

# **Scrutiny of Covid-19 and its impact on children and young people in Wales**

## Summary Note 3

October 2020

In April 2020 the Children, Young People and Education Committee set out to explore how the outbreak of Covid-19 affected all aspects of life for children and young people in Wales. This inquiry is ongoing and the Committee is keen to hear from everyone that has been affected. This includes children and young people and those involved in supporting children and young people across sectors, including – but not limited to – education, health, social care, and youth work.

This summary note contains the views of young people submitted via: key partner organisations who held interviews with young people; emails sent directly to the Committee; and paper worksheets distributed through key partner organisations and returned via freepost to the Senedd's citizen engagement team.

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It is of importance to the Children, Young People and Education Committee to ensure the voices of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are at the forefront of scrutiny. To support this, the citizen engagement team has focused on how to engage specific audiences who could be considered as being from disadvantaged backgrounds. The engagement approach included working closely with key partner organisations who communicate with young people regularly. Appendix 1 includes a full list of organisations that the citizens engagement team worked with for this engagement. By offering guidance and encouragement to these organisations, they have enabled the input of valuable experiences directly from young people into the inquiry and to bring these views to the Committee's attention.

In addition, by adjusting the questioning used for the main Call for Views, where young people could directly email the Committee, a paper worksheet was created for young people who may have required a non-digital route to engage with the consultation. This was distributed with the support of key partner organisations and foodbanks. Within this summary note you can see images from the paper survey written by the young people who participated.

This is the third and final summary note that will be developed as part of this engagement. Several notes have been created to enable continuous reporting during the course of an ever changing situation for the young citizens of Wales. You can read [summary note 1](#) and [summary note 2](#).

This summary note aims to conclude the key themes arising that may be of relevance to the Committee's work - further alternative methods may be explored in the future if required.

The themes and quotes within this note have been selected on the basis that they are reoccurring themes and illustrative to the current situation. Where it's possible and appropriate, quotes have been selected to add context.



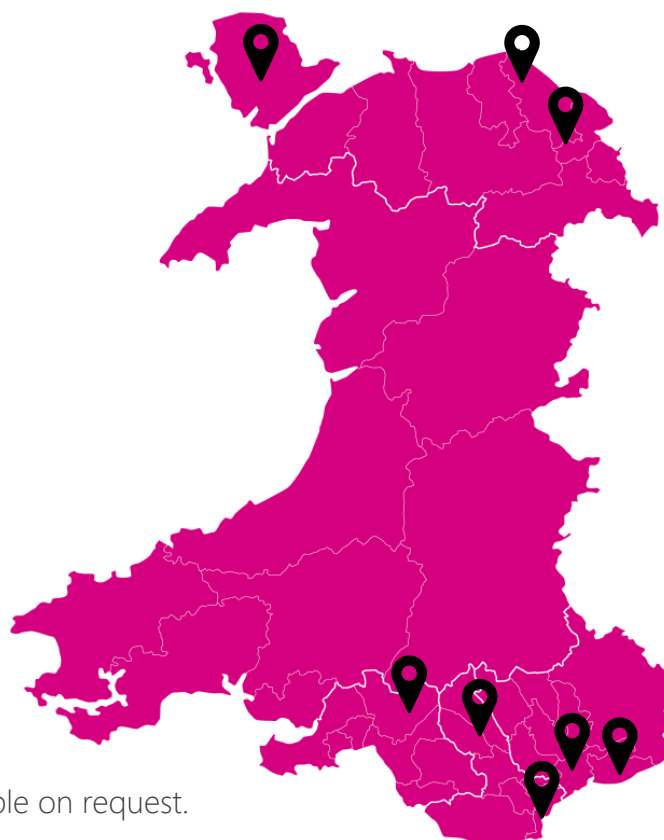
## Data Sample

Findings in this report have been based on the responses from 51 young people from across Wales. The priority was to gain qualitative information about the experiences of young people during the coronavirus pandemic. This would enable a more in-depth understanding of the issues young people may have encountered. Appendix 2 displays the questions participants were asked. The intention was not to compare experiences by the participants' age or location. However, to ensure we were gaining a national view from a number of ages, young people were able to self-select regarding sharing their rough location and age. Therefore this data sample reflects the information we received and is not a full insight into the participant's demographic. A variety of methods were used to gain this information due to the need to adapt the process for a range of audiences.

