COVID-19 YOUTH INSIGHTS

Report by Annette Burghes & Aidan Jolly

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BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH

In July 2020 COoL (a network of small to medium sized arts organisations in Liverpool) were asked by Public Health Liverpool to work collaboratively with young people to enable them to better understand attitudes, motivation, barriers and behaviours in relation to COVID-19 guidance. One of these pieces of work was qualitative and quantitative research undertaken by young people with Collective Encounters to find out:

- Current attitudes to the COVID-19 restrictions amongst young people and what might help young people to comply with these restrictions.

- How well young people understand how the virus spreads, and what their fears and concerns are.

- How best to communicate COVID-19 restrictions to young people.

- How young people's friends and family are responding to COVID-19 restrictions.

- Whether there is an understanding of the Test and Trace system.

- Any other information pertaining to young people's attitudes and concerns and the impact of COVID-19 on young people.

Qualitative research exploring these themes was conducted by young people between 14th September and 30th September. The online survey was available and distributed throughout September. Case studies were gathered in early October. A call out for case studies was placed in October and 13 young people told their story.
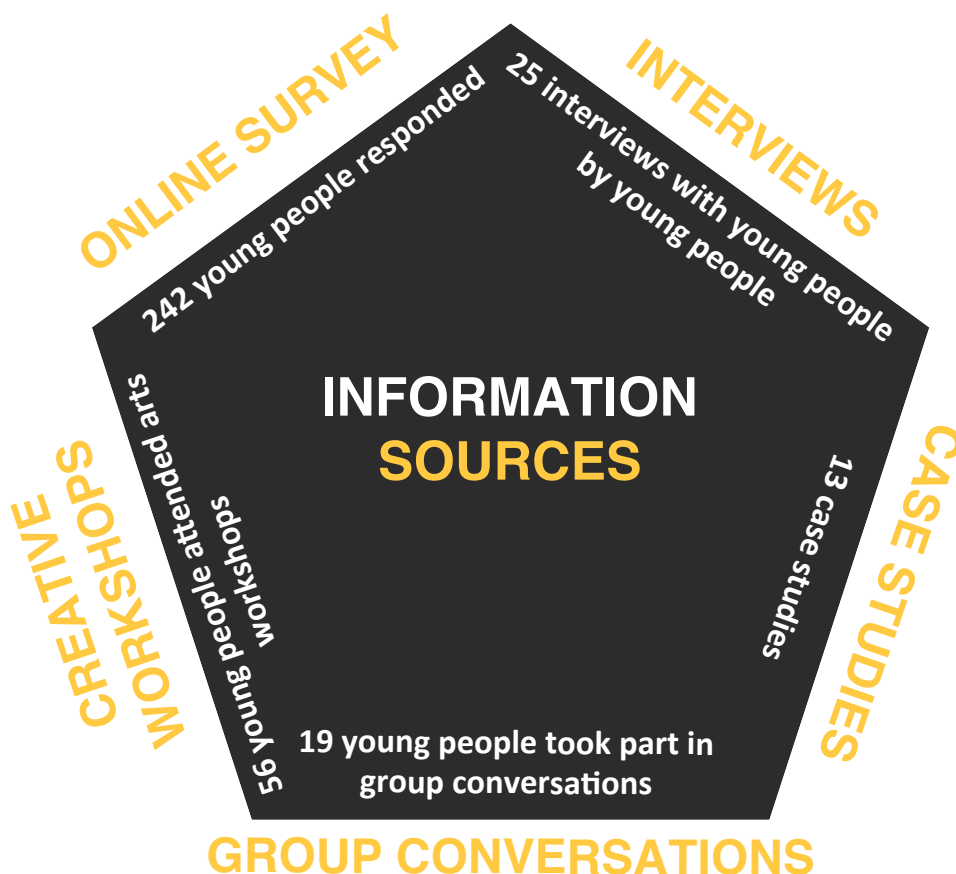
The other parts of this project involved Open Culture and Homotopia who are managing two open calls for commissions for a selection of artists to design, make and deliver COVID-19 public health communications. These pieces are aimed at the general public and specific hard-to-reach communities and will use effective and creative messaging, manifesting as visual public art, instructional public health messages and short films as selected by the commissioning panel. The two artists commissioned to undertake this work were Soph Welton, a visual artist and graphic designer and Tom Shennan, a filmmaker. The third aspect of the project is an open face covering open design competition for Liverpool residents aged 14-25 years. The winning designs will be printed onto special limited addition face coverings that will be given out for free by Liverpool City Council.

During August 2020 Collective Encounters set to work recruiting a young person's steering committee to help guide the project and undertake paid research with peers in their local areas. This group we identified as COVID Community Activists and in total eight young people ranging from ages 15 – 24 representing Speke Garston, Princess Park, Wavertree, Norris Green, Kensington and Fairfield, Fazakerley and Greenbank were enlisted in September. This group worked with a researcher at Collective Encounters to design and capture information in response to Public Health Liverpool's questions. A huge thanks must go to the eight COVID Community Activists for all their hard work, and dedication to this project.

A range of data sources were used including an online survey, creative workshops, interviews, group conversations (focus groups), and case studies exploring COVID-19 and its impacts and effects. All data was captured within social distancing guidelines.

 The time period in which data was captured was short. The online survey ran for three weeks, and the community activists had just two weeks to capture the qualitative data for the study. They worked hard to utilise their network of peers, friends, neighbours, school and university classmates and family members to capture as information as possible in a short period of time. The image below illustrates the information captured from each of the sources.

ONLINE SURVEY — 242 young people responded

INTERVIEWS — 25 interviews with young people by young people

CASE STUDIES — 13 case studies

GROUP CONVERSATIONS — 19 young people took part in group conversations

CREATIVE WORKSHOPS — 56 young people attended arts workshops

INFORMATION SOURCES

AGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED

Total Respondents

In terms of age there was a fairly even split between the respondents of both the qualitative and quantitative data, with 39% of total respondents falling within a range of 14 - 18, 31% were aged between 19 - 21 and 30% between 22 - 24.

