

Written evidence submitted by Allerdale and Copeland Youth Council

Allerdale and Copeland Youth Council Survey to find out issues arising for young people during COVID-19

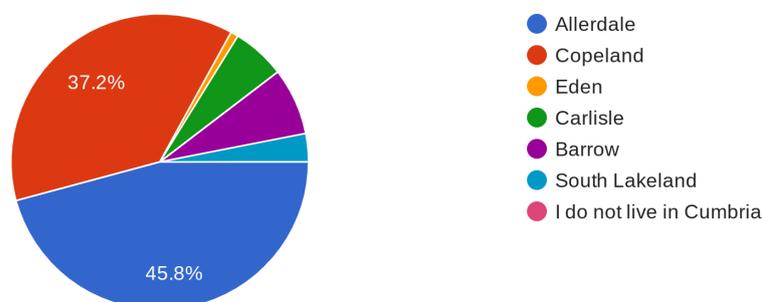
West Cumbria (Allerdale & Copeland) Youth Council put together a survey for 11-18 year olds to find out how they were coping with social distancing and issues relating to Covid-19. The survey received a total of **1,450** valid responses. Please note that **32** responses had to be rejected as they did not meet the survey requirements of being **11-18 years old** and **living in Cumbria**, and they declared so during the survey.

Please note that while discussing the earlier questions I may refer to related replies submitted in the final question, which was open-ended.

Q1)

Which area of Cumbria do you live in? A map is attached in case you are unsure of this.

1,450 responses

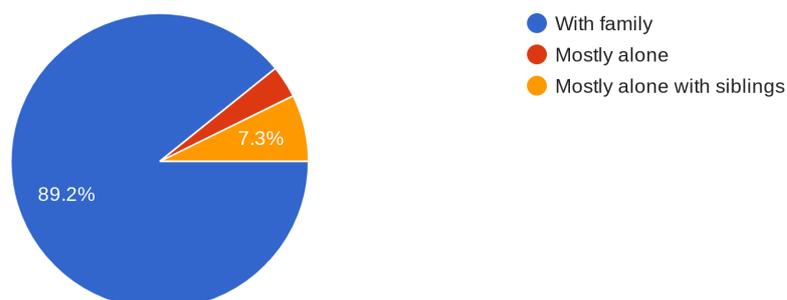


- Although we received responses from all areas of Cumbria, it is worth noting that we received 83.0% of our responses from our own areas of Allerdale and Copeland

Q2)

Are you at home with parents/guardians or mostly alone as they are key workers?

1,450 responses

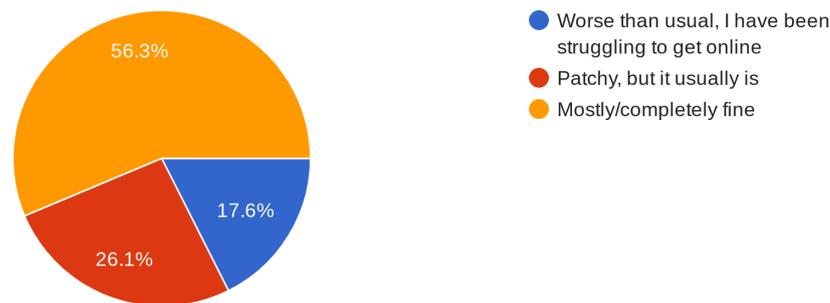


- It should be regarded as positive news in most cases that 89.2% of young people are isolated with family, and a very small percentage of 3.5% being mostly alone
- However, 7.3% are isolated with siblings are often responsible for younger siblings, which was an issue reported later in the survey as they had less time available to complete schoolwork in time
- There were also reports that being with family increased stress levels as it encourages arguments as well as giving them less personal space and time alone, which is having a negative impact on their mental health

Q3)

How has your internet connection been during isolation?

1,450 responses

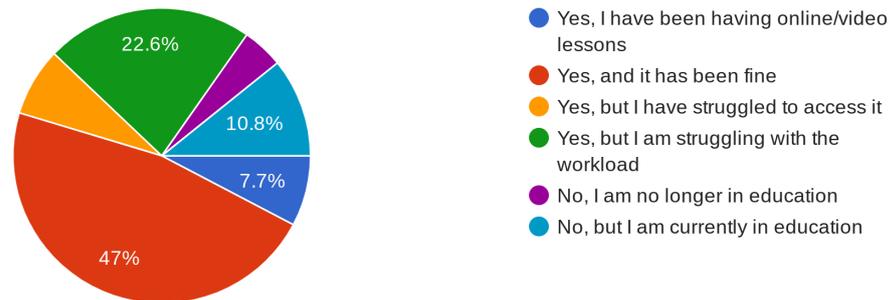


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- 43.7% of young people do not have a reliable access to the internet, with roughly 40% of these people saying that their internet connection has been notably worse during the pandemic
 - This is especially an issue as schoolwork is currently being sent and collected online, therefore many are struggling to access or submit the necessary work especially in time for deadlines
 - Cumbria has also seen widespread issues with their internet connection, such as the internet going down completely in certain areas of West Cumbria on 6-7th April which was mentioned by some respondents mentioning this event specifically