Method	Number of participants
Paper worksheets	26
Via a key partner organisation	15
Via email to the Committee	10
Total	51

Age range	Number of participants
0-3 years old	1
4-10 years old	7
11-16 years old	23
17-25 years old	8
No response	12
Total:	51

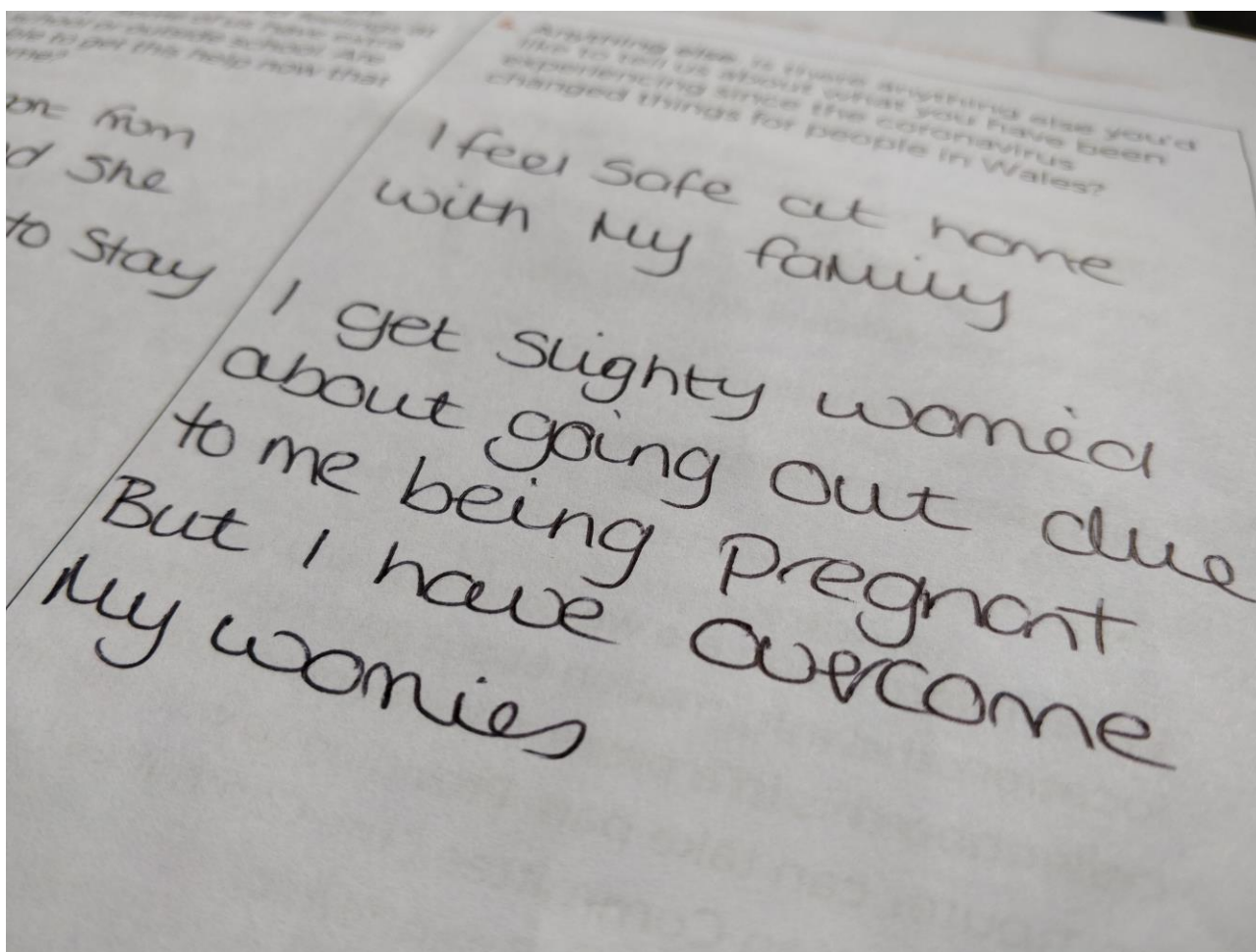
Each pin on the map represents a location where at least one young person participated. Please note that 17/51 participants did not reveal their location. A more detailed set of data can be made available on request.



