



## MCR Pathways Lockdown Survey

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# How To Build Back Better: Listening To The Voices Of Our Young People



Scotland's Voice For Young People

# Contents

**Introduction From MCR Pathways**

**3**

**Executive Summary**

**4**

**Why Young People's Voices Matter More Than Ever**

**10**

**Reaching 1,000 Young People - Methodology**

**11**

**Young People's Experience Of The COVID-19  
Pandemic & Initial Recommendations:**

**Impact On Mental Wellbeing**

**12**

**Impact On Education & Returning To School**

**15**

**Impact On Futures**

**23**

**Final Word From Our Young People - Voices That Matter**

**29**

# Introduction from MCR Pathways

As we emerge from lockdown, now, more than ever, it is vital that we capture and listen to the voices of our young people. Through the Young Scottish Talent Programme, MCR supports care-experienced and disadvantaged young people in secondary schools across the country. Despite belonging to a group at high risk from COVID-19 disruption, these talented young people rarely get the opportunity to have their voices heard.

As the economy and social systems are slowly rebuilding and reopening, we must ensure that our most vulnerable are at the centre of the discussions and decisions. We need to listen to their stories and hear their challenges and concerns. We have so much to learn from them. Only by acting on their feedback, can we ensure their needs are addressed as we work to build back better.



To get to the very core of what matters, we engaged and surveyed more than 1,000 young people from across the country, gaining insight into their experience of lockdown, including: mental wellbeing, home learning, and impact on career plans and future expectations.



## Relationships and trust are at the heart of MCR's approach.

Our young people have trusted us to share and document their experiences. Some have gone to great lengths to do this, sharing individual and meaningful insights. Rest assured that we have supported every young person who has shared difficulties and challenges.

This report summarises the key findings and insight that will ensure all young people are supported through education and have the tools they need to fulfil their true potential. The first of three reports outlines the statistics and overwhelming conclusions made clear by the comments and experiences young people have shared. Initial recommendations have been included to ensure the current recovery plans include all of what matters. The second report will highlight differences in responses, examining how age group, gender, region and home circumstances impact young people's experiences. The final report will give young people the opportunity to tell us the changes and support they need to feel confident in their education and futures in a final set of recommendations.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this and for your commitment to do whatever it takes to ensure our young people are always defined by their talent and potential, never by their circumstances.**



*Iain MacRitchie*

**Iain MacRitchie**  
**MCR Mentor, Founder & CEO**





# Executive Summary

1,347 young people (aged 13 -18) from city, town, rural and island settings participated in the MCR Pathways Lockdown survey, which ran for six weeks over June and July 2020. Over 1,000 young people provided detailed and comprehensive responses to questions on their mental wellbeing, home learning, expectations for the future, and support needed for the return to education. Those surveyed are Scotland's most disadvantaged young people for whom lockdown and home education were extremely challenging. 56.1% are care-experienced and either currently or were previously in the care system. 43.9% of the young people are on the edges of the care system experiencing various forms of disadvantage.

Impact on Mental Wellbeing	Impact on Education & Return to School	Impact on the Future
<p><b>66.8%</b> feeling low, anxious and stressed</p> <p><b>88.8 %</b> sleeping patterns impacted</p>	<p><b>68.2%</b> did no school work</p> <p><b>80.5 %</b> hard to get back school routine</p>	<p><b>79.6%</b> worried about grades</p> <p><b>61.5%</b> leavers worried about next step</p>
<p><i>"It's hard to sleep when you have a lot on your mind, especially worrying about school and your next steps since everything has been a big change and it's not as if it's a change that we had control over."</i></p>	<p><i>"Since I'm used to having people around to explain it face-to-face, it's been a bit harder getting help with schoolwork, especially since it's quite often that I struggle putting what I need help with into words and I struggle learning from words alone if I don't understand the text."</i></p>	<p><i>"It will affect the job industry and work experience part because for what I want to do when I leave school, I need a lot of work experience. I'm also concerned about how it will affect my family."</i></p>

## Impact On Mental Wellbeing

**Two thirds (66.8%) of young people are feeling low, more anxious and stressed since lockdown.**

"It has been so hard connecting with my friends as I haven't really got much to talk about because I don't do much on a day to day basis anymore. This also has affected my mental health quite badly and my stress levels are very high because I'm struggling to do work that I know I need to do."

**An overwhelming 88.8% of young people told us their sleeping patterns have changed and over a quarter (26.5%) said they were experiencing significantly disrupted sleep.**

## Impact on Education & Return to School



**Since lockdown, 68.2% did not use any learning materials provided by the school. Of those, nearly half did not because they felt the materials were hard to understand, 42.5% were too stressed and anxious. Significantly, over a quarter had caring duties that impacted on their capacity for home learning.**

### Young People Who Struggled To Use School Materials:



49.1%

Materials were hard to understand



42.5%

Too stressed & anxious



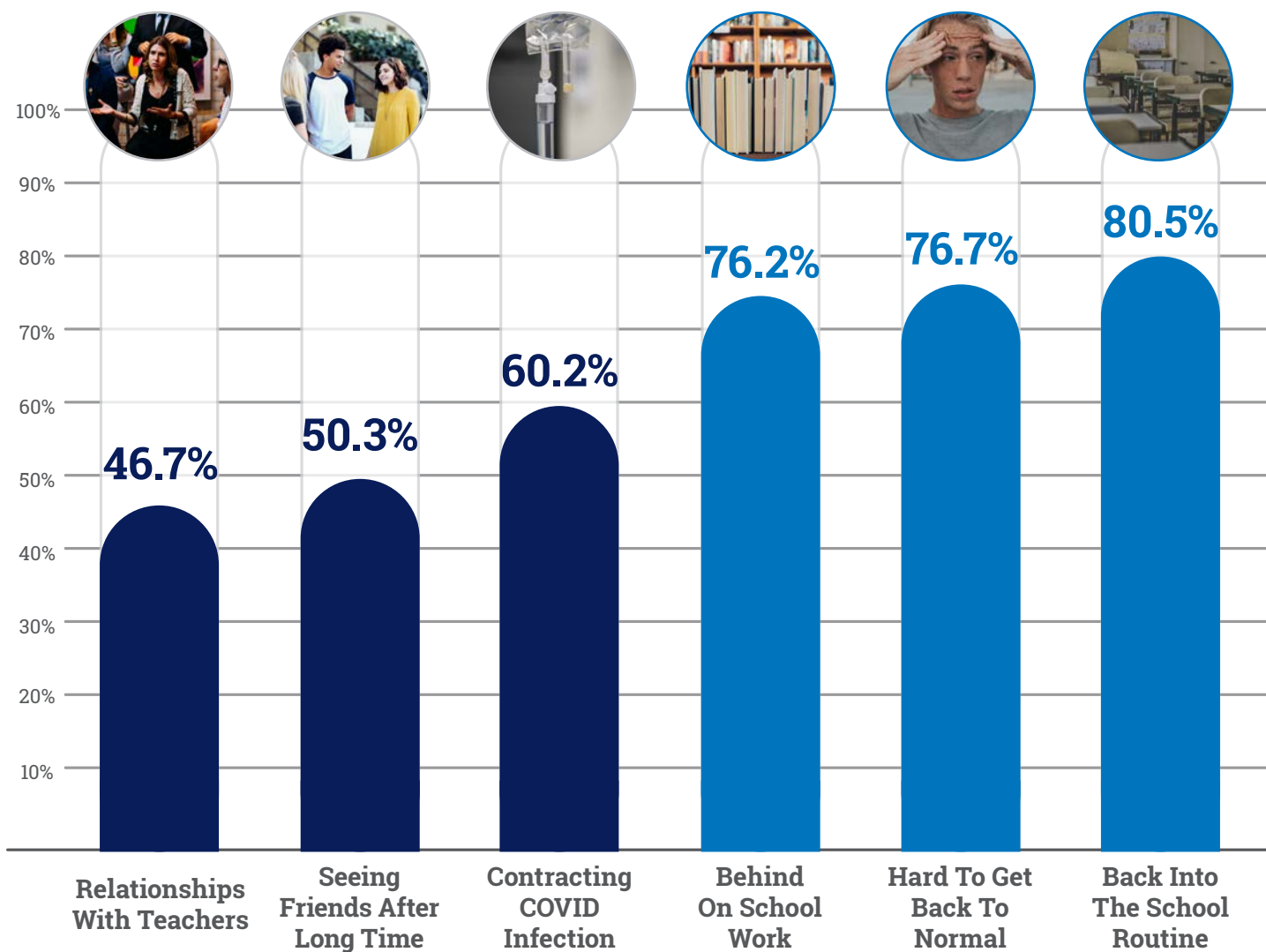
26.7%

Had caring duties

When asked about returning to school, young people are most concerned about getting back into the school routine (80.5%); finding it hard to get back to normal (76.7%); and being behind with school work (76.2%).

Six out of ten (60.2%) are concerned about COVID infection; five out of ten (50.3%) are worried about not having seen friends for a long period of time. 46.7% are concerned about re-establishing relationships with teachers.