Aged between 14 - 18

Aged between 19 - 21

Aged between 22 - 24
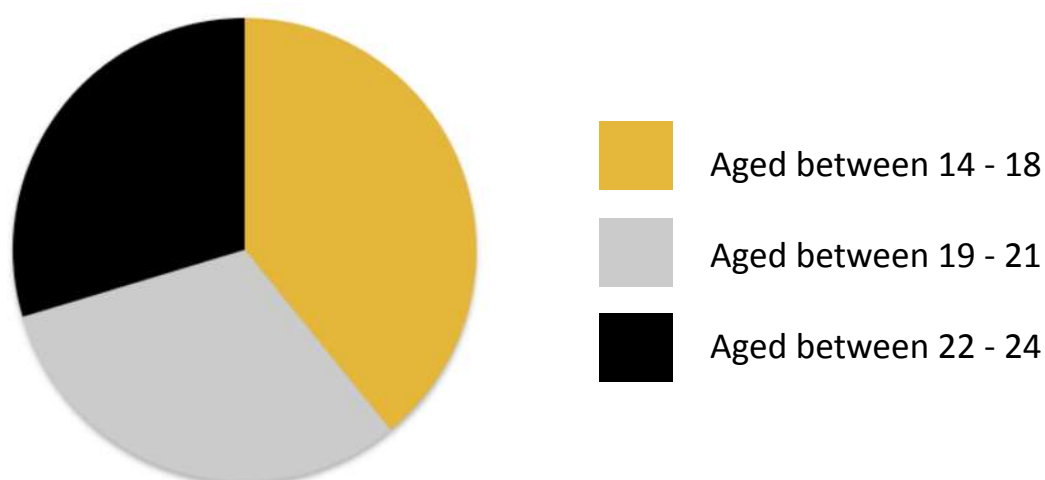
Online Survey Respondents

A total of 242 young people in Liverpool responded to the online survey

39% aged 14 - 18   19% aged 19 - 21   32% aged 22 - 24

Creative Workshops

56 young people took part in creative workshops led by community based arts organisations in Liverpool.

54% aged 14 - 18   27% aged 19 - 21   20% aged 22 - 24

Interviews and Group Conversations

Qualitative data was captured from a further 44 young people from Liverpool aged 14 – 24 by the group of COVID Community Activists. These interviews and group conversations were undertaken with the friends and peers of the Community Activists. Accurate age data was not recorded. The age of these respondents has been estimated by using the age of the Community Activist leading the interview or conversation.

YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED

Online Survey

Additional was captured about respondents of the online survey.

Employment or Education

60% in full time education

16% working full-time

9% working part-time

7% were neither working or in full time education

4% are on zero hours contracts

The remaining respondents identified as volunteers, and 1% said they had lost their job to COVID.

Gender

70% were female

25% were male

5% identified as neither male or female or preferred not to say.

Highest Level of Education Attainment

31% Secondary or FE

30% Undergraduate

22% GCSE

10% Primary (but probably many of these have not yet completed secondary)

6% Postgrad

1% PGCE/Cert Higher Ed

COVID FEARS

Young people were asked what were their main concerns about COVID-19. We wanted to find out whether young people were more worried about their own health if they caught the virus, or the health of friends and family members. We also wanted to find out whether young people were not at all worried, and if that was the case, who these young people were and how we might get an effective message to them.

Those taking part in the online survey were asked to rank the following statements in the order they most related to them (1) and least related to them (3).

The results of this told us:

- 71% of young people most related to the statement 'I am worried about passing COVID-19 onto family and friends'.

- 16% of young people most related to the statement 'I am not at all worried about getting COVID-19 or passing it onto family and friends'.

- 13% of young people most related to the statement 'I am worried about getting COVID-19.

Most related to being worried about passing COVID-19 onto family and friends.

Most related to being worried about getting COVID-19.

Most related to being not at all worried about getting COVID-19 or passing it on to family and friends.
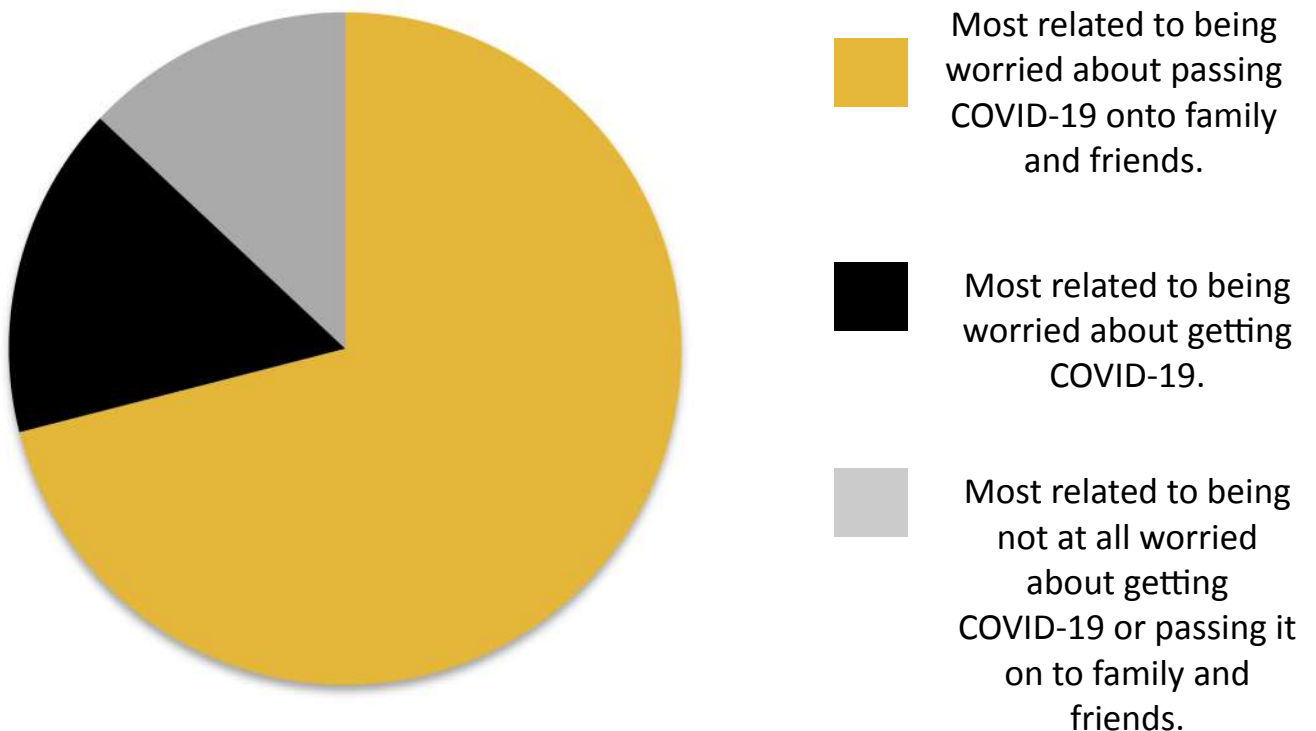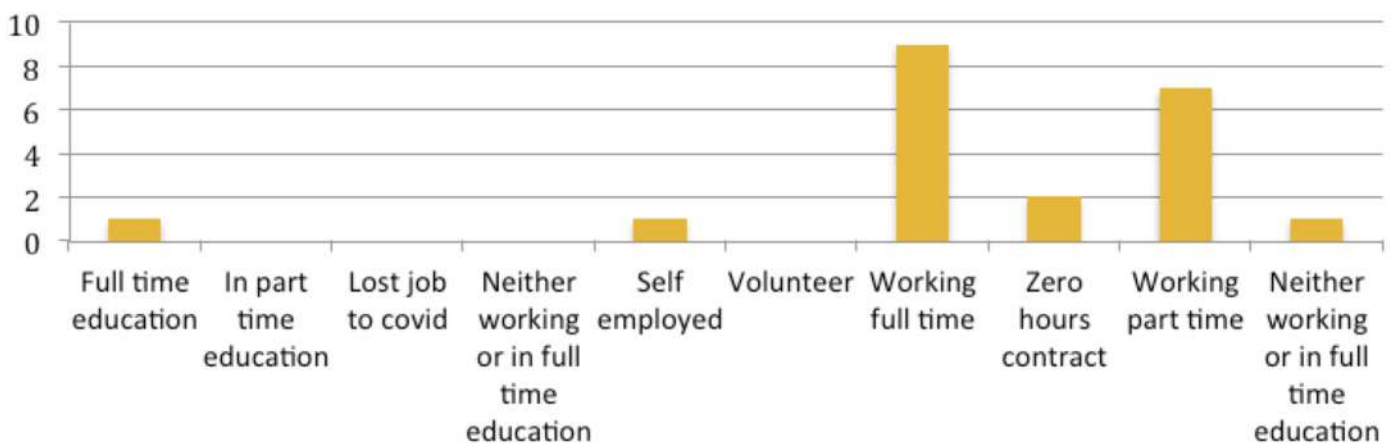
COVID FEARS