## Key themes:

Comments collected over the course of this engagement have been both positive and negative. The general themes arising in this final summary were; Mental Health and Well-being; Being listened to; and Education and Employment.

### **Mental Health and Well-being;**



Picture: 17 year old, Flintshire

In general young people expressed views around heightened anxiety which could be interpreted as typical given the amount of change to everyday life that the whole nation has experienced. Many young people focused their responses on the future and what might happen given there is a degree of uncertainty:

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"Mae'r syniad o fynd yn ôl i 'normal' yn fy mhoeni oherwydd na fydda i nag unrhyw un arall ym mlwyddyn 13 yn medru mynd yn ôl i'n normalwydd ni o fynd i'r ysgol. Mae llawer o ansicrwydd pryd y bydd y cyfnod hwn yn dod i ben, ac rydw i'n bryderus o'r ffaith ein bod wedi gadael yr ysgol heb gael ein paratoi am y byd tu hwnt yn iawn." - Young person (email)

"For the past month my daily mood has been the worst. I am not sleeping because of the [house] move, my GCSE's, worries about Covid-19. At the moment I don't think I'll be able to go to school and now I have so many stresses because I might have to travel on the bus which I really don't think I'll be able to. My routine is really bad, I'm not sleeping and this makes me very tired in the day." - Child asylum seeker

However many have also embraced the opportunity to try new things, build on connections or find ways to cope:

"At the start of lockdown I was nervous and stressed. Now I am relaxed and calm. I talk to my family" - Young person

"It is good being at home more seeing more of my mam and sister and my dog and my dad when he comes home from work. It has helped to improve our relationships" - Young person (email)

"I am learning some new skills such as gardening." - Young person (email)

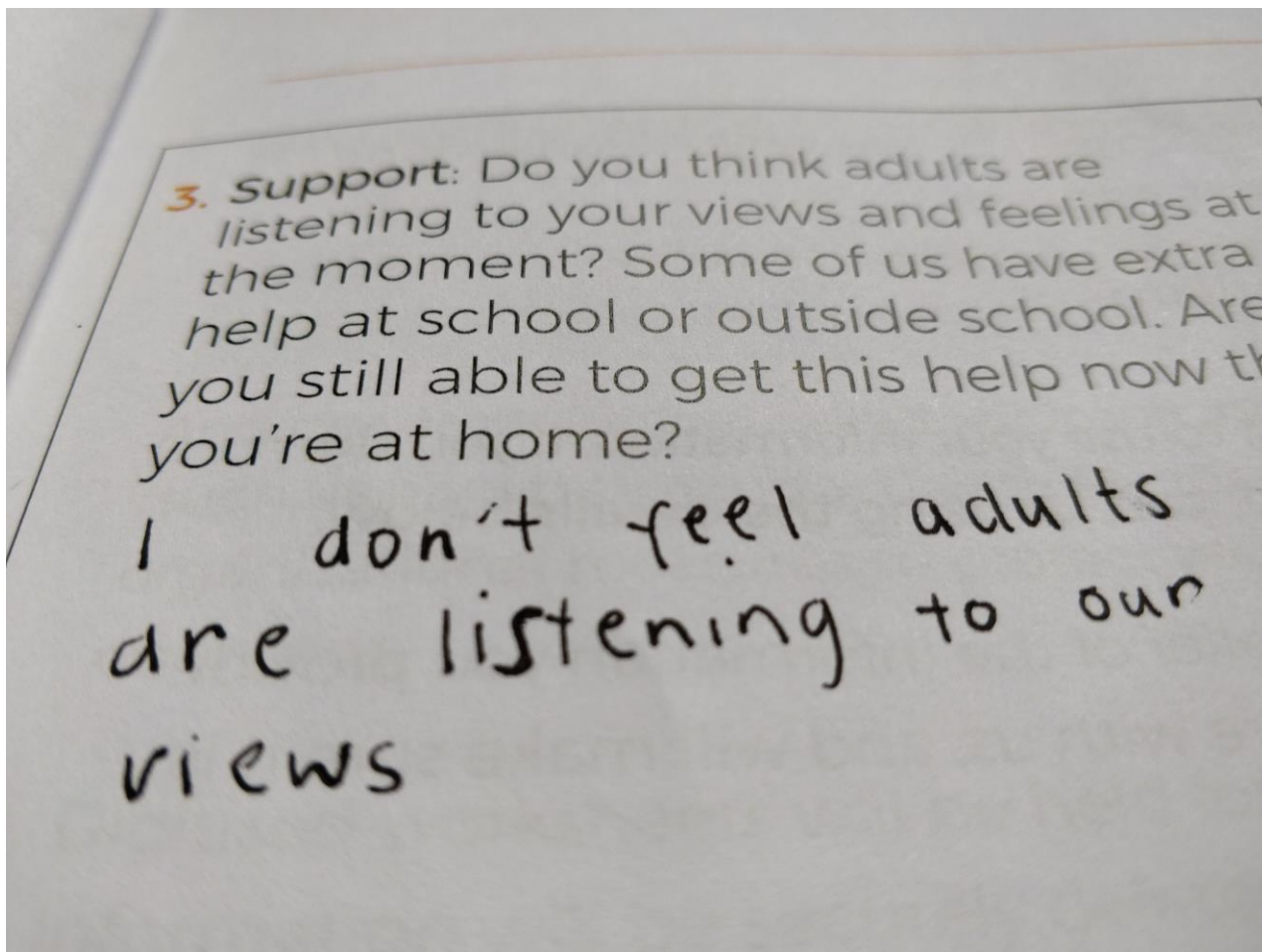
"I feel depressed and anxious. I am getting help with this" - 10 year old, Merthyr Tydfil