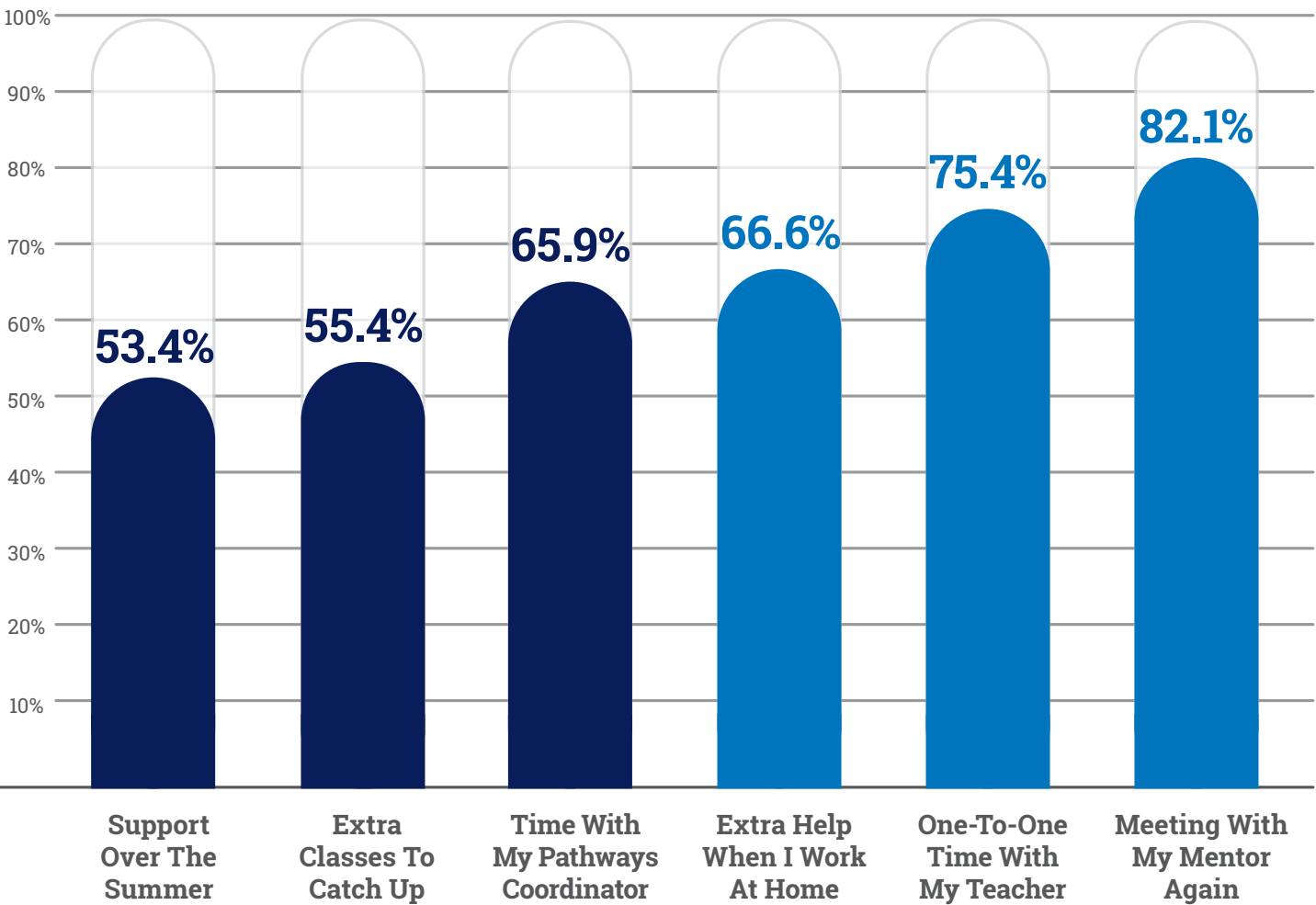
### Concerns About Returning To School:



"I have lost all social interaction abilities, I feel it would be really tough speaking to people again. Feeling more angry than usual because I am normally quite calm when I'm at school but worried about being angry and rude."

To make it easier to go back to school, an overwhelming 82.2% of young people stated that meeting with their mentor regularly again would help. 75.3% also asked for one-to-one time with their teacher. And two thirds of young people (66.6%) stated that they needed extra help with learning at home.

Returning To School Support:



“Since meeting my mentor I’ve had such a better mindset than ever before. I used to be stressed about exams all the time and I had no confidence in myself at all, but my mentor has helped me realise that I need to start believing in myself and do what’s best for me instead of putting other people first. If it wasn’t for my mentor I think this year at school would have been a lot more difficult for me.”

Young people have fed back very clearly that they want to be back in school full-time. However, if there is a requirement to use blended learning and attend school part-time, 54.3% want to attend every day or 3 - 4 days a week. The least preferable option (10.8%) was attending 1 - 2 days.

To be able to work at home, 58.1% of young people asked for more time with teachers when in school and 27.7% more time online with teachers. A surprising 42.1% wanted printed copies of resources.

“I would rather be in school full time but if not I would like my teachers to give me all my work printed instead of online because it’s harder to understand and concentrate while using a computer.”

There are many practical constraints to learning at home. 14.5% don’t have IT & internet access and nearly two in ten (19.5%) don’t have the space at home.



## Impact on the Future

Demonstrating resilient attitudes, **64.8%** of young people say that COVID-19 has not changed their future plans for what they want to do when they leave school. **19.4%** now want to stay on in school for longer. Only **15.2%** are no longer sure what they will do when they leave.

Just 20.4% of young people believe they will get the grades they deserve. 55.1% are worried they won't and 24.5% feel certain there is no possibility that they will.

Of those leaving school, just 38.5% are feeling confident about their next steps. The majority are worried they won't get into their chosen university / college, or are unsure what to do next.

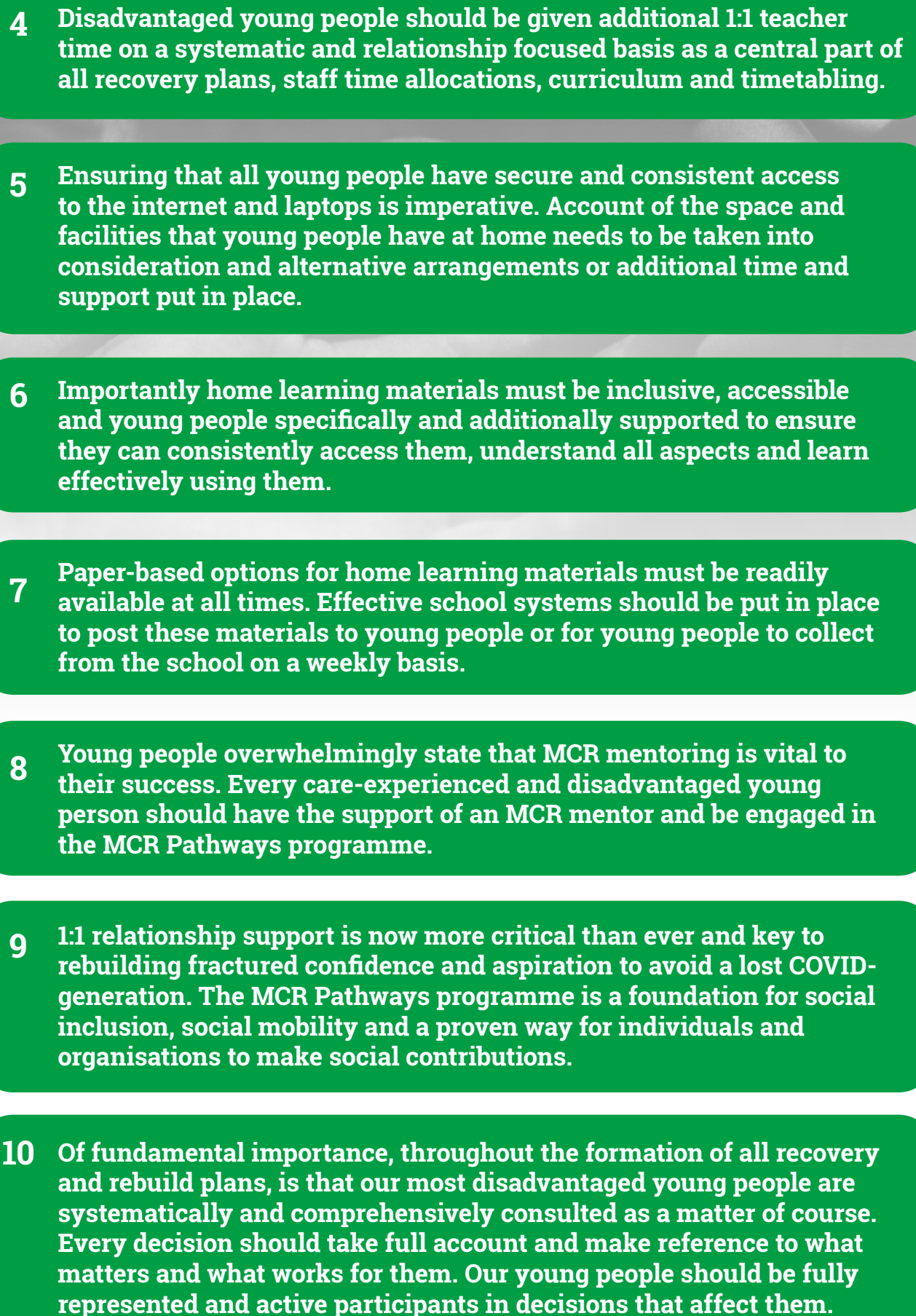
"Feel like I'm going to fail all my S4 exams and then, because it's too hard to study at home, I will then go on to fail my S5 exams."



## Initial Recommendations

- 1** School should be provided on a full-time basis. In the event of further lockdowns, care-experienced and disadvantaged young people should be prioritised and provided with continuous full-time schooling as standard. Either delivered in school or if necessary in other public buildings. Young people want and need routine and structure.
- 2** It is important to reframe schools as safe havens, community hubs and critical learning spaces where essential trusted relationships, opportunity and aspirations are formed.
- 3** It is vital that schools dedicate several periods each week to deliver a recovery curriculum encompassing high quality support for mental wellbeing, re-establishment of peer and teacher relationships, healthy sleep, exercise and eating habits. Teaching and discussion of these issues needs to be given equal priority to academic subjects in the first few months.