An analysis of COVID-19 fears by age shows that respondents in the older age categories were slightly more likely to be primarily concerned about catching COVID-19.

Most related to being worried about passing COVID-19 onto family and friends.

Most related to being worried about getting COVID-19.

Most related to being not at all worried about getting COVID-19 or passing it on to family and friends.
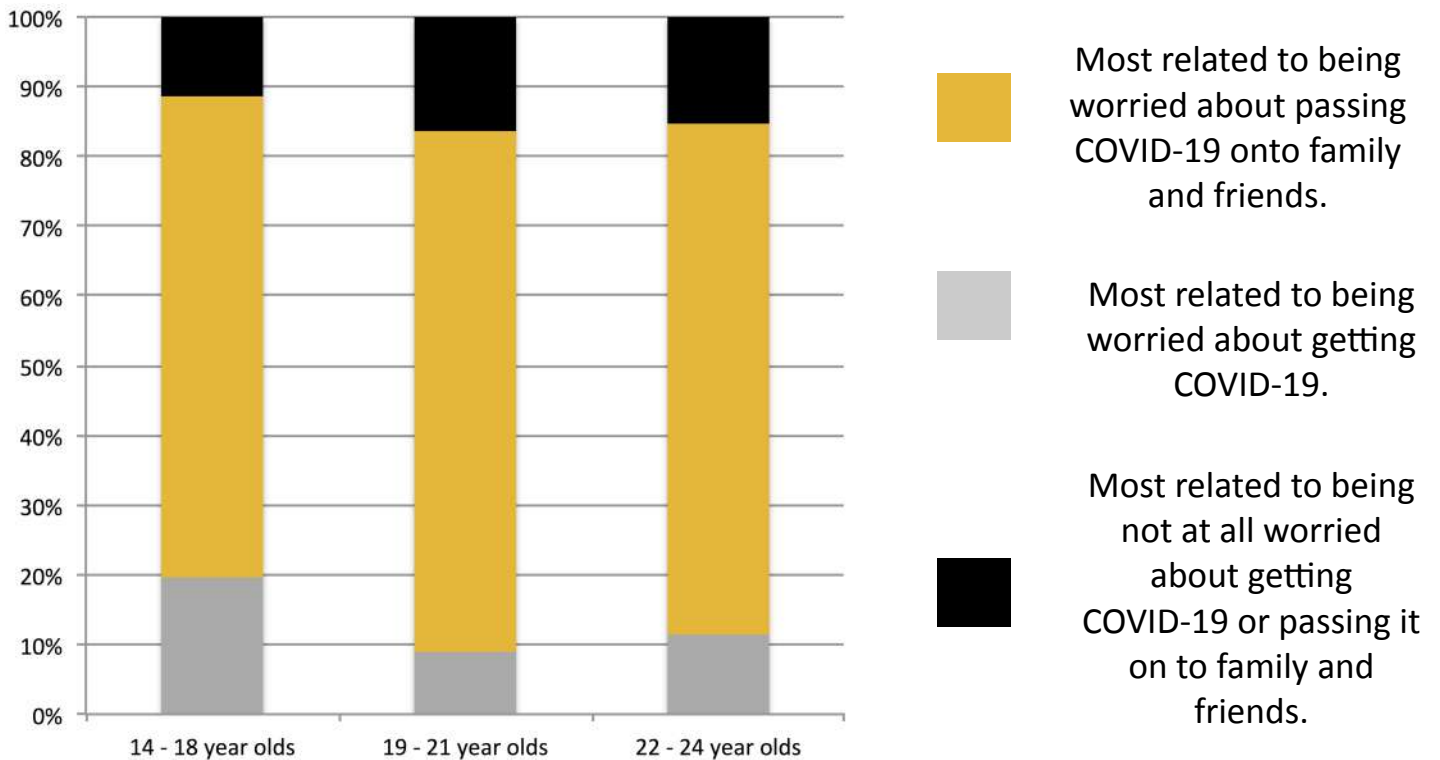
Further analysis was done on the not insignificant percentage of young people (16%) who were neither worried about getting the virus nor transmitting it to those around them. This showed that on average slightly more men than women were 'not worried'. The table below shows the employment/education status of those that make up of this 16%.

COVID FEARS

Public Health messaging on the increased risks of COVID-19 to older people and those with underlying health conditions, and the role young people play in transmitting COVID, had clearly been absorbed by those we surveyed. There was also a good understanding of the risks of asymptomatic transmission by young people to older family members and those close to them.

"My main worry is passing it on".

"My family getting sick".

"I'm not concerned for myself but I am for my Nan".

"Members were concerned about being asymptomatic carriers and passing the virus onto loved ones who were at risk, for example one member's Granddad had COPD".

"I'm worried about my Nan".

The majority of the group conversations and interviews took place in early September 2020 and a large number of young people also referenced increased risk to friends, family members, housemates and classmates as schools and universities started the new academic year. The ability of university students to follow the 'rule of 6' was raised a couple of times as problematic for students or anyone living in houses of multiple occupation.

"The young people are not fearing for themselves as such, it seems to be more about their family members with underlining issues. They feel like if they get Covid-19 they will recover but are worried about passing it on to the elderly family member". *

"The anxiety around starting school and being in larger groups again came through in a lot of answers". *

"I'm worried about making people I live with ill, in this group 10 students live together so if 1 person gets it there is a risk of infecting another 9 residents".