Q4)

Have you been having work sent to you via Google Classroom etc.?

1,450 responses

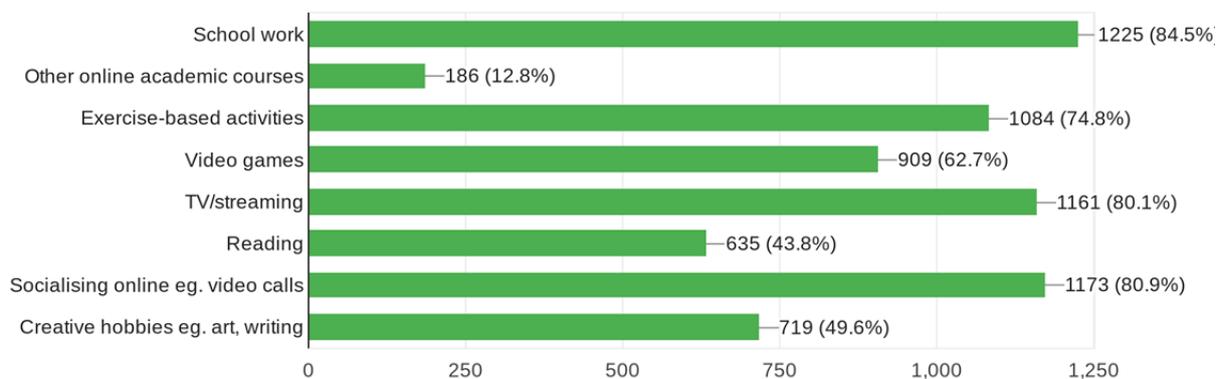


- The responses to this question seem to suggest that there is quite an inconsistent approach to schooling across Cumbria and a variation in how well it is received
- Out of those who are receiving schoolwork, 35.4% of these people reported issues. Some referred to issues with their internet connection as previously mentioned, however, the biggest issue was the size of the workload and this was repeatedly mentioned later in the survey
- Interestingly, out of those who are not receiving work 70.6% of these people claim that they are still in education. If true, this leaves the question of why so many students are not being taught and whether this simply relates to the type of course they are on eg. if they are at college something practical, or if there are wider issues

Q5)

Tick all of the following activities have you partaken in to entertain yourself during isolation.

1,450 responses



- The most popular three activities during the pandemic amongst young people are listed here:
1 - Schoolwork

2 - Socialising online

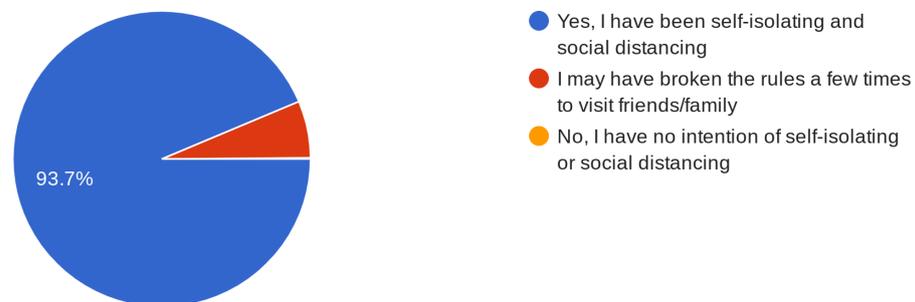
3 - TV/streaming

These activities are mostly technology-based although we recognise the psychological benefits of socialising online, and the fact that exercise-based activities are close behind in popularity indicates that there is not an unhealthy trend to be concerned about. However, schoolwork ranking so highly on the list could be a concern as students report receiving a higher workload than they usually do which can be unmanageable

Q6)

Truthfully, have you been following government guidelines?