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- 4** Disadvantaged young people should be given additional 1:1 teacher time on a systematic and relationship focused basis as a central part of all recovery plans, staff time allocations, curriculum and timetabling.
- 5** Ensuring that all young people have secure and consistent access to the internet and laptops is imperative. Account of the space and facilities that young people have at home needs to be taken into consideration and alternative arrangements or additional time and support put in place.
- 6** Importantly home learning materials must be inclusive, accessible and young people specifically and additionally supported to ensure they can consistently access them, understand all aspects and learn effectively using them.
- 7** Paper-based options for home learning materials must be readily available at all times. Effective school systems should be put in place to post these materials to young people or for young people to collect from the school on a weekly basis.
- 8** Young people overwhelmingly state that MCR mentoring is vital to their success. Every care-experienced and disadvantaged young person should have the support of an MCR mentor and be engaged in the MCR Pathways programme.
- 9** 1:1 relationship support is now more critical than ever and key to rebuilding fractured confidence and aspiration to avoid a lost COVID-generation. The MCR Pathways programme is a foundation for social inclusion, social mobility and a proven way for individuals and organisations to make social contributions.
- 10** Of fundamental importance, throughout the formation of all recovery and rebuild plans, is that our most disadvantaged young people are systematically and comprehensively consulted as a matter of course. Every decision should take full account and make reference to what matters and what works for them. Our young people should be fully represented and active participants in decisions that affect them.

# Why Young People's Voices Matter More Than Ever

Across the globe, young people's education has been dramatically disrupted due to COVID-19. This is the longest period young people in the UK have not attended school. The impact is profound.

A [recent](#) Educational Institution of Scotland study of 26,000 teachers found that 61% highlighted low pupil participation in learning as a significant barrier to educational progress during the lockdown period. More than half of the teachers said that they were concerned pupils lacked adequate IT and internet access. 64% raised concerns that young people may be facing challenging situations at home that prevent engagement with learning. This clearly evidences the concerns of educational professionals.

Other surveys, including [Young Scot](#), give insight into the experiences of the pupil population as a whole. The MCR lockdown survey is distinct in focus on our most disadvantaged young people. Their feedback demonstrates that whilst young people across the country have struggled through lockdown, for those with experience of the care system and in other ways disadvantaged, challenges were significantly magnified.

Many of these young people already faced multiple barriers preventing them from engaging with education, including lack of IT equipment, no or unreliable internet connections, chaotic household situations, historic family disengagement with education, limited space to study, and caring responsibilities. COVID-19 and lockdown served to compound and intensify many of these challenges. By reaching our most vulnerable young people, we are able to provide insight into those who need the most help.

This attainment gap is only expected to widen. How we act now as a country will determine the futures for thousands of our most disadvantaged young people. It is within our power to close this gap. Listening to the voices of young people will enable us to determine how.



## About MCR Pathways and Young Scottish Talent

MCR Pathways is a Scottish school-based mentoring charity supporting those in or on the edges of the care-system to realise their full potential through education. MCR delivers its Young Scottish Talent programme in secondary schools supporting young people through group work, mentoring and Talent Taster work experiences. Our vision is that every disadvantaged young person gets the same education outcomes, career opportunities and life chances as any other young person. Participation in the YST programme has been shown to dramatically improve educational achievement, confidence and wellbeing, as reported in [January 2020](#).

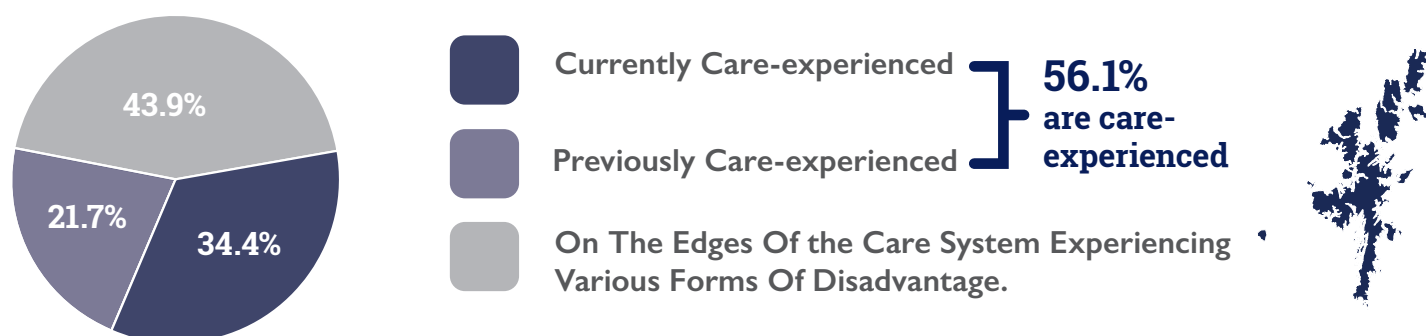


# Reaching 1,000 Young People - Methodology

Young people aged 13-18 (year groups S3-S6 and 2020 leavers) were invited to take part in the survey. The findings are fully representative of the views of Scotland's most disadvantaged young people, with responses from those living in cities, towns, rural, and island areas all included.

The survey ran for six weeks, from 1st June through 7th July. 1,347 young people participated, with 1,025 providing detailed responses. Young people were asked 20 questions on mental wellbeing, home learning, support needed for the return to education and expectations for the future.

## Breakdown Of the Young People Surveyed:



- **1,347** young people were involved in the research of which **1,025** provided detailed and comprehensive feedback.
- Of those providing detailed responses, **Almost 900 young people were either part of or in scope for the MCR Pathways programme.**
- City, town, rural and island settings were represented in **60 schools** from **Glasgow and Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire**, the central belt, to **Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Shetland.**

The survey results give a clear picture of young people's experiences since lockdown began and their thoughts on the impact of their future plans. This insight should feed directly into policy and education provision to support our most vulnerable young people.

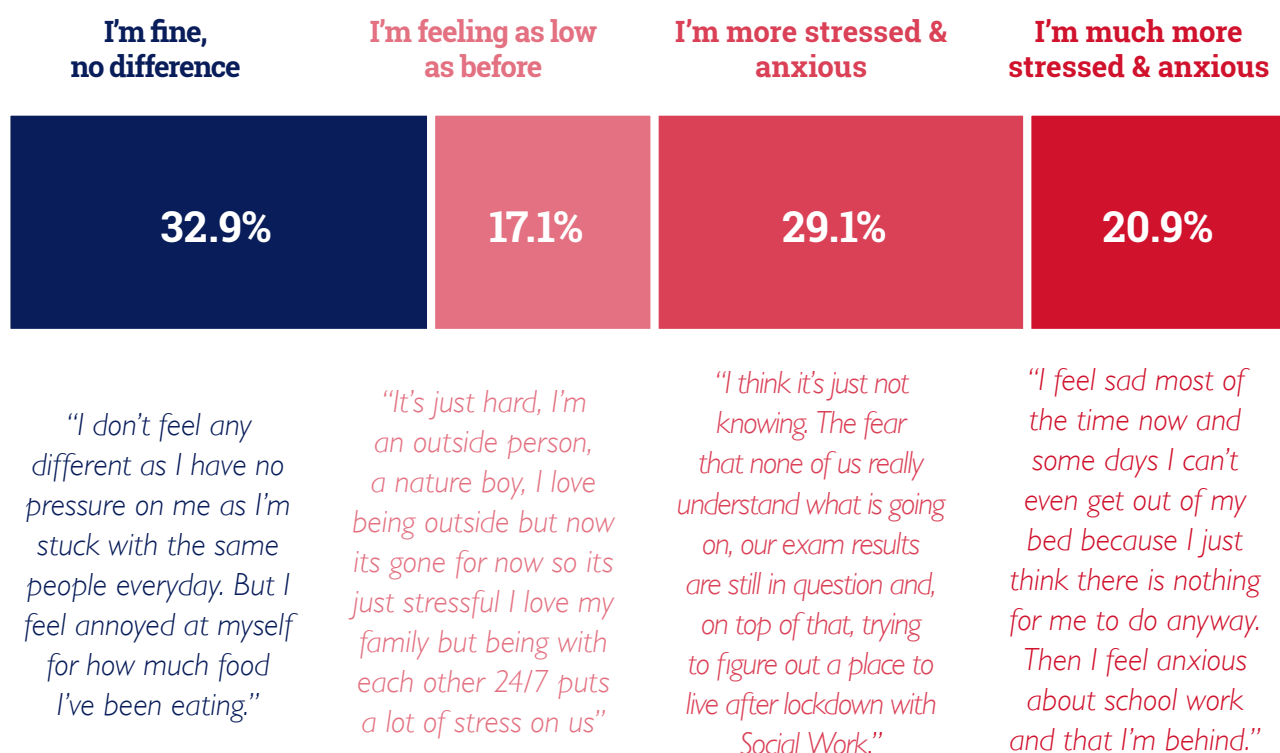
## Impact On Mental Wellbeing

For many, lockdown has put a strain on mental wellbeing. This is especially true for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people. Struggles with mental wellbeing can take many forms, including anxiety, sadness, anger, or lack of interest in normal hobbies or school work. We need to be aware that young people may vary in how they express mental wellbeing. For this section, we included questions that not only asked directly about mental wellbeing, but also sleep, worries, and how young people have been spending their time.

