4 days last November 2021. We work Monday-Thursday. And overall it has had a very positive effect on my families mental health. If my kids were off school on Fridays, it would mean we could actually spend more time together as a family, without being tired from work, the benefits on everyone involved are worth it!"

Chart 5: How likely parents would be to take certain actions to ensure their children were looked after on Fridays



Parents said that, to supplement their children’s learning, they would be most likely to pay for them to attend clubs, or take them on educational visits or do outdoor learning activities themselves

- If their children were not in school on Fridays, parents told us they would be most likely to **‘pay for them to participate in clubs**, such as sports clubs’, **‘take them on educational visits or do outdoor learning activities’**, or **‘pay for them to have other lessons**, such as music, art or dance’ to supplement their learning [See Chart 6]

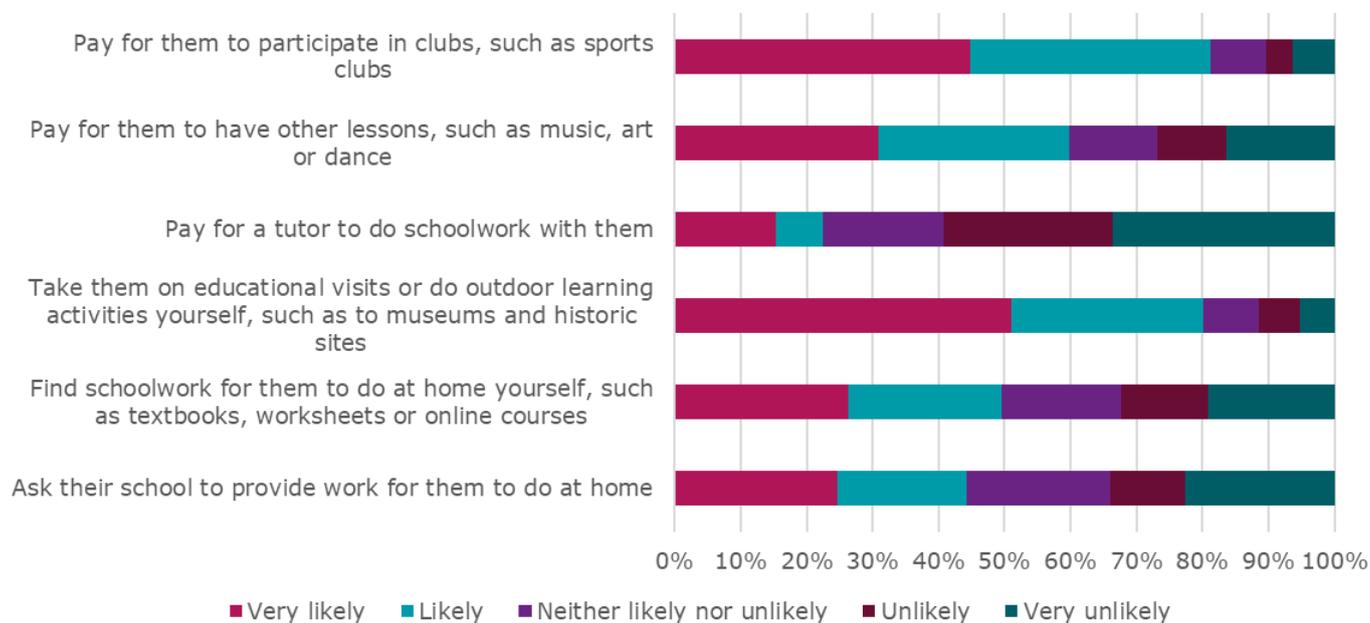
Quotes

Parent: “I would love to focus on the outdoors much more, enrichment, nurture, animals, water based sports. so much is not allowed in schools due to risk assessments and red tape nowadays that children are missing out on so much.”

Parent: “Children need to be allowed their own time to explore the world on their own. This is an opportunity to give them some time to do so.”

Parent: “Having longer weekends would give them an opportunity to experience more positive life experiences, and help them cope with the pressures of school by being active and engaged in broader activities away from a negative and pressurised environment.”

Chart 6: How likely parents would be to take certain actions to supplement their children's learning if they were not in school on Fridays



Respondents suggested other associated changes to the school week that could mitigate the impact of making Friday part of the school weekend

- Respondents proposed other changes to how schools operate, and to the school week more broadly, to mitigate any potential negative impact of schools being closed to students on Fridays
- Some students suggested that online learning could allow them to enjoy the benefits of being at home on Fridays without their education suffering

Quotes

Parent: "If they were at school for longer during the rest of the week then they would be able to achieve more activities in the school day and shouldn't miss out on

education. Working parents would then be able to work the hours they are required during the week without having to pay for additional childcare."

Student: "Teachers could be available online from school so if any questions or not sure on anything they can be on point to ask, and if anyone has an EHCP in place then they obviously can go in on a Friday, and learning would be easier for them with having the support of their teacher in a smaller class environment."

Student: "The teachers could also set us online work to do so that instead of just being a day off it could be a homeschooling day."

Student: "Another alternative to help this would [be] to use online schooling on Fridays, as that would help with carbon omissions, and would be a less stressful day, as I spend 2.30h travelling."

Student: "Maybe you can have some schools do optional (or required for misbehaved or poor performing students) online classes."

Some respondents suggested alternative changes the Government could make to reduce the demands of the school weekend

- Several respondents proposed alternative changes to the school week which the Government could take to reduce the burden on students and teachers, including later start and finish times

Quotes

Student: "If [making Friday part of the school weekend] wouldn't be possible I would like to see a later school start time and a later school finish time, as teenagers general stay up more at night and sleep in, this is because of their body clock."

Student: "Why not on every Friday school starts a little later or it's a half day every Friday on a non school uniform day every Friday?"

Teacher and parent: "The schools should consider a 4 day week for teachers. Our mental health and physical health are slowly deteriorating and the long term effect will be felt by schools everywhere as shortages. These shortages will affect pupils and the quality of education will decline."