1,450 responses

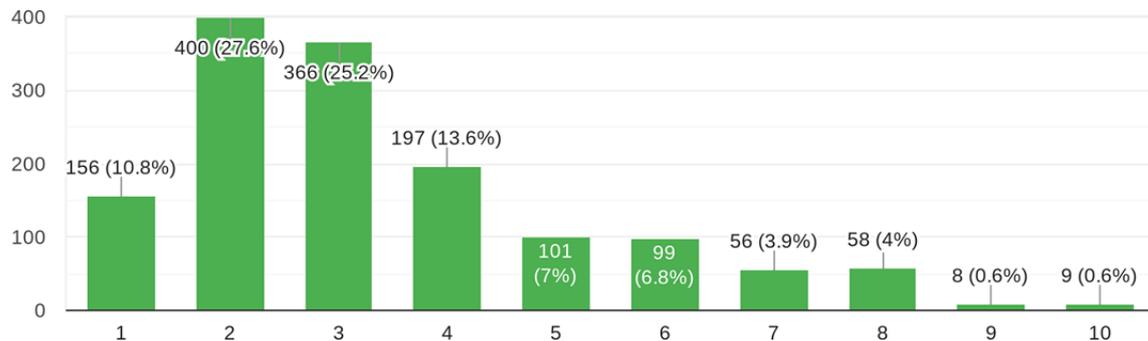


- It is a reassuring trend that most people claim to have been following social distancing guidelines, and nobody reported having a complete disregard for the rules
- However, later responses said that they had witnessed younger children being allowed to play out in their communities
- Some of those who visited family were unsure as to whether they had broken the rules or not as there seems to be confusion over the guidelines for children of split parents, and reported that they would like more clarity

Q7)

Looking at the image attached, please rate your mental health on an average day during isolation. Please remember that your response is anonymous.

1,450 responses



A Simple Mental Health Pain Scale

thegracefulpatient.wordpress.com

MILD		1	Everything is a-okay! There is absolutely nothing wrong. You're probably cuddling a fluffy kitten right now. Enjoy!
		2	You're a bit frustrated or disappointed, but you're easily distracted and cheered up with little effort.
		3	Things are bothering you, but you're coping. You might be overtired or hungry. The emotional equivalent of a headache.
MODERATE		4	Today is a bad day (or a few bad days). You still have the skills to get through it, but be gentle with yourself. Use self-care strategies.
		5	Your mental health is starting to impact on your everyday life. Easy things are becoming difficult. You should talk to your doctor.
		6	You can't do things the way you usually do them due to your mental health. Impulsive and compulsive thoughts may be hard to cope with.
SEVERE		7	You're avoiding things that make you more distressed, but that will make it worse. You should definitely seek help. This is serious.
		8	You can't hide your struggles anymore. You may have issues sleeping, eating, having fun, socialising, and work/study. Your mental health is affecting almost all parts of your life.
		9	You're at a critical point. You aren't functioning anymore. You need urgent help. You may be a risk to yourself or others if left untreated.
		10	The worst mental and emotional distress possible. You can no longer care for yourself. You can't imagine things getting any worse. Contact a crisis line immediately.

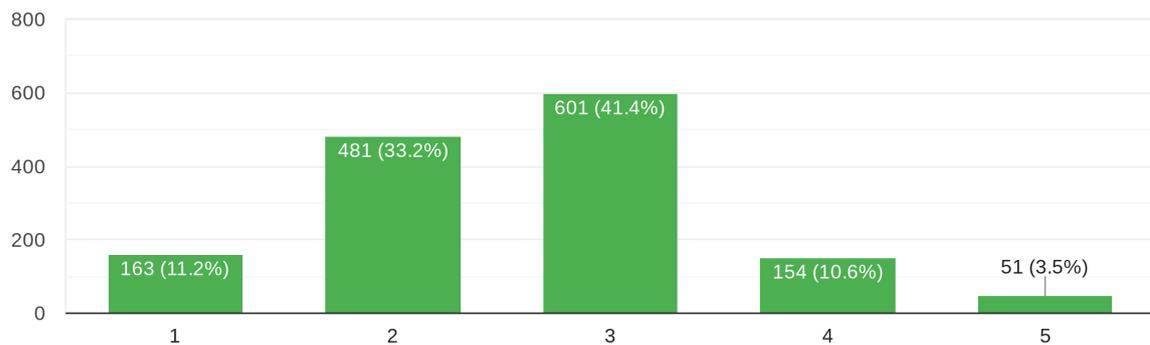
- Mild cases = 64%
- Moderate cases = 27%
- Severe cases = 9%

- Over half of the people reported having only mild issues with their mental health, but 64% is still lower than would be expected in normal circumstances
- The most popular option was 2 with 400 choosing this, but there were still hundreds of people reporting that they were in the moderate to severe range and the survey was sent out relatively early in the lockdown so it is concerning to see such extremes being met within weeks

Q8)

Would you say that the pandemic has worsened or improved your mental state? If it has had no effect, please select 3.