### Findings:

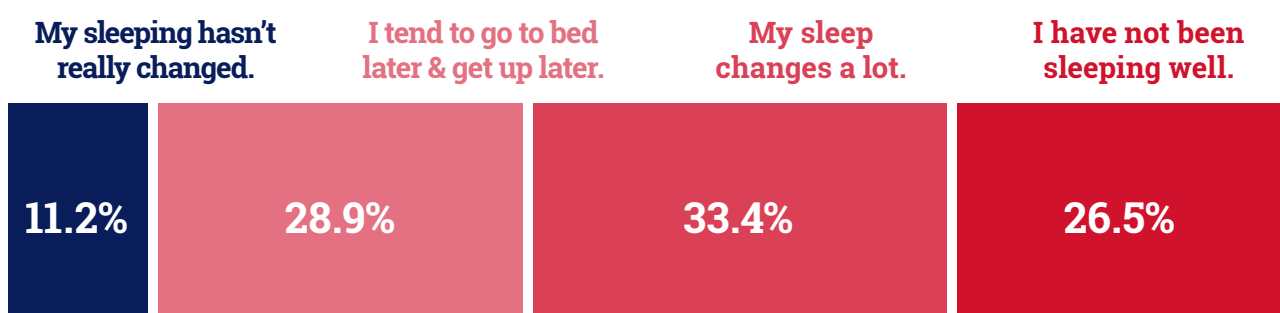
- Two thirds (66.8%) of young people report feeling low, anxious and stressed; whilst **50% report feeling more anxious and stressed** compared with before the pandemic.

### How Lockdown Has Affected Young People's Mental Wellbeing:



- 88.8% of young people have seen a change in their sleep patterns.** 26.5% of young people report severely disrupted sleep. **Mental wellbeing and stress were the most commonly listed reasons for poor sleep.**

### How Lockdown Has Affected Young People's Sleep:





# What Young People Are Telling Us...

## About The Hardest Thing In Lockdown:

"It has been so hard connecting with my friends as I haven't really got much to talk about because I don't do much on a day to day basis anymore. This also has affected my mental health quite badly and my stress levels are very high because I'm struggling to do work that I know I need to do."

"It's been super stressful at home because my whole family routine has been flipped upside down! I live with 7 other people usually so it's really hectic."

"For some people school is the only social time they have and now that it's not possible at the moment, it has impacted their mental health as it could be the only place where they feel safe and included."

**19.6% of young people told us that challenging situations and relationships at home were the hardest part of lockdown.**

## About How Their Sleep Has Changed:

"It's hard to sleep when you have a lot on your mind, especially worrying about school and your next steps since everything has been a big change and it's not as if it's a change that we had control over."

"Now I have medication to help me get to sleep as I stopped sleeping altogether."

"With not having the constant structure and routine of school, my sleeping has been greatly impacted. As a result there's been days when I don't even want to get out of bed and I know this is the case for a lot of others as well."

## About The Emotional Impact Of Lockdown:

**"I think it's just not knowing. The fear that none of us really understand what is going on, our exam results are still in question and, on top of that, trying to figure out a place to live after lockdown with Social Work."**

**"I've also gained so much more anger over the course of lockdown which isn't normally like me."**

**"I feel sad most of the time now and some days I can't even get out of my bed because I just think there is nothing for me to do anyway. Then I feel anxious about school work and that I'm behind."**

## Recommendations - Mental Wellbeing



**School should be provided on a full-time basis. In the event of further lockdowns, care-experienced and disadvantaged young people should be prioritised and provided with continuous full-time schooling as standard. Either delivered in school or if necessary in other public buildings. Young people want and need routine and structure. It is also important to reframe schools as safe havens, community hubs and critical learning spaces where essential trusted relationships, opportunity and aspirations are formed.**



**It is vital that schools dedicate several periods each week to deliver a recovery curriculum encompassing high quality support for mental wellbeing, re-establishment of peer and teacher relationships, healthy sleep, exercise and eating habits. Teaching and discussion of these issues needs to be given equal priority to academic subjects in the first few months.**



**Young people who are care-experienced or come from disadvantaged backgrounds must be prioritised for additional mental wellbeing and 1:1 support. This may require increased system capacity through deployment of mental wellbeing practitioners within schools.**

# Impact On Education & Returning To School

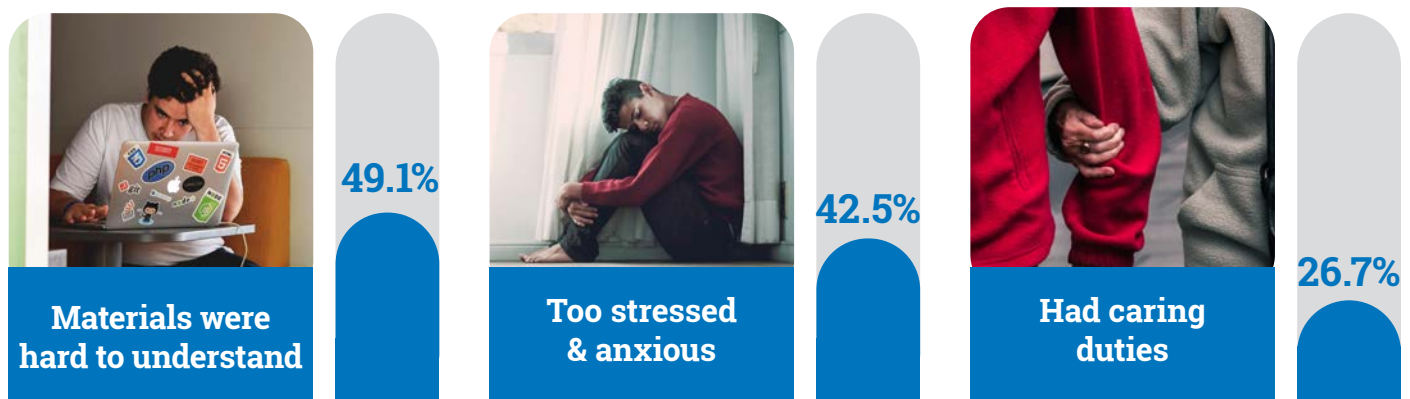
When school resumes in August 2020, young people in Scotland will have missed nearly half a year of standard classroom education. Whilst the restrictions apply to all young people, their experiences have varied drastically. Between 15,000-20,000 of our most vulnerable may be experiencing [digital exclusion](#), meaning they don't have the IT equipment or internet connection needed to keep up with their work online or stay in contact with their support network. The Scottish Government and charities, including MCR Pathways, are committing resources to get young people the vital IT they need in time for the new term. However, many have already missed out.

To understand their circumstances better, we asked young people about their experience of online learning during lockdown. We wanted to know the whole picture. Caring responsibilities, disruption at home, and mental wellbeing struggles are just a few of the barriers young people might be facing that make completing work challenging.

## Findings:

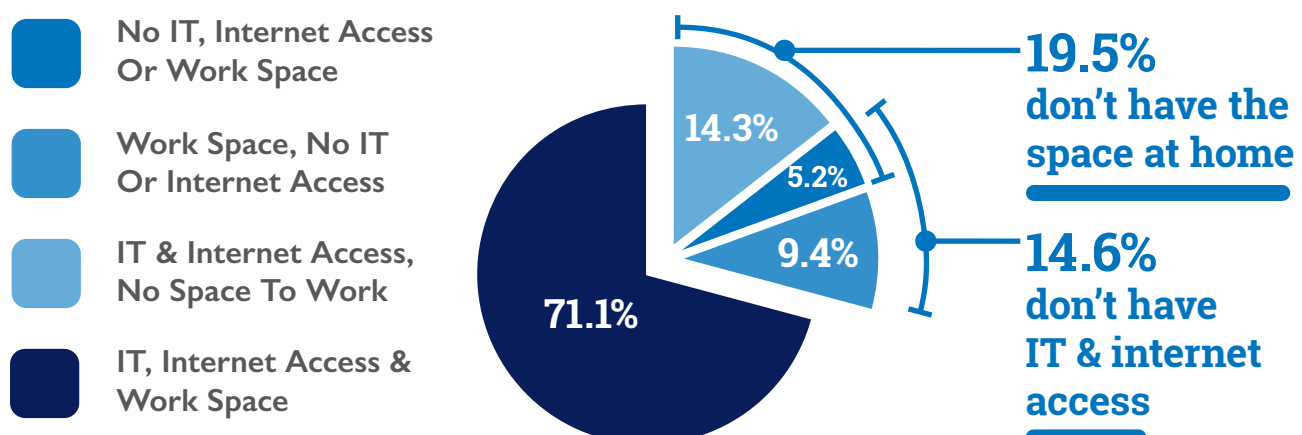
- Since lockdown **68.2% did not use any learning materials provided by the school.**
- Of those, **49.1% were unable to work through school materials as they found materials difficult to understand.** **42.5% were too stressed and anxious.** Significantly, **26.7% had caring duties** that impacted their ability to complete school work.

## Young People Who Struggled To Use School Materials:



- For many, **the greatest challenge has been space and equipment for home learning.** 14.3% have IT and internet access, but no space to work. 5.2% don't have IT and internet access or space to work. 9.4% have space to work but don't have IT and internet access.

## Barriers With Home Learning:



- Just 20.4% of young people believe that they will get the grades they deserve.

## Concerns About Exam Results:



I believe I will get the grades I should

20.4%



I'm worried that I won't get the grades I should.