"I think I'm just concerned about going back to Uni and then picking it up and bringing it back home and giving it to my parents".

"I'm not necessarily concerned about getting it myself but passing it to people I live with because they are at high risk of dying from COVID due to pre-existing health conditions. So, I would be concerned about that".

"More personally, I am concerned for my families and friends welfare as well as potentially having asymptomatic COVID and spreading it unknowingly".

* Records of creative workshops

COMPLIANCE WITH THE RULES

Hand Hygiene

Through the online survey young people were asked whether they understood that good hand hygiene helped stop or slow the transmission of the virus.

- **91%** of young people said they understood this rule.

- **98%** of young people said they do or would do this.

- **77%** of young people said their friends and family always comply

Avoiding Crowds and Keeping Two Metres Apart

Through the online survey young people were asked whether they understood that this rule on social distancing helped stop or slow the transmission of the virus.

- **86%** of young people said they understood this rule.

- **87%** of young people said they do or would do this.

- **35%** of young people said their friends and family always comply

Wearing Face Coverings on Public Transport and in Shops

Through the online survey young people were asked whether they understood that this rule on face coverings helped stop or slow the transmission of the virus.

- **86%** of young people said they understood this rule.

- **97%** of young people said they do or would do this.

- **77%** of young people said their friends and family always comply.

"All members of the both groups said that they were spending particular time on washing their hands now and keeping them sanitised when outside".*

"Washing your hands, wearing masks and social distance when possible".

"Constantly washing hands, not sharing food or drink, masks on transport and in shops and social distance".

"All members of the group understood that regular use of hand sanitiser was important as well as masks being worn in public spaces".*

* Records of creative workshops

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Compelling data was found in both the online survey and the transcripts of interviews, creative workshops and group conversations that there was a good understanding of the guidelines on hand hygiene and wearing face coverings and on the surface there seems to be compliance with these guidelines.

There was less robust evidence that young people understood the guidelines pertaining to social distancing and just 37% of young people thought their friends and family always complied with the guidelines around avoiding crowds and keeping two metres apart.

The evidence suggests changes to the guidelines and rules around social distancing was leading to a lack of understanding about them. There were just a small handful of young people who were able to confidently state government guidance on socialising and social distancing. The remainder sought clear guidance from the Government but couldn't find it. The words contradictory and confusing were used to describe the rules many times in interviews and group conversations.

"Overwhelming from everyone - there's no clear guidelines".

"It's confusing because of localised lockdowns too".

"Looked online and the government website and some of it isn't very detailed, it doesn't make sense, no clear instructions".

"Need more clear regulations, messaging is confusing, people don't understand it".

"Really mixed messaging all the time, putting onus on us, it's our fault but it's so confusing".

"We had the announcements and then they stopped".

"At beginning we had clarity, now it's all disappeared, I didn't even know how many people could gather at one time, I was looking to see and it's so hard to find clear information. A lot of different people saying different things".

"I want real clarity, we got that with stay at home save lives, now we don't know".

"Different rules for different places, very difficult when nothing's clear".

"Not got a clue all I know is wash hands, wear a mask and keep things clean".

"I am not very confident because rules are constantly changing and not being followed but I am confident in the understanding of basic hygiene".

Young people were asked how they related to this statement, "the rules keep changing so I just do my own thing". The yellow bar below shows most of the 242 respondents of the online survey most or somewhat related to this statement.
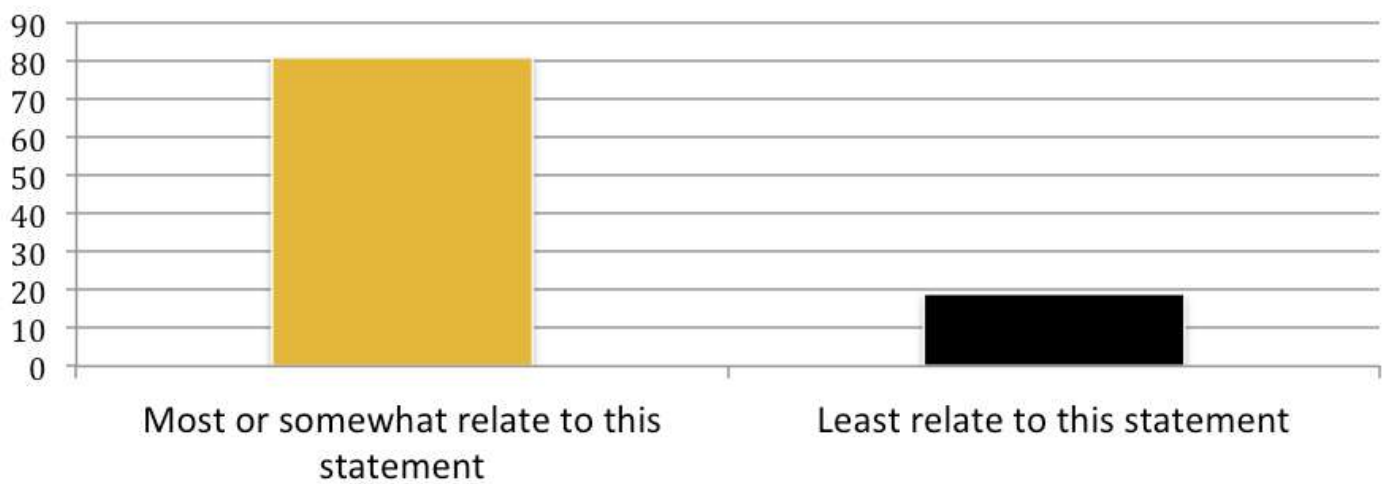
"..the way like the lockdown and stuff is working, it doesn't really make sense, like a 5:00pm, or a 10:00pm curfew, and like no other people in your household, so we could literally meet, like six other people, or five other people from different households all day until 10:00pm in a pub, but then we all have to go home separately. It just doesn't really make sense".

"I think the guideline is unclear purposefully. I think when people are like, "Oh, the government is so confusing," they want to be confusing; they're putting the entire onus on the individual".

"I think the guidelines are very ineffective. They're misguiding people and giving them autonomy over decisions then leaving them to blame each other".

"They're ridiculous, let's be honest. Can't see anyone outside of your own household but you can go to the pub, restaurants, shops (which have all but abandoned distanced measures). Before getting my car the buses to work had got so busy again and people had even started sitting next to strangers".

"Most of them. A lot of them are… They're quite confusing in the way that they're worded. Or there are some, like, loopholes. You know, the one where some people can hunt in groups larger than six or you can go to the pub until 9:00, which makes no sense because obviously a virus doesn't know the time".

