

The Impact of COVID-19 on the Health and Economic Wellbeing of Young People Accessing Support Services: **Living in Limbo?**

A mixed methods research project speaking to our members and young people through interviews and focus groups.



EXISTING RESEARCH INSIGHTS

- △ Unemployment and job concerns affected around **61%** of young people from BAME communities, compared to **51%** of young White people
- ▷ Research conducted by the Institute for Employment Studies discovered that around half of young people (**46%**) under the age of 24 have reported an **overall fall in employment** since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic

- ◁ The **fall in employment** is having a disproportionate impact on young people from Black and minority ethnic communities, with the rate being **four times higher** for young Black people than for young White people

Source: Institute for Employment Studies, 2021

- ◁ Findings highlight that since the pandemic began, one in five young people (**21%**) have experienced **suicidal thoughts**, rising to **28%** of young people who are NEET*

Source: Prince's Trust, 2021

* NEET - Not in education, employment or training

- ▷ Nearly **6 in 10** young people aged 16-25 had reported a loss in their earnings since the pandemic began

Source: London School of Economics & University of Exeter

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ACCESS**



WHAT OUR RESEARCH TOLD US

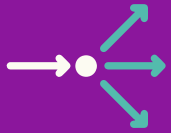
Members were deemed to be rapid in their response to shifting and adapting to deliver their services virtually. They have each devised blended approaches to service delivery that consist of community-based, in-person drop-ins and scheduled appointments, text messaging, mobile phone welfare check calls and online appointments

Young people need support to:

- ▷ Apply for jobs
- ▷ Build confidence for an interview
- ▷ Write a personal statement
- ▷ Find work placements
- ▷ Gain experience of going into a work environment
- ▷ Handle academic pressure and frustration
- ▷ Build resilience in Higher Education
- ▷ Be recognised as new young employees with invisible disabilities
- ▷ Access a range of appropriate training opportunities
- ▷ Build self-confidence and to plan next steps in education, work and training



The research was conducted with 40 participants (both young people and members) using semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and a survey.



HOW PRACTITIONERS HAVE RESPONDED

Illustrated below are the central ways in which practitioners have said that they have organisationally responded to the emerging employment and wellbeing support needs of young people during the pandemic:

- ▽ Moving from in-person to virtual appointments, texting and mobile supportive conversations
- ▽ Developing and testing new digital pathways to access services
- △ Extending the hours they work, and offering more flexible times for appointments
- ▽ Producing more resources online to help encourage self-help
- ▽ Updating online safeguarding policies and procedures
- ▽ Streamlining services, balancing need versus demand
- ▽ Pausing and renegotiating access with gatekeepers to groups of children and young people
- ▽ Switching from group-centred to individual-tailored work
- ▽ Additional team training and support to stay connected and to cope with greater volume and/or intensity of work



OUTCOMES

- ▽ Young people would like greater parity between youth-focused support services in smaller towns to those which can be found in large cities, and to be able to access them both in person and remotely
- ▽ Young people recognise that mental health and wellbeing and employability are closely linked, and they would like to see opportunities to access support services to build resilience and confidence more widely promoted
- △ Practitioners' mental health needs to be taken into consideration in this landscape where they are working from home
- ▽ As a result of the increase in youth-centric engagement platforms, some Youth Access members have reportedly reached more young people, and thus have widened their reach to young people.
- ▽ Services that are delivered virtually highlight the challenges of inaccessibility of technology. However, one positive outcome of delivering services virtually has led to services being accessed by young people who are geographically more remote.
- ▽ The underpinning strategy has been supportive conversation, sometimes leading on to a referral to more tailored services, or advocacy work to support young people back into training or education
- △ A hybrid approach moving forwards seems most appropriate for both young people and members