55.1%

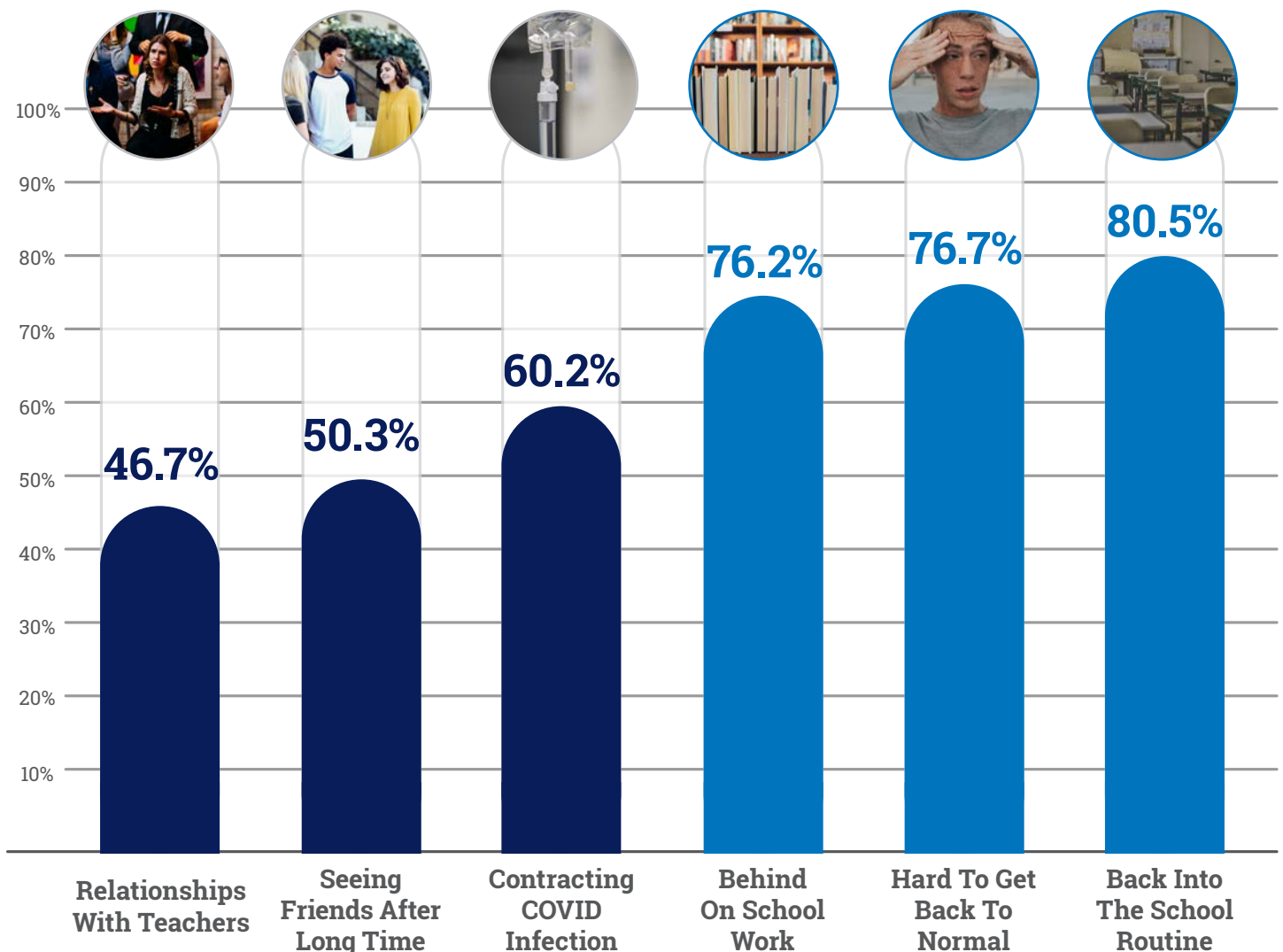


There is no way I will get the grades I should.

24.5%

- For the vast majority of young people, **being behind in their education and being able to get back into their school routine are their biggest concerns** about returning to school (76.7% and 80.5% respectively).

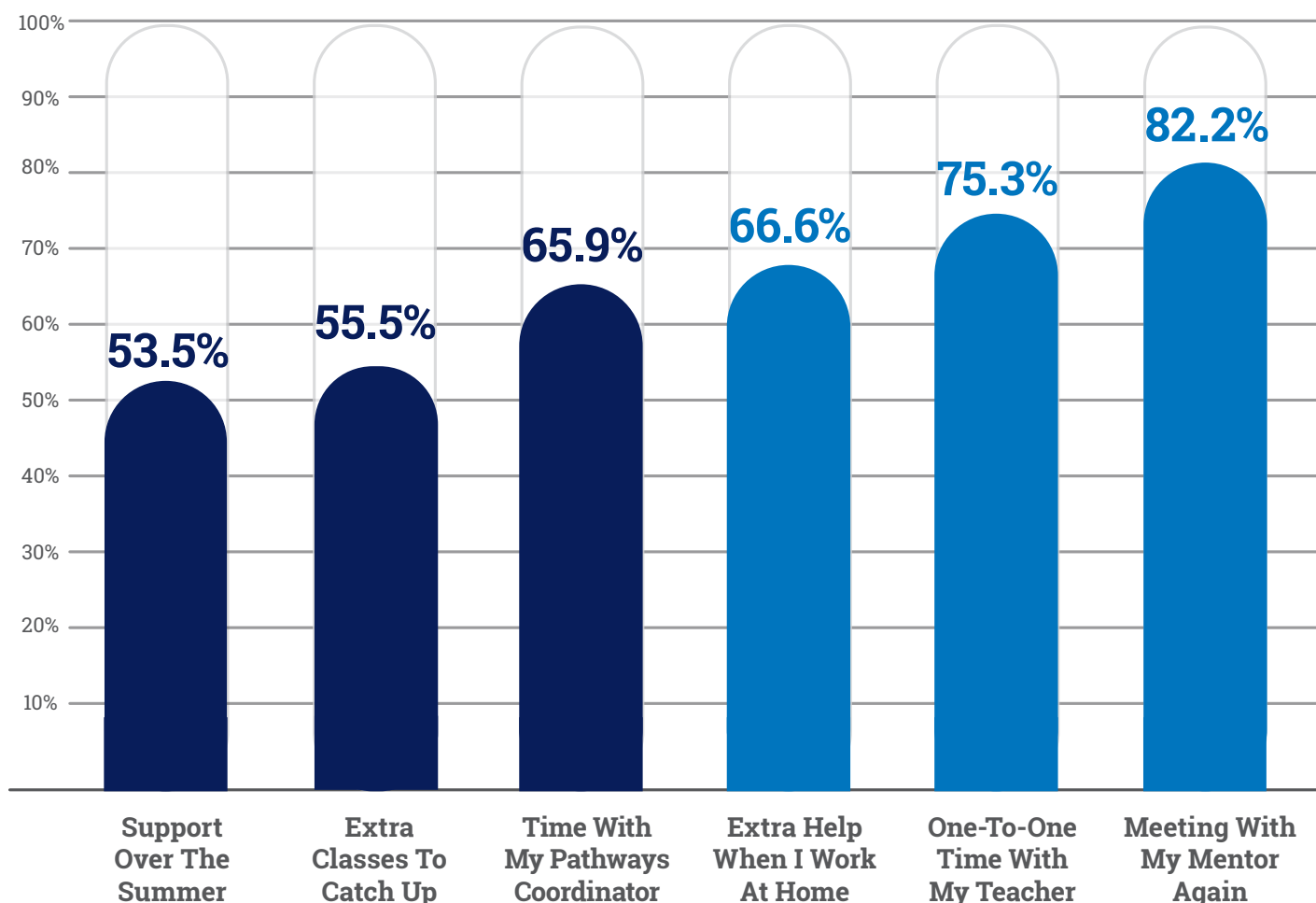
## Concerns About Returning To School:





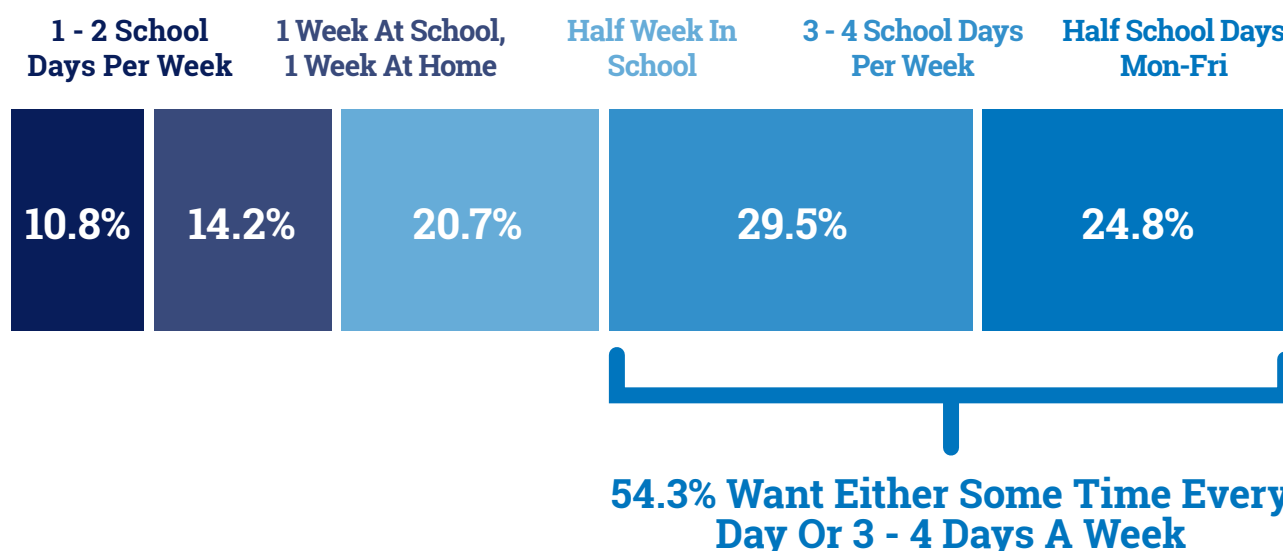
- Overwhelmingly, young people told us that being able to meet with an MCR mentor (82.2%) and having more 1:1 time with teachers (75.3%) would make returning to school easier.