1,450 responses

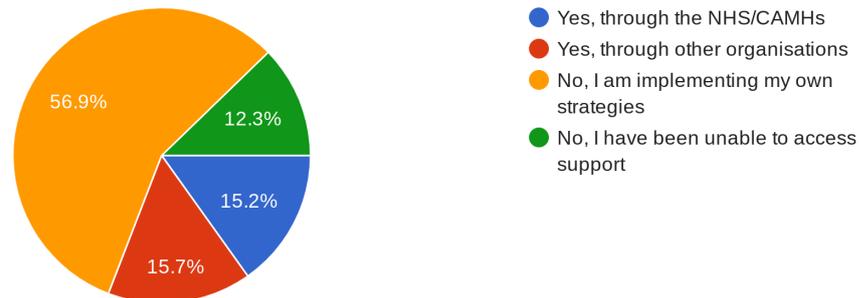


- The majority of respondents, 44.4% overall, reported that the pandemic had had a negative effect on their mental state (this was indicated by answers 1 and 2), this was largely due to issues such as loneliness caused by social distancing rather than concerns about the coronavirus itself
- There was a rather small percentage of people, 14.1% overall, that have seen a positive impact of their mental health due to a decrease in stress and more time to themselves

Q9)

(OPTIONAL) If you struggle with your mental health, have you been able to access support during isolation?

626 responses

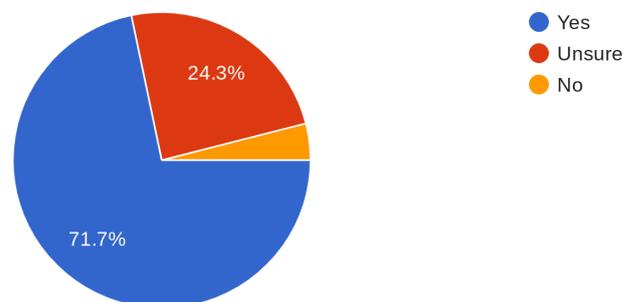


- It is concerning that only 30.9% of people struggling with their mental health have accessed external support, with most having to rely on implementing their own strategies
- It is also worth noting that out of those who have managed to access support, a higher percentage found support through other organisations and charities rather than the NHS or CAMHS

Q10)

Would you feel able to identify the symptoms of coronavirus in yourself/loved ones?

1,450 responses



- The majority of young people felt confident that they would be able to recognise the symptoms of coronavirus and in the final question seemed to be aware of the main symptoms such as having a dry cough or fever

Open-ended question

This final question was open-ended to allow young people to raise other concerns if they wished to do so. As you can understand, we received hundreds of responses to this question, therefore, we have condensed the replies into those which were repeatedly mentioned as well as some others that we felt were worth mentioning.

- School - the most common reply we received stated that the workload being given by schools was higher than usual and it was hard to cope with, especially with special circumstances due to the pandemic such as having to look after younger siblings or other problems in their home life which they felt their teachers would not understand. This was alongside technological issues such as having no access to a printer when needed for work. There were also concerns of students with ADHD who struggled to focus by themselves, and some who struggled to teach themselves the content and saying that video lessons would be better. There is also still some uncertainty among students about what is happening with GCSEs and A-levels, which seems to not have been communicated properly
- Work - some older respondents are working during the pandemic, many at supermarkets etc. and they have reported issues ranging from a lack of respect from customers, unsure about how many hours they should be working as well as struggling to balance work with a higher workload for school. Some children helping their parents with small businesses face similar problems. Also, Cumbria is a largely rural area and thus has quite a few farming families, with no guidance as to whether children are allowed to go to work to help their parents on the farm
- Mental health issues - many people reported that being away from distractions was worsening their mental illness, as well as those with anxiety disorders being especially concerned about the health of their family. Some young people did not report having issues themselves but had friends who were struggling to cope and felt unable to properly support them when they opened up.
- Breaking guidelines - multiple people reported being able to see younger children leaving their house to play together on a regular basis with no intervention from their family, which obviously poses a risk as children are often asymptomatic carriers
- Split parents - some families seem to be unsure on what the guidelines are for children of split parents and whether they have to stay in one household for the duration of the lockdown, more clarity would be helpful

April 2020