Observations have also been received from key partner organisations who are positioned to gain a holistic picture of the views of the young people with whom they work, particularly those from challenging backgrounds:

"60% of children in care and every care leaver that we surveyed told us they felt lonely more often during the lockdown. Similarly, 57% of children in care and every care leaver that we surveyed told us they were feeling more anxious. While our survey data offers a snap shot, we are hearing these concerns routinely in our other services and support work" - Key partner organisation response

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### Being listened to:



Picture: 14 year old, Newport

To explore young people's perspectives on their right to say what they think should happen and be listened to (Article 12 in the UNCRC), young people were asked about the level of support they were receiving during the pandemic in comparison to before. They were also consulted on whether they felt they were able to control this support and access to their rights.

Views were mixed with some individuals having to overcome real challenges while others were able to continue as before:

"So many things have happened recently and it's a mess really. We moved houses from one part of Cardiff to another because the landlord wanted the house back. This was at the start of August. Where we are now is not appropriate. I have complained but nothing has

happened. School is now further away for me and I'm not happy to take a bus because of my sister being vulnerable." - Child asylum seeker

"I am listened to in the Youth Forum and my parents listen to me but I don't feel that school are listening" - Young person (email)

"I get support from my mum and she encourages me to stay positive" - 17 year old, Flintshire

"Everyone is listening to me, my mum (my foster carer) always asks me how I am feeling about going back to school, and my mum helps me if I need help" - 12 year old, Rhondda Cynon Taf