## Returning To School Support:



- Young people want to return to school full-time. However, if there is a requirement to use blended learning and attend school part-time, they have expressed a desire to be in school as much as possible. 54.3% want either some time every day or 3 - 4 days a week. The least preferred option (10.8%) was attending 1 - 2 days.

## Blended Learning - Returning To School:



- To be able to work at home, **58.1% of young people asked for more time with teachers** when in school, and **27.7% more time online with teachers**. A surprising **42.1% wanted more printed copies of resources**.

## Blended Learning - Support:



## What Young People Are Telling Us...

### About Learning At Home:

**"My school has provided learning materials because I couldn't get on the links they were sending but thankfully they sent paperwork home for me."**

**"It's hard to understand something you have never been taught. In class it is much easier to grasp the tasks when a teacher has explained it in a way you understand and it is still fresh in your memory when you get home and have work to do from the house."**

**"My school is also open during the week so I attend as much as possible. It is a comfortable environment for me to do my work as well as keep a well balanced diet as they ensure that we have both breakfast and lunch and keep as positive as possible within the restricted 2 or more metres we are away from each other."**

## About Their Inability To Work At Home:

"As it moved online you need to load files which the work is on, but it usually doesn't load correctly on phones and I don't have a computer so I get frustrated and decided to stop because it was just getting me worked up."

"I need things to be explained in more detail than others which is hard to get when I need to wait for the teacher to email me back as my anxiety does get worse during the wait."

"Since I'm used to having people around to explain it face-to-face, it's been a bit harder getting help with schoolwork, especially since it's quite often that I struggle putting what I need help with into words and I struggle learning from words alone if I don't understand the text."

## About Their Home Learning Set Up:

"The laptop has helped me keep in contact with my mentors through video calls, which also gives me a reason to look presentable instead of wearing pyjamas every day. I didn't have a working space but boredom motivated me to create one with a foldable table from Christmas which I turned into a desk and an old computer chair."

"I stay with a lot of people which include 5 younger siblings, 3 of which are under the age of 5. This makes it hard to find a bit of peace to do the work. My house also doesn't have a dining table or desk area to do it meaning I usually have to sit on my bed not getting the peace I need as I share a room."

"I don't have a laptop or iPad to study. I use my phone and can't send word documents or any important work to teachers. My phone's messed up."

## About Their Upcoming Exam Results:

"I personally need a grade in a specific subject for entry into both university and a college course and if I don't get it then it will set my plans back by 2 years. I don't think it's been clarified enough just how grades are being given this year so I'm a bit confused about that as well."

"I'm scared about doing exams next year because we're at home and not in school so it's harder to learn at home."

"I am a little worried as I had a rough bump during prelim times and I got a conditional for University only to be told I can't do higher English and I am not getting any school work for English so I can't prove myself."

## About Their Ideas To Make Blended Learning Work:

"Definitely as much time with the teacher as I find it extremely difficult to learn at home. I find being in a classroom environment with a teacher and rules makes learning a lot easier and manageable."

"I would need access to a laptop or some electronic device to contact teachers, use teams and to gain information from my teachers. I would need extra support from my teachers especially for maths as I struggle with maths."

"My Pathways Coordinator and mentor always support me so when I go back to school, I know they will support me the best they can and if I have more time with teachers in school they will be able to explain it more."





## About Their Concerns For Returning To School:

"I have lost all social interaction abilities, I feel it would be really tough speaking to people again. Feeling more angry than usual because I am normally quite calm when I'm at school but worried about being angry and rude."

"It will be difficult with school, I will be very behind and will be very confused with the work. I will need extra support from my teachers as it takes me quite a long time to understand things such as maths."

"I don't know what it's going to be like when we go back and since I'm not much of a talker, I've only kept contact with 2 or 3 people. This makes me quite anxious but also about my work because I hate getting into trouble when I have tried."

## About What Would Make Returning To School Easier:

"I think teachers and pupils should have more one-to-one sessions to make sure they are keeping up and support them if they aren't and need help with anything."

"I think extra classes would really help me because I do feel a bit behind and talking to my mentor, Pathways Coordinator and counsellor would help my anxiety."

"Because I feel I am behind and the support and extra work would make me feel more confident and less stressed about going back to school."

## About The Best Timetable If Part-Time Learning:

**"I really miss being in school and the more time I get in school means more time with my teachers to ask questions and get a direct and immediate response so I don't dwell on the issue all day."**

**"I would love to be in school the whole week, every week."**

**"I would rather be in school full-time but, if not, I would like my teachers to give me all my work printed instead of online because it's harder to understand and concentrate while using a computer."**

## Recommendations - Education & Returning To School



**Disadvantaged young people should be given additional 1:1 teacher time on a systematic and relationship focused basis as a central part of all recovery plans, staff time allocations, curriculum and timetabling.**



**It is imperative to ensure that all young people have secure and consistent access to the internet and laptops. Best practice guidance on home learning should be established, published and continually reviewed by disadvantaged young people and a range of professionals. Importantly home learning materials must be inclusive, accessible and young people should be specifically and additionally supported to ensure they can consistently access them, understand all aspects and learn effectively using them.**



**Paper-based options for home learning materials must be available at all times. Effective school systems should be in place to post these materials to young people, or for young people to collect from the school on a weekly basis. The latter also providing an opportunity for wellbeing and learning check-in.**

## Impact On Future Plans

Lockdown has the potential to cause lasting impact on young people's education, careers and future plans. For those already on the edge of education prior to lockdown, who struggle with engagement and attendance, it is essential that we rebuild their support networks. In this section, we asked young people if lockdown had affected their plans for the future and what most concerned them about their next steps after leaving school.

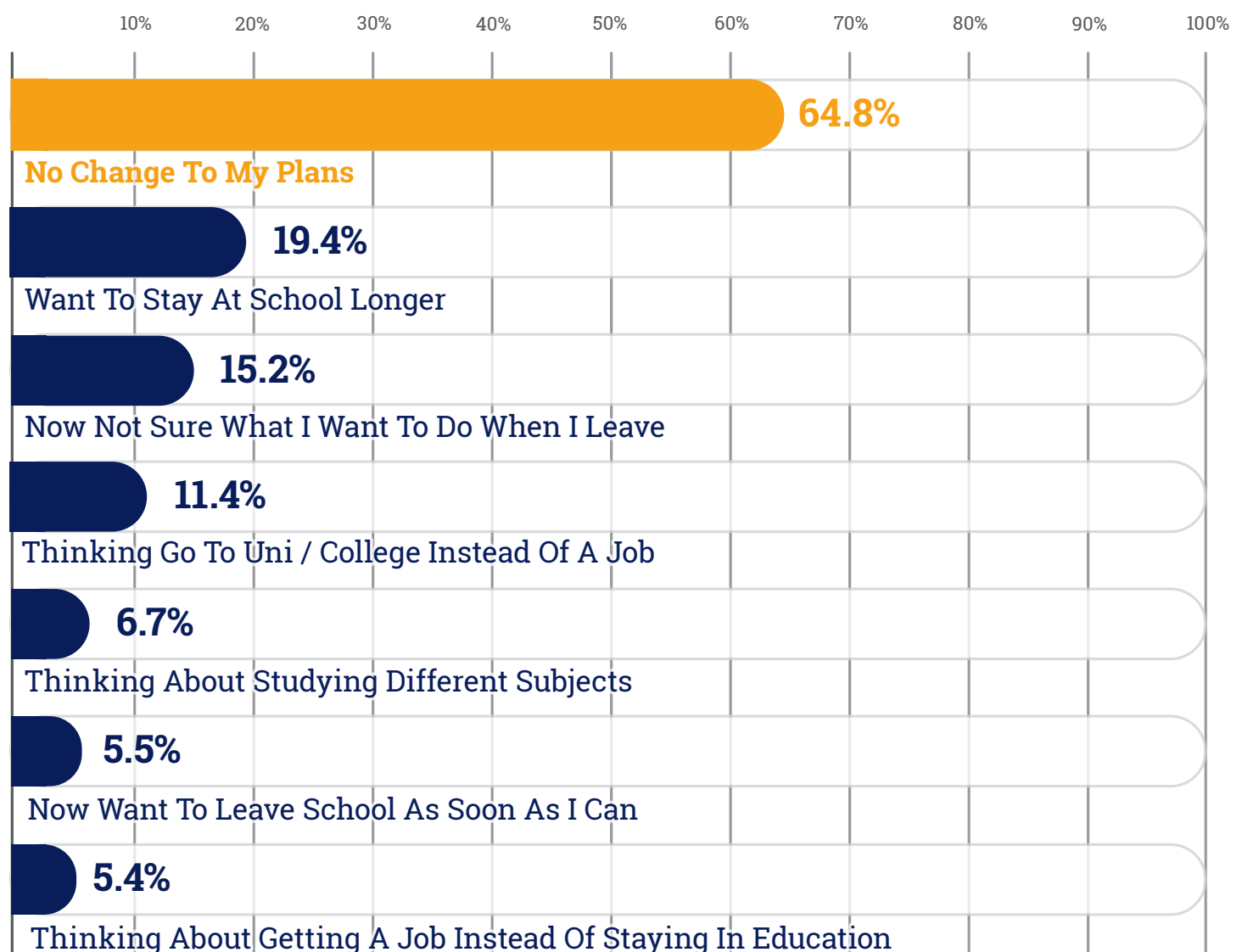
Encouragingly, young people still feel optimistic about their plans when they leave school, however school leavers are significantly more worried about their next steps compared with younger pupils.

