



Youth Shout Out Event

Since the pandemic began, young people have been affected in a variety of complex ways. London Councils and LB Camden recently held an online event that invited young people to share their experiences and views. This briefing summarises the discussions that took place among the young people at the event's breakout sessions.

Since the pandemic began, young people have been affected in a variety of complex ways. This includes: their home life, losing loved ones, getting behind on education, living with parents, carers or guardians who are struggling with their own physical or mental health, feeling isolated and worrying about what the future holds.

The aims of the event held by London Councils and LB Camden, were to:

- Provide a platform for young people from all London boroughs to:
 - Share their experiences
 - Talk about the impact of lockdown and restrictions on their lives
 - Highlight what they are concerned about now and for the year ahead
 - Hear their ideas and solutions to overcome barriers and challenges
- Get a better understanding of young peoples' needs and what really matters to them
- Find ways to reach out to young people across London with information, advice and messaging that works for them

Discussion on the effects of lockdown – looking back

Young people described the last year as being a whirlwind, challenging, tough, difficult and uncertain, others said it was a mixed experience that was not all bad.

Political engagement

- This generation is the future. Young people are passionate and their views should be listened to.
- Many young people reported that they have an increased interest in politics and current affairs.
- Some young people have been taking part in local youth councils and other political activities such as the London Youth Assembly.

- There was a common feeling that young people are consulted after decisions have been made and that when they are consulted, decision makers listen to what they are saying but they don't take action, leaving young people without a route to hold them to account.
- Young people called on local councillors to listen to the concerns of children and young people.

School

- Schools have learnt and are better at delivering remote education but teachers are setting more homework. It is more difficult to understand things online with limited interaction with teachers. It is also harder for teachers to spot pupils who are struggling or don't understand.
- Some students are experiencing headaches and eyestrain from too much screen time. It is taking a toll on their physical health.
- The loss of the structure of the school day has made it hard. Some feel that teachers are setting too much work and leaving them with no free time. School and home are the same place now, so it feels like they are living at school - there is no escape.
- One young person said that they had to go to school because they did not have access to internet at home, noting that it was scary and no one should be scared to go to school.
- Young people raised the issue of digital poverty and how it was unfair that individuals were not able to learn in the same way. Work has been done to address this but a gap remains. Some siblings are having to share devices and share limited learning space, too. The issue of the digital divide is not limited to lockdown but an issue that was previously hidden. This issue needs a long term solution.
- There are high levels of stress and anxiety caused by the uncertainty around exams and assessments. People that are usually high achievers have no motivation to study.

Mental health and wellbeing

- Young people said that lack of social interaction with peers, friends and family has led to isolation, loneliness and anxiety.
- One young person said that they keep reminding themselves to focus on surviving, that this is a time to survive rather than thrive. Others said that they have had time to focus on health and wellbeing, doing things like yoga and baking. One young person said they realised how resilient they are and that they are able to get on with it.
- Some schools have programmes to support children and young peoples' mental health, including workshops. Some areas have local mindfulness sessions and things like yoga. Regular in-person sessions/activities are particularly helpful for care leavers in supported accommodation who might otherwise be quite isolated.
- Young people encouraged others to talk about how they were feeling and asking for help when they need it. They noted that some people are worried about accessing help, facing barriers relating to pride or self-esteem. Some young men have had mental health issues and not felt able to be honest or access help during this time.

Communication – the need for clarity

- Trying to keep up with government policies and announcements can be overwhelming and confusing. One young person said they relied on TikTok for explanations - there was an account that explained the changes in rules every day.

- Young people asked whether boroughs could make announcements to aid clarity.

Discussion on looking forward

School

- Young people called for more targeted learning to help students catch up including tutoring and after school 1 to 1s with teachers.
- Young people want to see more use of coursework and tasks that build up evidence for grades.
- Young people called for a move away from the narrow focus on exam preparation. Schools should also teach young people a range of skills including critical thinking skills, creativity, independent living skills, how to do taxes and how to present yourself in a job application or interview.
- Young people need more opportunities to explore and pursue their interests and passions.
- After the pandemic, technology will continue to play a big part in education, including continued use of online classes, meetings, homework etc. Young people raised the challenge of identifying everyone who is still facing digital exclusion as some young people / families will not be forthcoming with information about their home environment. Online learning needs to be accessible and sustainable for future generations of pupils to come.

Health concerns

- Some young people are worried about side effects of vaccines. They mentioned that there are many conspiracy theories.
- Concern among parents also affects their children who become unsure and anxious about going back to school.

Job prospects

- Young people are the future workforce. Many are concerned about job prospects. They missed out on work experience last year and want access to the same opportunities that people had before the pandemic including work experience, apprenticeships, internships etc.
- Young people should have opportunities to take part in activities that give them experiences they can bring to the table when applying for jobs.

Volunteering and positive activities

- Young people noted the strengthening of relationships within communities and how important it was to keep that up. Many shared positive experiences of getting involved in volunteering and community action, such as delivering groceries to neighbours and food and PPE to the homeless.
- Young people called on local authorities to provide business support to social enterprises.
- One young person said they planned to do more volunteering.
- Children need to be able to get more involved in activities. It will be important to re-energise people as many have lost motivation.
- There will be many sporting events this year which may inspire personal fitness goals.

Political engagement

- Young people would like to see more opportunities for political engagement. They want to see a commitment to consult with young people about what happens next and creativity in terms of how they are involved (they don't want 50 page documents to read and comment on). They welcomed opportunities to engage with local youth councils.
- One young person encouraged others to speak up and not be afraid of sharing criticism to push for change.
- In one borough, the advocacy and participation officer has been obtaining and including young people's views. It is important to think about the needs of young people in care/ care leavers.

Environment & Climate Change

- Since the pandemic began, carbon emissions have already decreased but there is a risk that fewer people will use public transport due to the pandemic, so emissions may get worse. This is worrying for air pollution around schools.
- There should be more cycle lanes. Many young people started riding a bike or riding more often during lockdown and would cycle more often if they felt safer on the roads.
- Many have appreciated going on walks during lockdown. It is an opportunity to be more considerate of the effects on the environment in the action we take. Behaviours such as use of biodegradable products, reusing items and buying second hand, eating vegetarian should be promoted.

Wrap-up

- Young people called for more, and more meaningful, opportunities to engage with local leaders. They called for more engagement by Members with local schools and youth groups/ forums including local youth councils.
- All decisions makers, service providers and policy leads will need to consider the needs and concerns of young people as they respond to the pandemic and plan for London's recovery.

Author: Samira Islam, Principal Policy & Project Officer (T: 0207 934 9524)

[Click here to send a comment or query to the author](#)

This member briefing has been circulated to:

Portfolio holders and those members who requested policy briefings in the following categories: Children and Young People