UNDERSTANDING SYMPTOMS AND
WHEN TO ISOLATE

The main symptoms mentioned by respondents were coughing, loss of taste and smell, high fever, headaches and muscle aching. A couple of respondents mentioned sneezing, however many more respondents also knew this wasn't a symptom. None of the respondents mentioned some of the less common ones e.g. rash, nausea, diarrhoea or vomiting. It is also worth noting one of the COVID Community Activists tested positive during the research period and was experiencing these less common symptom along with nose-bleeds towards the end of the research period. Respondents showed awareness of the broader list of COVID symptoms, saying that if they felt poorly they would check the NHS website for the full list.
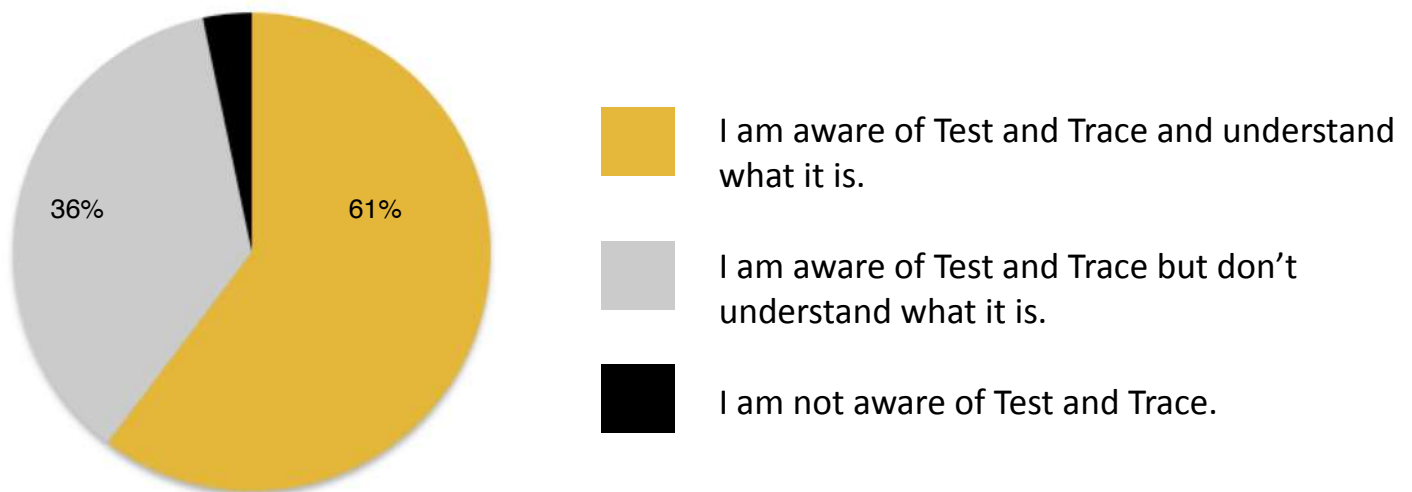
Young people living outside of the family home, such as those in University accommodation, referenced the fact that at the beginning of term colds and mild flu often circulated in shared accommodation and it was a challenge to differentiate these and to know when to get tested. *"Lots of other colds and flu circulate especially when living in student accommodation so hard to know when to isolate and get tested".*

The similarity of the main or most common COVID-19 symptoms to that of a common cold or mild flu was raised a number of times by respondents. *"It's hard press to discern it from a normal cold or flu"*. Reassuringly though the majority of respondents said that if they had any symptoms they would self-isolate and get tested, *"It's better to be safe than sorry"*. *"Order a test if one was available...have shopping delivered to my flat...arrange for someone to top up my electricity...stay/work from home for 14 days or until I get a negative test".* Although there was one person who said they wouldn't get tested. *"If I just feel a little bit ill, a little bit under the weather, maybe I feel a bit fluey but I'm not coughing or anything like that, then no, I probably wouldn't get tested".*

The seemed to be a little confusion as to the rules of when to isolate. *"Well yes, because they say like you've got to self-isolate when you get back from holiday"*. This has made some people adopt their own policy on isolation, *"If I've been out with friends I'll isolate myself for a week or two and carry on washing my hands and social distancing".* Three respondents mentioned they would isolate if they had been in contact with someone with symptoms or who had tested positive.

TEST AND TRACE

Whilst awareness of the Test and Trace system was high (97%) amongst the young people who responded to the online survey, a significant portion of those who responded (36%) had heard of it but did not understand what it was.

- **(yellow)** I am aware of Test and Trace and understand what it is.
- **(grey)** I am aware of Test and Trace but don't understand what it is.
- **(black)** I am not aware of Test and Trace.

Of those who had heard of it, but didn't understand it, 49% were aged 14 – 18, 30% aged 22 – 24, and 22% aged 19 to 21. This suggests (based on the total responses by age) that 14 to 18 year olds are less likely to have understood the message about test and trace than older groups.

Of all respondents with education to A Level or higher, 68% had heard and understood the message, and 32% had heard, but didn't understand. For respondents with education to GCSE level or lower, the percentages are reversed, with 57% saying they had heard of it, but didn't understand, and 43% saying they had heard and understood.

Twelve respondents in the qualitative data spoke about Test and Trace or mentioned downloading the NHS COVID app.

The online survey asked young people how frequently they used social media channels and this showed up some important variations between the age ranges, a factor which could inform future Public Health messaging.
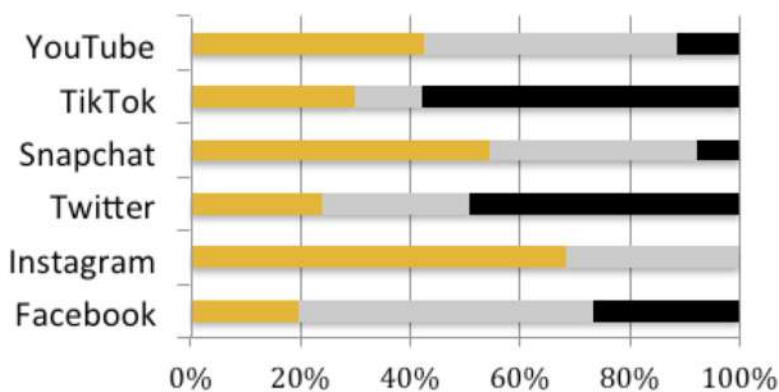

AGES: 14 - 18

AGES: 19 - 21

AGES: 22 - 24
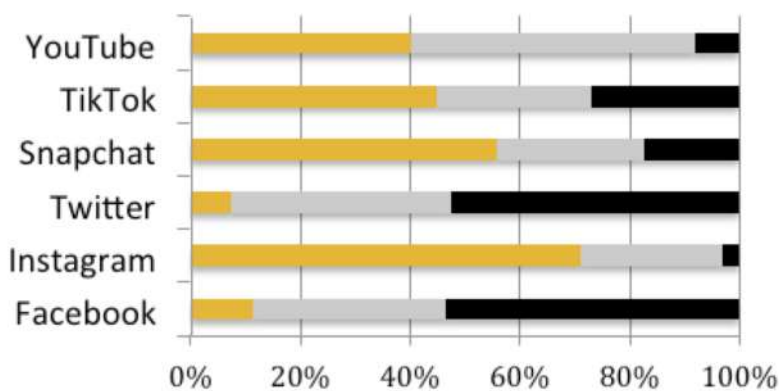
The yellow bars represent the channels young people use more than five times a day.