For much of the survey, there was negligible correlation between age and young people's answers. However, in this section, we saw clear age differences in responses. By understanding young people's concerns about their future, as a country we'll be better able to provide them with the support they need to thrive.

### Findings:

- **64.8% of young people say that COVID has not changed their future plans** of what they want to do when they leave school. **19.4% want to stay on in school for longer** and only **15.2% are no longer sure what they will do when they leave**.

### COVID-19's Impact On Leavers' Futures:



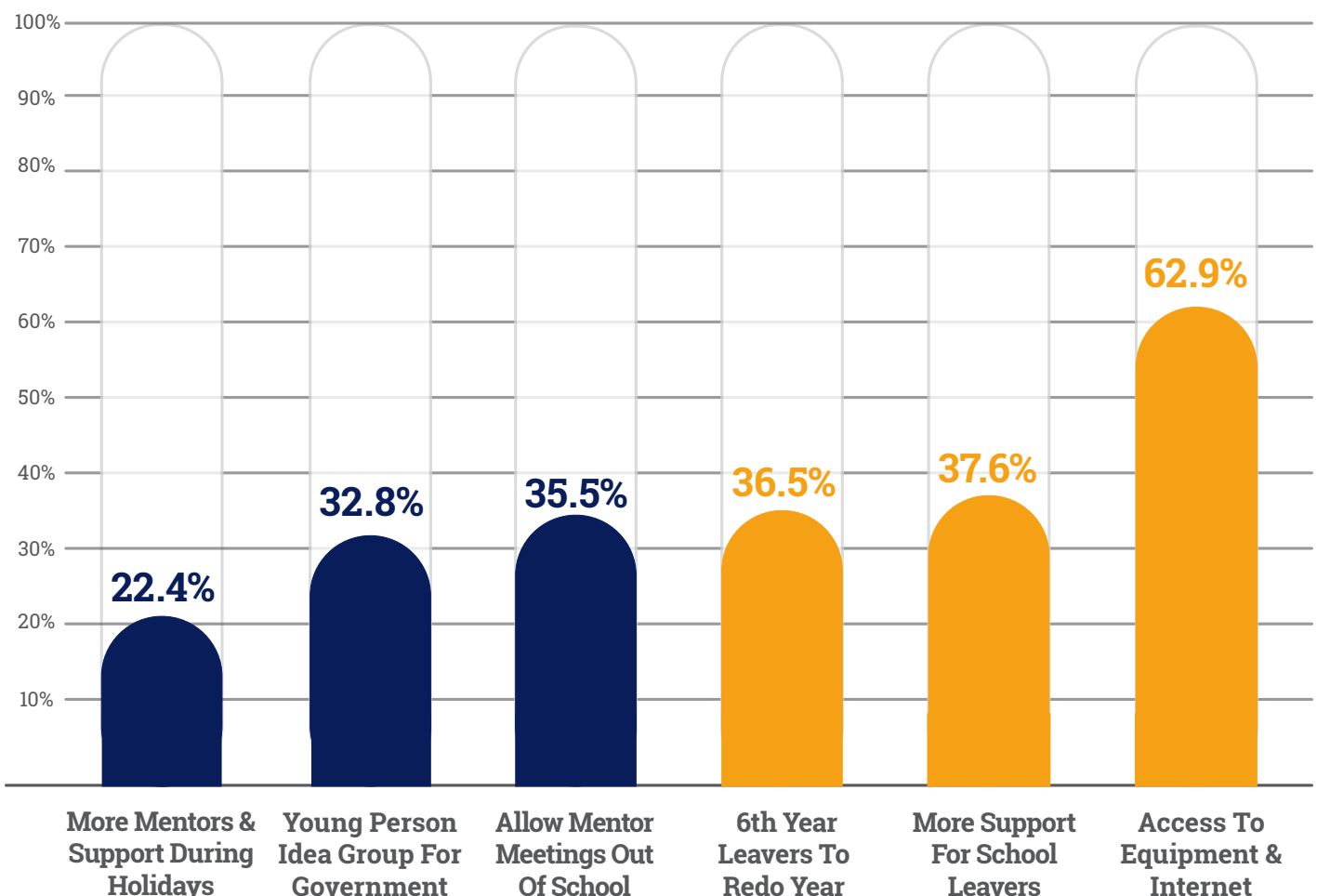


- For school leavers, just **38.5%** are feeling **confident about their next steps**, with just under half of respondents telling us they were worried that they wouldn't get a college/university place or a job. The same number were also worried they wouldn't be prepared for college or university.



- Again and again, **young people have indicated that access to IT and the internet is a major concern.** **62.9%** of respondents said that ensuring everyone has access to and support of this vital equipment is the **most important** support young people need in the new academic year.

## MCR Support - What Support Is Needed In The Next Year:





# What Young People Are Telling Us...

## About Changes To Plans For Leaving School:

"I'm starting to think I'm not good at things or that my family don't think I can do the things I want."

"I worry I will not achieve qualifications in school if I'm expected to use online learning so I will be disadvantaged."

"I don't know what qualifications I will be able to achieve in 5th and 6th year if part-time/home learning continues."

## About Concerns For Leaving School:

"I haven't gotten the chance to even see my university yet so I don't know the layout. I'm worried I won't be prepared."

"Just wish I finished getting help from my school for applying for an apprenticeship."

"I'm quite worried that I won't get into my first choice for university so I have decided to do summer school for my second choice for safety but it's quite hard."

## About The Long-Term Impact Of Lockdown:

"I feel that lockdown has affected how I will cope with National 5 subjects. I was already worried and now I'm even more concerned. I think that the pressure of a pandemic, going back to school and my recent home life issues, including being kicked out, will be too much stress and strain on my mental health which will lead me to not doing great on my National 5s. This means that if I don't pass I won't get the amount of Highers I need for college or uni."

"Feel like I'm going to fail all my S4 exams and then, because it's too hard to study at home, I will then go on to fail my S5 exams."

"With the incoming recession jobs will be much harder to get and this could potentially destroy all my plans for life and might throw me into poverty depending on the continued response from the government. Also, the fact that the school year ended prematurely and without a proper farewell was demoralising."

## About MCR Mentoring:

"I think MCR is a big part of how I have evolved positively in the school. I appreciate everything my coordinator has done for me and know a weight got lifted having MCR through my school years."

"My mentor has done amazing at assigning me with activities and resources to keep me occupied. I think I just need to work on my own motivation to keep active. They have pushed me to go on more walks which I have really enjoyed and they have chatted to me a lot about university and my worries."

"Since meeting my mentor I've had such a better mindset than ever before. I used to be stressed about exams all the time and I had no confidence in myself at all but my mentor has helped me realise that I need to start believing in myself and do what's best for me instead of putting other people first. If it wasn't for my mentor, I think this year at school would have been a lot more difficult for me."

## About Support Needed In The Next Year:

"For the people still attending school I think it's important for them to access learning equipment through their MCR coordinators to allow their brains to keep functioning through this time. I feel like I am given tonnes of support which eases my worries about leaving school so suddenly and moving on with my life."

"I think everyone in 4th, 5th and 6th year should be given the chance to repeat the year if they want to."

"Every week I would always be excited to see my mentor and talk about how our weeks have went. My mentor was even helping me prepare for my prelims and she made me calm and made it easier for me as she provided me with one-on-one help."

## About How They Are Feeling Overall:

"I just keep trying to move forward and be happy. It's hard but I don't tell anyone because I'd rather keep everyone happy. I've been trying to stay positive but nothing is working so I just stay up thinking about it."

"My lockdown experience has been the hardest. I thought it would be okay but it hasn't. My mental health has just went down one big hill. I have lost so many friendships, so it's been a really challenging time for me."

"I'm hoping that when we go back to school, students don't get shouted at for not doing the work teachers give us. It's been very hard mentally and I hope the teachers understand that. Some people get it hard at home, they don't need it from the school."

"I really appreciate having my mentor in this time. I think everyone should have mentors as I know without them lockdown would have been a lot more of a struggle. I think people just need someone to talk to and communicate with through times like these and be able to share their circumstances and have a laugh."



## Recommendations - Plans For The Future



Lockdown has been a particularly challenging experience for care-experienced and disadvantaged young people. It is essential that schools should implement a comprehensive support package that gives young people options, including the opportunity to repeat the 2019-20 academic year, access to careers advice and wellbeing support services within schools.



In the case of a second regional or national lockdown, schools should ensure disadvantaged and care-experienced young people have full time access to face-to-face, socially-distanced learning. Preparatory planning should take place now with contingencies set of other public buildings to act as learning hubs and school communities. Effective home learning strategies, including how to effectively access online resources, should be taught explicitly to all young people.



Young people overwhelmingly state that MCR mentoring is vital to their success. Every care-experienced and disadvantaged young person should have the support of an MCR mentor and be engaged in the MCR Pathways programme. 1:1 relationship support is now more critical and a key way to rebuild confidence and aspiration to avoid a lost COVID-generation. The MCR Pathways programme is a foundation for social inclusion, social mobility and way for individuals and organisations to make social contributions.



Of fundamental importance, throughout the formation of all recovery and rebuild plans is that our most disadvantaged young people are systematically and comprehensively consulted as a matter of course. Every decision should take full account and make reference to what matters to them and what works for them. Our young people should be fully represented and active participants in decisions that affect them.