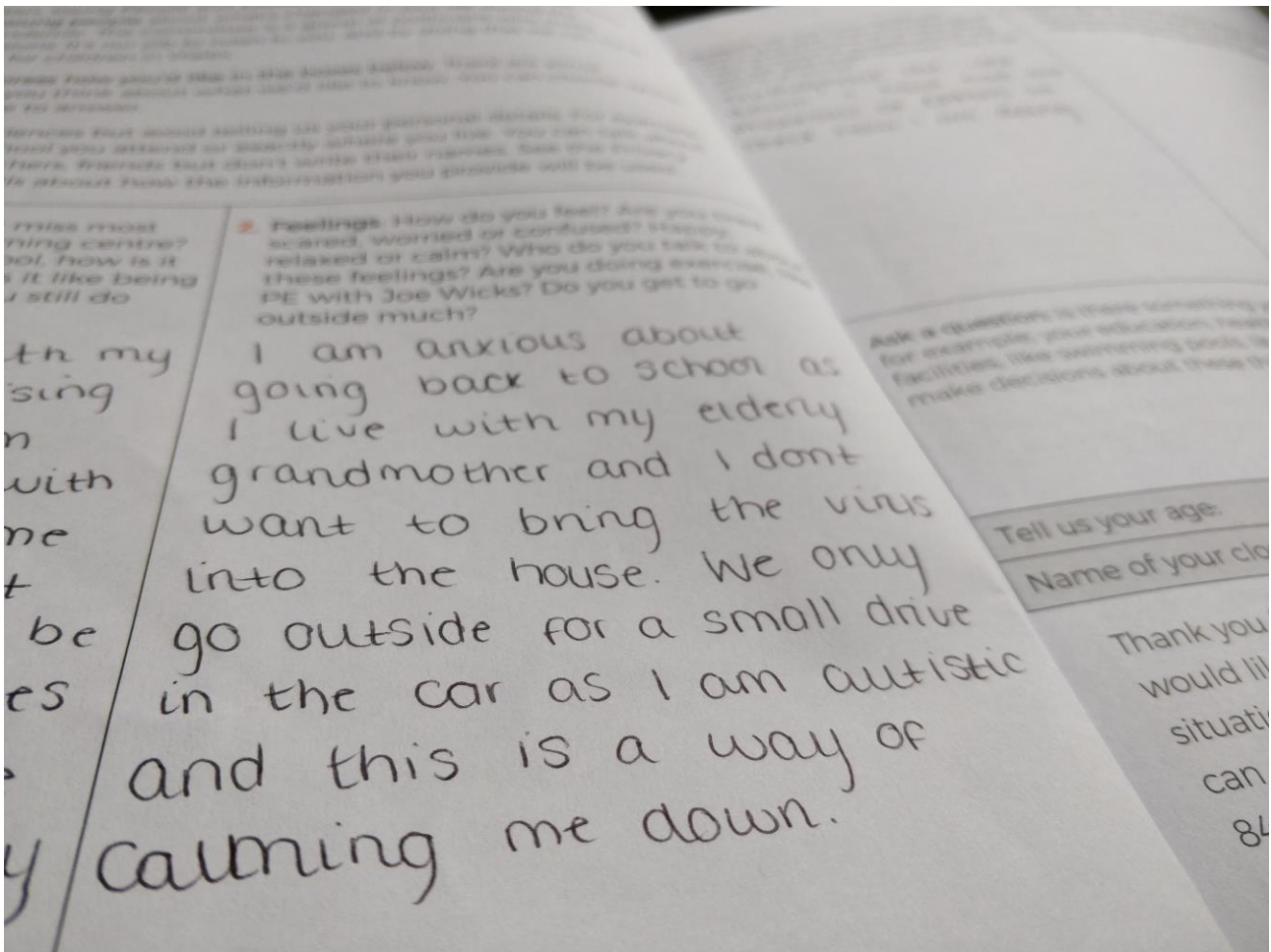
"The Resilience Team have been great with support [...] and my parents have been a huge support throughout. When I have been feeling more anxious at times, they have been there for me." - Young person

"I think the Welsh Government are better prepared than the UK Government on listening to young people and the people of Wales." - Young person (email)

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## Education and Employment:



Picture: 15 year old, Merthyr Tydfil

Many participants demonstrated excitement around the schools reopening. Albeit there were concerns from some young people, especially if they were in a situation where returning could mean they were putting other family members at risk:

"I feel relaxed, happy and excited because my school is opening soon" - 12 year old, Merthyr Tydfil

"I miss school because I don't get to see my friends anymore. It's hard to do schoolwork at home and I feel like I'm not learning" - 13 year old, Merthyr Tydfil



With regards support from schools, it appeared that students who needed additional support were missing out on this in some cases. They felt this lag in support was affecting their progress and their confidence that they will be able to keep up with their peers:

"Hello, my name is XXXXXX im 11 and am severely sight impaired. I use a connect 12 humanware in school that I love and it makes my life in school easier. I want to be like my friends and do the best I can. I've had to cope in lockdown without my equipment as I'm not allowed to use it at home. School work has been difficult and I feel frustrated and I want to give up. I'm worried of falling behind and not being able to do the work when I start secondary school in September. Please please help people like me be able to access my work from home as easily as I do in school. I have some hard important years ahead of me and I want to do my best to prove to myself I can. No one should have to suffer, I deserve to have an education like everyone else" - 11 year old (email)