The grey bars represent the channels young people use one or twice a day.

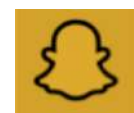The black bars represent the channels young people never use.

Instagram is the most popular social media channel amongst all age groups.
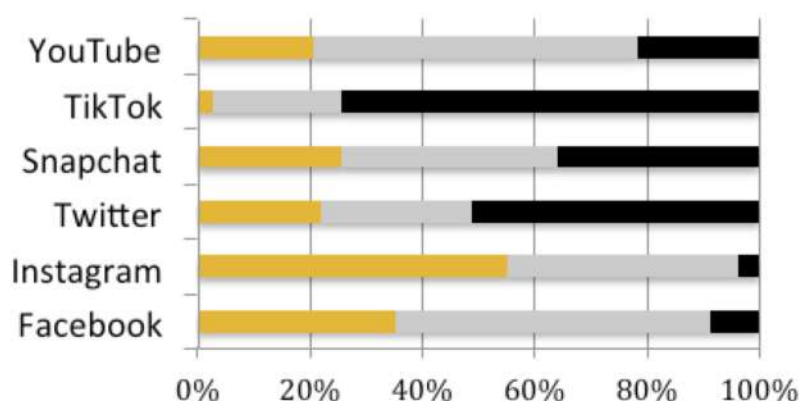
TikTok is used by 47% of 14 - 18 year olds surveyed more than five times a day

Snapchat is used by 53% of 19 - 21 year olds surveyed more than five times a day

Facebook is used by 36% of 22 - 24 year olds surveyed more than five times a day

POSTERS AND MESSAGING

The online survey asked young people their preferences on COVID Public Health messaging; which image/posters they found most effective, and which were they most likely to stop and take notice of.

Most effective (41%)	21%	19%	14%	Least effective (7%)
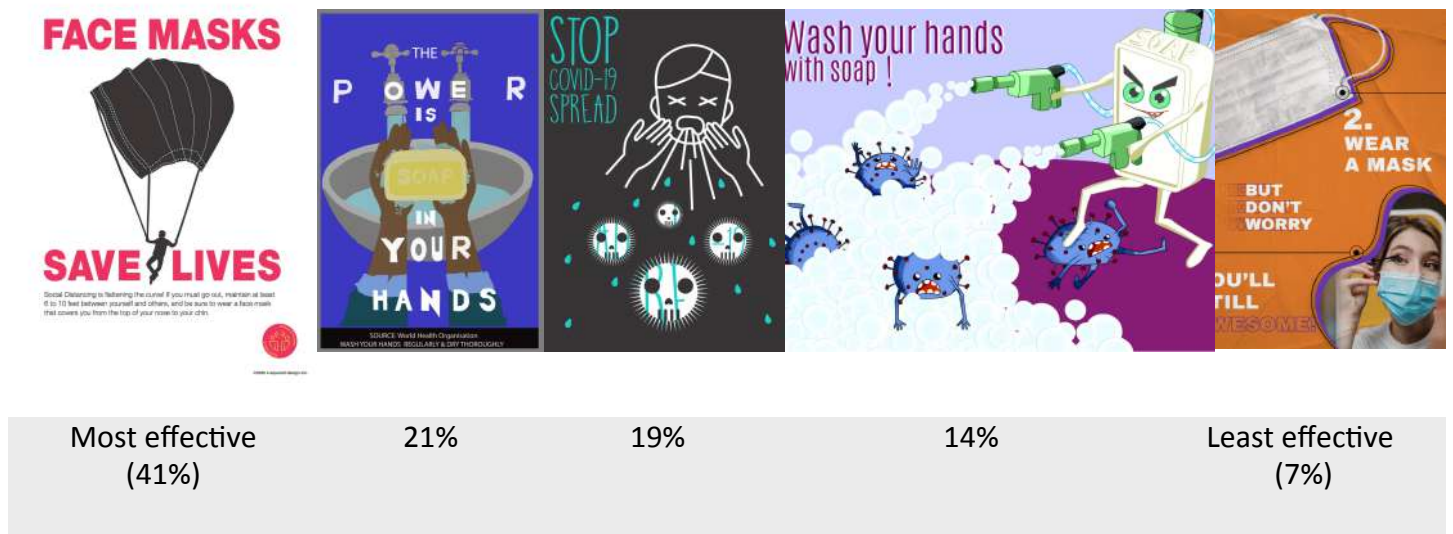
The creative posters above the young people deemed to be most effective used direct language and a clear action and reaction in terms of messaging e.g. if you wear a face mask you will save lives. The silhouette image is also unspecific in terms of gender, culture, age and race. This poster also does not use an authoritarian voice and the message in the poster applies to all people equally. The font style used are clear with high contrast primary colours. The poster is quick and easy to understand. For these reasons it is also memorable.

The Public Health posters below were scored in relation to those most likely to be read. The most popular poster/s here also use clear messaging, and simple styles.

Most likely to stop and read (31%)	27%	17%	13%	Least likely to stop and read (12%)

REACHING YOUNG PEOPLE

Social Media Channels

Data gathered around social media use showed variations between ages however Instagram proved to be the most popular channel amongst all ages. The development of image based and video messaging assets should be prioritised for the Instagram platform.

Whilst there was a low frequency of Facebook use amongst very young people (14-18), their parents and older siblings are likely to use this channel and it is from them the younger people are likely to take their lead when it comes to managing COVID-19 risks and following guidelines.

We also recommend utilising the networks within these channels by identifying and building relationships with key influencers and Facebook groups. Search sites such as those listed below can help identify which people are influencing on which channels. Influencers could get messages to those young people who are less likely to access more traditional channels such as government websites and the NHS website.

- Social Bakers
- Upfluence
- HypeAuditor

Local influencers may also be prepared to prepare their own content around specific local public health messages e.g. Liverpool FC 's TikTok channel produce a video on the NHS COVID app.

Style and Tone

Based on the findings of this research we also recommend future messaging:

- Adopts a clear and simple action - reaction format e.g. reduce social contact - slow the spread; wear face masks - save lives; get tested - protect the vulnerable.
- Avoids or limits the use of images/photographs of individuals or groups of people within poster and social media campaigns.   Evidence suggests young people respond better to images that are neither gender, culturally or age specific.