## Impact On Mental Wellbeing



**“My sleep schedule has totally flipped. I’ve been sleeping all day and been awake all night and it has been hard to get back into a normal sleeping routine where there is no daily structure.”**

**“It’s quite hard to learn at home since it is a completely different environment and my household is very busy which just makes it harder to concentrate and the lack of entertainment has been very hard too.”**

**“I seem to feel more sad and depressed and very scared due to this situation.”**

**“When I was at school I didn’t have much time to think about stuff but, since I’m at home... I’d rather be at school. I miss so many people from school. I don’t like staying at home all the time, I would like to meet closer people to me.”**

**“Struggling with mental health issues makes staying at home and being excluded from daily life extremely hard as it makes my attempt at improving my mental state almost impossible for me.”**

**“Being a young carer for my mum has made staying at home easier to do my caring role, but has made it suffocating as there is no free time to get out and relax. Even going out feels stressful as keeping distance from people is hard to do in some circumstances. Lockdown has had a strong impact on a lot of young people’s mental health in my age group including me and some of my friends.”**

**“I just feel like I’m in prison; daily exercise then back to my cell.”**

**“My sleeping pattern has been really bad some nights. I’m not even going to sleep. Then I’m sleeping all day. It has been really messed up.”**

**“I will be staying up to around 3 and 4 in the morning on House Party with my friends. We talk all night long and it’s the only way we can really keep in contact with each other. But as I’m staying up till this time I don’t usually get up till around 12 or 1 pm.”**

# Impact On Education & Learning

**“But it’s much better in person rather than online because the teachers explain well in class rather than online classes.”**

“I can always get on the internet but I’m always busy with my family and a lot of tough situations have been popping up so I have had zero time to get my work done.”



“I have internet access and everything but I find it extremely hard teaching myself and even understanding what they’re asking from us as pupils.”

**“I have to look after family and help around the house, so that takes up most of my day. By the time I’m finished, there’s no time.”**

**“The schools need to decide on one platform to use for learning because it’s getting confusing because teachers are using different platforms or putting the work on every platform.”**



“I have the space and materials, but I live with children all under the age of 3 and they tend to come into my room a lot so I can’t really focus.”

**“My anxiety is really stopping my school work. I look at my work and I get too anxious because of how much there is. I feel like it’s too much but I’m trying to keep up.”**

“I think work is confusing and hard to get through when there isn’t a teacher in front of me to help me and keep me on track, otherwise I get distracted or don’t know what I’m doing.”

**“They barely marked them so I got demotivated fast since I couldn’t see if I was correct or not.”**

**“It’s very crowded in our small flat, so finding a place to study has been difficult.”**

**“I do have a phone but obviously it would be so much easier and motivating if I did have a computer as computers/laptops were used in school occasionally.”**

“There isn’t a desk or dining table for me to do my work at so unless I do it in my bed, which isn’t the best place to concentrate and work at, I can’t do it. I have access to the internet but I don’t have a computer or tablet to use so it makes it difficult as it doesn’t work properly on mobile phones.”

"I have a vulnerable parent and I'm scared of something bad happening to them or anyone in my family. I'm worried about getting to see my friends again for multiple reasons and I need to fix some relationships with my teachers because I had messed up massively."

"I feel as if I didn't try hard enough in my prelims and since December, I realised what the exams will actually be like, and I started making study plans with my mentor and doing a lot more work than I had ever done or was supposed to be doing."

"Having been at home for this long, I'm going to find it hard to get back into the school routine especially going into S4, the last year of school (well for me anyway), as I need the right qualifications to get into college."



"I am worried because I haven't been at school or had the correct work."

"I would prefer to have more alone time with teachers so then it's easier to understand."

"I didn't do very well in my prelims. I think I would've done well in the exams but I don't think my teachers think the same."

"I have been doing my mentor meeting by Google Meet and hope to do this over the Summer."

"I find it very difficult to read and learn off of technology. I prefer to have paper copies of work, it makes it so much easier for me."

"I am living with someone who has asthma so I don't like the idea of maybe passing it on to them."

"I am worried that I will not receive the results that I'm looking for. When we got told the school will be shutting, that's when I knew I had to get all the work evidence I needed for each subject so that I had it all in and I didn't have to worry."



**“It’s hard to understand something you have never been taught. In class it is much easier to grasp the tasks when a teacher has explained it in a way you understand and it is still fresh in your memory when you get home and have work to do from the house.”**

“Home learning really isn’t working for me personally. I feel when I go back to school it’ll improve my learning as I can ask more questions and understand better. Communication over emails can be difficult to understand sometimes.”

“Feel like when I go back to school I will need as much help as possible to keep my head in the right place while doing work.”

“I just want everything to go back to normal.”



**“I think all the teachers are trying their hardest. Doing 1:1 meeting would be good for not only me but a lot of people who I know would think it’s easier to talk in person because sometimes emails or messages can be taken wrong or in the wrong context.”**

**“I want days at school like a 5 day week, but I think 4 days is good as well and then the rest of the week I’m on my computer doing the work.”**





## Impact On Future Plans



"It will be harder to establish a good routine with part-time learning and I feel with the part-time learning, I may not be able to spend time with my friends because they may not be in the same days. I also feel a bit set-back on my journey towards the future and worry that next year's prelims and exams may be affected because of all that is going on."

"I'm still completely focused on uni/college."

**"How it will affect the job industry and work experience part because for what I want to do when I leave school, I need a lot of work experience. I'm also concerned about how it will affect my family."**

"I feel like I will get more stressed and anxious about school than before. I'm also worried about how I will behave towards teachers. Being under extra pressure can make me be rude towards my teachers even in the past before lockdown."

"I am worried about my predicted grades and I am unsure if I will meet the entry requirements."

**"As I need specific results to get a place in college, I do not know if I have even passed. Also COVID-19 can ruin my future plans of being in the travel industry."**

**"I feel like this has made me want to stick with what I want to do even more. I had a talk with our school's Careers Advisor and she asked if I had a plan B and I really didn't want to have a plan B. I want to stick to what I want and go for it."**

**"I am only going into fourth year, however I am concerned about the eventual impact this might have when I apply to university or college."**

"I think lockdown has made me realise to stick in at school and never give up on something you want to achieve or your goal."

**"I still want to follow the same career path as before, it's just going to take me longer than planned due to expected exam results and fears."**

"A lot of people have died and the entire world might go into another depression or due to the lack of teacher help, I might fail my exams."

"I want to stay on till S6. I'm S4 now going into S5 and thinking about the future. Leaving school is still hard and questionable as it's all going to change."



**“I would love to see my mentor again as she has provided a lot of support and has made me feel safe and happy around her.”**

“I honestly think lockdown has completely changed my mindset, but at the moment I’m not sure if that’s good or bad. Knowing MCR was there and having check ups on me every now and again made me feel a lot less stressed.”



**“Mentors are a good thing for young people. MCR Pathways is probably the best thing that I have got from school as I have got my Duke of Edinburgh. My coordinator has made time and effort for every single person he has worked with even now I’m leaving school this year, I will be up seeing him every so often for a catch up.”**



“I think the 6th year leavers should have a chance to be offered to come back as they might not get the grades they want due to difficulties that isn’t their doing or their fault. If they don’t want it, so be it, but I think it should at least be offered. Coming from a new 5th year as of this year, I know how stressful it can be.”

**“Lockdown has been difficult and hard. I just want a normal school routine back. I’m struggling without my school routine, online class is just you sitting in your house on your phone or laptop that I do all the time and get very bored very easily.”**

**“My main issue is a lack of equipment. It has really stunted what I can do.”**

“I have known my mentor for my whole journey through school. I would still like to keep in touch with my mentor for as long as possible as we built a relationship over the years and would be upsetting if contact was just cut off.”

“I would have loved to be able to meet my MCR mentor out of school. I think it would really help my mental health to get out and communicate with them as they have helped me through a lot. I also think there should be more support for school leavers as if they are like me they were nervous about university before lockdown and lockdown has made that anxiety worse.”

**“Once in lockdown, I didn’t realise how privileged I was and how much I took for granted. I’m happy my MCR mentor is still in contact with me.”**

**“I have been supported by MCR Pathways and don’t know what I would do without their guidance and support.”**

**“We must do anything to ensure this generation gets a proper education or else who will take care of the economy next?”**



“Lots of young people are struggling with mental health and don’t have any support so I think it would be good to be able to set out a support system where people can meet a mentor or MCR Pathways Coordinator face-to-face while following the rules.”

“Lockdown has made me closer with family and it has also made me argue a lot more with family as they are the only people I see really. If you’re having a bad day, they’re going to get the attitude which normally ends in an argument.”

“I’ve had so much support from not only my mentor, but my Pathways Coordinator as well. Even if it’s just having a little chat once a week to see how I’m feeling, it’s made such a difference to my last year at school and also made me learn a lot about myself.”

**“It feels as though the world has changed so much around me that I feel as though I’m the only one feeling empty and lost. I know I’m not the only one who feels this way, but it’s really weird as this situation has never occurred before.”**

**“I feel like this lockdown period is or has affected a lot of young people, including me, and it would be great if we had some support with internet access and online mentoring. Hope to see you all as soon as possible. It’s been a difficult time as people are passing away and I don’t have any contact with my friends so I don’t know how they are.”**

“The struggles of day-to-day life have been difficult. Not being able to leave the house much to see friends has really affected me, but being able to stay in contact over social media has really benefited me. Along with the constant engagement with support staff from my school checking in, it has helped to reassure me that this is only temporary and things will become more ‘normal’ eventually.”

**“I really appreciate having my mentor in this time. I think everyone should have mentors.”**

“I feel very lucky to have been part of this programme and if anyone gets the opportunity to take part, make sure you do, because it helps you so much knowing that if anything goes wrong or you’re struggling, you always have somebody to speak to.”

**“Never thought I’d say this but I’m really missing school. Just wish I could have spent my last few months with my friends as that’s me left. I can also not thank my MCR coordinator enough for what he has done for me over the years and he’s made me a better person than I was when he first met me.”**