"My younger brother and me don't need extra help in school; my big brother does (year 7) but doesn't have a 1-2-1 at home just mummy helping us all" - 7 year old (email)

Many young people explained that virtual teaching wasn't their preferred way to learn:

"Online school is much more confusing to me because my teacher can't explain work as much as she could before" - 11 year old, Merthyr Tydfil

"I miss face to face teaching and the instant response when you ask a question. It is very different now as you have to send an email and the answers could take days so you can't complete the work and procrastinate and find other things to do" - Young person (email)

As employment is not a key focus of the Committee's work, the approach to questioning focused on understanding participants views on their education. However when invited to submit their views on anything else they wanted to share, on occasions, employment was briefly touched upon and raised queries about their resilience:

"I have lost my job. I feel as though I could have had more in place to help due to this issue" - 21 year old, Flintshire

Finally, young people shared their feelings about examinations, expressing a particular view of the unfairness that they felt may have taken place:

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"Mae gen i deimladau cymysg iawn am beidio a chwblhau fy arholiadau Lefel A. Teimlaf fy mod ar fy ngholled oherwydd nad ydw i wedi cael gorffen fy nghyrsiau, yr oeddwn yn eu mwynhau'n fawr, na chael y cyfle i brofi fy hun yn yr arholiadau. Rydw i felly, wrth reswm, yn poeni'n sylweddol am fy nghanlyniadau. Ar y naill law, os ydych chi ganlyniadau da iawn, rydw i'n poeni na fydd prifysgolion neu ddarpar-gyflogwyr yn ymddiried yn y canlyniadau hynny, ond ar y law arall, os ydych chi ganlyniadau nad ydw i'n hapus â nhw, rwy'n poeni y byddaf yn ei chael hi'n anodd delio â'r ffaith na chefais i'r cyfle i gael canlyniadau gwell." - Young person (email)

"My exams weren't fair, I missed a year of school because I was ill but then I came back and I got A's and A\*'s for mocks. However I received a B as a final result. I'm trying to contact the school but all I have heard is that I'll have to do a resit while doing my A Levels which I'm worried will be too stressful. I didn't fail and I know I can go to study what I want next but I knew myself I could have gotten higher and I haven't had the opportunity." - Child asylum seeker

## Appendix 1

The following key partner organisations enabled the collection of responses by either distributing paper worksheets or interviewing young people and sharing their views:

- Action for Children
  - Caerphilly Youth Forum
  - Child Poverty Action Group
  - CWVYS
  - Displaced People in Action - D.P.I.A
  - Ethnic Minorities & Youth Support Team Wales (EYST Wales)
  - Family Information Service (Newport Branch and Flintshire Branch)
  - Flintshire County Council | Cyngor Sir y Fflint
  - Flintshire Integrated Youth Provision
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- GAVO
  - Knighton Foodbank Powys
  - Llamau
  - Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
  - National Youth Advocacy Service
  - NSPCC
  - PATCH - Pembrokeshire Action To Combat Hardship
  - People Plus
  - Race Council Cymru
  - Salvation Army Newtown
  - Stephen and George Trust
  - TAG Youth
  - TCC (Trefnu Cymunedol Cymru / Together Creating Communities)
  - The Kings Storehouse Rhyl
  - Tros Gynnal
  - Trussell Trust - Vale Foodbank (Barry)
  - Twynyrodyn Community Hub
  - Welsh Refugee Council
  - Youth Cymru
  - Ysgol David Hughes, Menai Bridge
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## Appendix 2

The following questions were included in the paper worksheets:

- 1.** Education: What do you miss most about school or your learning centre? If you're still going to school, how is it different to before? What's it like being at home more and can you still do your schoolwork?
  - 2.** Feelings: How do you feel? Are you tired, scared, worried or confused? Happy, relaxed or calm? Who do you talk to about these feelings? Are you doing exercise, like PE with Joe Wicks? Do you get to go outside much?
  - 3.** Support: Do you think adults are listening to your views and feelings at the moment? Some of us have extra help at school or outside school. Are you still able to get this help now that you're at home?
  - 4.** Anything else: Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about what you have been experiencing since the coronavirus changed things for people in Wales?
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