MYTHS AND MISINFORMATION

Respondents were asked whether they had heard any myths or misinformation relating to COVID. One respondent said early on in the pandemic there was a myth circulating that hand gel wasn't effective against the virus but that now this myth had dissipated. No other respondents mentioned this. Three respondents mentioned they had been exposed to information on social media questioning the efficacy of masks but that they themselves didn't believe it.

One very young respondent of a creative workshop said that he did not believe the pandemic was 'real'. Other members of this workshop laughed at this response indicating this belief was not widespread within the group. However a note sent to us by a young person said, *"I think we need to remember that the virus doesn't really affect our age group…It doesn't make sense that kids are restricted going back to school (I am only allowed in 3 days a fortnight with minimum contact in one classroom all day) while older people can go to shops and pubs"*, implying the contradictions within the social distancing rules was leading young people to speculate about the seriousness of the virus.

There was a general awareness of other myths that had been circulating such as
•   The Simpsons (television programme) predicted COVID (1 occurrence).
•   Vaccines cause autism (2 occurrences).
•   Vaccines have computer chips in them (2 occurrences).
•   Injecting bleach (1 occurrence).
•   5G started it (1 occurrence).

One respondent mentioned that he had seen the word "HOAX" written over social distancing notices in public places, and another respondent said there was a lot of information circulating about the 'Great Awakening', which refers to the QAnon conspiracy 'theory'.

Questions about myths led to further discussion around where young people go for news and information. When speaking about myths all of the young people mentioned social media. Ten young people mentioned that they would always look to verify information from a number of sources NHS website, World Health Organisation, BBC news and SKY news.

WIDER CONCERNS

The focus of the pandemic has very much been about safeguarding the population's physical health; however the young people we spoke to had much wider concerns that were having an impact on their mental health.

The economic and job market challenges of the pandemic played on young people's minds. Many felt their future had been put on hold. Would they be able to financially independent the future? How were families in which people had lost their jobs going to survive? Does this mean there will be even more food bank? Some young people were already struggling to find part-time work to support their studies and this was a causing a strain on the finances of their families who were helping them.

A number of young people also cited the effect of not seeing friends on their mental health. However there were also many of examples of strategies young people were putting in place to manage their mental health. This included going on daily walks during lockdown; sharing books, music or other material with friends online; eating well and getting exercise; maintaining social contact through social media.

Highly pertinent were the young people's concerns about the impact of lockdown and social distancing on their education now and in the future. University students frequently spoke about the quality of online education and whether they were missing out. Those attending Further Education provision also spoke about the lack of access to pastoral support, and help with things like University entry processes. Others wondered whether the University or College course they wanted to do would still be running next year or the year after. This was particularly prevalent for those who wanted to do arts based courses such as Creative Writing, Drama and Visual Arts. The lack of social contact with their peers and friends in education settings was incredibly challenging for many, and some felt this was having a negative impact on their experiences.

Prevalent amongst the young people was also a sense of social responsibility, and the wider context in which they were living. How will the world recover? Will the vaccine be politicised? What about people trapped in abusive relationships, how are they coping? How could they help key workers?

The following case studies illustrate local young people's experiences.

Jo, 19, Kirkdale

Jo has had Generalised Anxiety Disorder throughout their life ,and since 2016 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

When reports of COVID-19 were broadcast in the UK in January 2020, it kicked off a prolonged feeling of anxiety for Jo, *"it has taken a lot of work and time to get into a functional and comfortable way of living with it".* Although Jo recognises that it was a 'saving grace' being able to mentally prepare since January, the first instinct was to shut down, *"I'm not great with contamination fears, I've always had a big fear of contamination, even when I was quite young during the Bird Flu pandemic".*

Continuing to work in the office until February elevated this feeling of anxiety and began behaviours such as obsessive hand washing. Jo's employers encouraged staff to work from home prior to lockdown; an Emergency Management Team had been working on getting everyone working remotely. This was hugely beneficial to Jo's mental health. *"Being able to work from home and knowing my job is safe has protected my mental health in a way I can't even describe. Things would be so much worse if I worked in hospitality or retail or was freelance…So many of my friends are freelancers and thinking about what they have had to go through fills me with such anger and sadness…I hope the government has learnt from last time and protects these people".*

For Jo lockdown brought with it a sense of relief and control, *"During a pandemic there's nothing you can do but lockdown bought a sense of control, you can see the impact of your actions".* Jo and her partner did a few things to prepare mentally for lockdown; stocked up on board games, knitting needles; yarn and craft supplies. A sense of purpose really helped to stave off cabin fever. They watched TV shows and gave each other albums to listen to and discuss, *"I would set myself goals but wasn't too harsh on myself if I didn't meet them. Although there were lots of opportunities for acting and things like that during a pandemic surviving is enough".* Jo has no outdoor space at home but lives next to Sefton Park , they found walking with purpose helped them to deal with any concerns.

Jo is prepared to go back into lockdown and feels it's inevitable. Rather than being worried or scared about another lockdown Jo is frustrated the Government don't appear to be taking the advice of SAGE. "There are arguably simple measures that the Government aren't taking, they might be expensive but they're simple". Jo doesn't see herself as particularly vulnerable, "I'm not in contact with anyone who is sheltering and I am able to work from home".

IMPACT ON EDUCATION

Alia, 18, Speke

Alia had planned to apply for dentistry courses at University however because she didn't take her exams she didn't get the grades needed for University and is now re-taking the year, "I had lower grades because I hadn't taken the work as seriously before but I know I would have done much better if I had sat the exams".

On their final school, Alia was told by the Head of Year telling them to go home now, and that they would have a proper leavers day and prom in September. "Some people were shielding so they weren't even in school that day". This ended up not happening and Alia feels that there are people she used to see every day that she may never see again. "Now loads of my mates are at Uni and I've had to go back. I feel like my life's on hold for a year".

"I was so dependent on my friends and I went from seeing them everyday to strict lockdown. I got more anxious that I normally would, because everything was happening, and I didn't have my support properly. There are times when you need your friends".

Alia feels let down by the education system as she doesn't think there's enough recognition on how much pressure there is on everyone and that they are constantly getting mixed messages. "A-levels and applying for Uni is stressful and anyway but now we have the added stress without the support".

James, 19, Wavertree

James is at University, living in a shared house. They were initially told they would have a hybrid learning experience but with numbers rising in the city they are now completely online. James finds this a struggle, particularly the seminars because he has a very poor WIFI.

James does have access to the library, it's open for limited hours and you have to book a slot to work there or do a click and collect service for books.. *"It's not too bad but it's a 50 minute walk from my house and I don't want to get the bus at the moment"*.

"I have been going on walks outside with my friends, but we can't meet in groups or meet in each other's houses. There's a lot of confusion about what we can do and a lot of difference in people's interpretation of the rules. Some people are more relaxed, and some people are really strict".

IMPACT ON THEIR FUTURE

Jack, 19 Walton

Jack lives with depression, and the isolation of lockdown made this worse. Jack has a strong support network who live outside of his local area and his main struggle is he's not been able to see them in person. "*It's very hard to be isolated from the people that you trust and care about, even if you do meet in person, you have to stay far away from them*".

Jack regularly engages in a LGBTQ support group at the Brooke. Prior to lockdown they would meet in in person but sessions have moved online and are just online, which Jack finds difficult. Jack lives with his family in a household of nine. *"Although it's nice to have family around it can be hard because of the noise".* This is particularly hard when trying to do college work.

For Jack the biggest impact that COVID has had is on his education., *"I feel like I had 6 months where I basically had to teach myself".* He is studying Drama, Film Studies and Music at College and struggles with online learning because of poor WIFI. Jack is very concerned about the future. He is hoping to study drama at University but has seen the impact that COVID-19 has had on the arts and is worried Universities will stop doing drama courses and there won't be the opportunities to work in the industry. He's also angry about the Government's message that people in the arts should retrain in something else.

Lucy, 20, Knotty Ash

Lucy lives with her dad who owns a small business and suffers from asthma, so her concerns around COVID-19 have mostly been about him. Even though her dad's asthmatic they didn't get a letter saying he had to shield, although some of her friends did.

During lockdown Lucy began to question her future. She is planning to apply to start University next year but also thought about an apprenticeship in accounting or finance. She's very concerned about the recession.

Lucy is frustrated by the latest lockdown, partly because as she's not working she is often home alone and finds it really tedious but also because she doesn't think it's the right thing to do, particularly if it has a serious impact on the economy and businesses *"Things were really bad in March and we locked down and I really thought it would all be over by October but now things are even worse".*

Phil, 24, Dovecot

Phil has just completed his degree and is currently unemployed Phil is living with his Mum and Dad and although he is unemployed he is trying to build his profile online as a graphic artist.

He's also looking volunteering opportunities to boost his CV. He's managed to raise some income selling some of his old DVDs online. He's also looking at selling some of his designs on Red Bubble.

Phil has struggled with not being able to go out, as a film fan he's found it particularly hard not going to the cinema, which is something he did almost every day prior to lockdown. Although no one in his house is shielding, his dad does have some minor health issues to do with his kidneys, so Phil's main worry has been about his dad getting sick . He's been looking after his mental health by going on daily walks and making lists of things he likes to do, such as drawing.

Emily, 18, Walton

Emily is a part time art student at a local college. She has been looking for work since January 2020, on average unsuccessfully applying for 15- 20 jobs a week. She lives with her mum and grandmother and finances are usually tight but the situation has got worse during lockdown.

In September she successfully got a job working at a bar, however with additional lockdown measures being put into place in Liverpool, her bar has now shut and Emily will not be paid for this period. All she's been told is that they will review the situation in 16 days. *"I feel lucky though because at least I have a foot in the door and a job when the bar opens again".* She has not received any economic support from the Government.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Young people's primary concern about COVID-19 was the risk they posed to older people in their family, and to friends with underlying health conditions. Some young people (13%) had concerns about their own health but this came after their concerns for other people. The quantitative evidence that supports this claim was strongly reinforced by through the qualitative data.

Young people who are working and not in education are those less likely to not fully accept the health risks either to themselves or those around them COVID-19 poses. This implies those young people who have not gone on to further or higher education are less likely to understand the full extent the risk COVID-19 poses.

In the main, young people were following public health guidelines around hand washing.

The evidence for mask wearing is less compelling - 86% said they understood the rule, although 97% said they do or would do this. Within the qualitative data there were two occurrences of young people saying, "masks do not work" but the majority of the young people seemed to accept the value of masks in slowing or stopping the transmission of COVID-19.

Within the research data there is little evidence of a good or high levels of understanding of Test and Trace. There were high levels of awareness of the service (97%) but lower levels of understanding and its function and how to use it. This is an area for further research.

Qualitative data raised a large amount of worrying data around people's attitudes to social distancing in relation to the guidelines and rules. Although many understood the impact social distancing has on slowing or stopping the spread of COVID-19, most did not understood the government measures in place at the time (it is important to note since the qualitative research was captured these rules have since changed). Despite not knowing the government guidelines at the time, there was much evidence that many young people had made up their own policy and rules around when it was and wasn't safe to meet other people and the risks this posed to those around them and how best to minimize these risks.

CONCLUSIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government's handling of COVID-19 formed a major component of the qualitative data. There was significant evidence young people had no or very little confidence in the actions national government, and that the conflicting, ever-changing and perceived illogical guidelines on social distancing were creating a lack of trust. We have only extracted the information on this theme that will be useful for local Public Health strategy now and in the near future.

The student community in Liverpool has unique and specific concerns relating to how to manage COVID symptoms and risks in shared housing e.g. "if my flat mate feels poorly do I not go to work/seminars". Concerns around when and if to return to their hometowns were also raised.

Although young people are being exposed to a wide range of myths and misinformation on social media relating to COVID-19, including the efficacy of mask wearing and hand gel, there were only two occurrences of young people believing and accepting this information. In general there was a high level of understanding that any information for social media should be verified using more mainstream news websites and government websites.

An underlying belief that came through in both the qualitative and quantitate data was that 'other people were spoiling it for everyone else'. For example, by not using masks in shops, or not social distancing in bars - that it was these people who were responsible for the rise in cases. There would be value in principle of collective responsibility underpinning future COVID-19 messaging for example, "together we can do this" or "let's work together to beat COVID-19".

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Other recommendations for specific messaging based on the evidence in this report include:

1. Adopt an "action - reaction" style for future Public Health messaging.

2. Undertake further research on how young people behave online, and use social media (in particular Instagram) as a major communication channel for getting public health messages to young people.

3. Work with schools and civic agencies such as voluntary groups to ensure young people know how and when to 'fact check' information they come across online.

4. Make use of young people's primary concerns in relation to COVID-19 i.e. their worries about friends and family members who are older or have underlying health conditions.

5. Provide clear and concise guidelines on social contact and ensure guidelines are logical and do not contradict each other (i.e. the virus doesn't know the time).

6. Provide clear and concise guidelines on when to get tested, when to isolate and some of the less common COVID symptoms.

7. Provide Information on mental health support available for young people.

8. Provide clear information on the functioning of NHS COVID app and Test and Trace: why and how to use the service and app.

9. Work with local Universities to better understand how students are managing and reducing COVID risks in houses of multiple occupation and respond with appropriate information and messaging.

10. Harness young people's skills and capacity to deliver public health messaging and notices within their community through volunteering projects, or by using co-production models.

11. send out 'good news' stories as well as clear risk management messages to give young people hope for the future.

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