

Evaluation Report

OCT 2020



COVID-19 Impact On Exercise and Physical Activity In Young People.

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Introduction

Covid-19 has impacted all of our lives in one shape or another and its clear the effects will continue to be felt for a lot more time to come.

This study was put together following Active Humber's desire to learn more about the impact of Covid-19, particularly on exercise and physical activity. Local Works were already collating information from its "Keeping in touch" programme that was providing invaluable input from local young people. It therefore made sense to combine this information and develop an enhanced study that really delved into the impact on exercise and physical activity.

How was lockdown affecting the amount of exercise people were getting? Were they using the free time as an opportunity to get fitter? or did the restrictions effectively cut off their ability to keep active?

What activities were people doing? Did they continue doing what they have always done? or have they tried new activities? Did the restrictions mean that team sports and the social aspect was replaced by more individual activities?

What were the motivators? Was it staying fit? Using lockdown as an opportunity to get fit? or perhaps completely different motivators such as keeping their mind active or simply just as an excuse to get out of the house?

As well as trying to understand the possible answers to these questions, it was also important to understand the emotional impact of Covid-19, because as we know, physical and mental health are heavily connected.

Our intentions at the very beginning of this study was to talk more and gain a better understanding. This was our clear expectation. Everyone is different and react differently to situations. However, if we gain data together with anecdotal feedback in an open, relaxed and non-judgemental way, we anticipated we would delve a little deeper and make people think for themselves just what the impact really has been. We also hoped that by doing this, we would at the same time promote the benefits of exercise, even pointing out the alternatives out there as the world slowly adapted.

It is fair to say we already knew each of the participants to some extent before they took part in the study. Each of them with varying interests, abilities and motivations. We approached the study with a complete blank page, an open mind and a willingness to learn.



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About Local Works Ltd.

Local Works Ltd is an alternative education provider and a not for profit company/social enterprise. It uses the medium of sport to engage with and support the most vulnerable young people in the Marfleet area of the City of Hull. The company provides daytime provision for 11-16 year olds and evening provision for 11-18 year olds.

The company utilises sport activity as a means of encouraging young people to embark on a programme of activities that will address their specific problems of social isolation, dysfunctional behaviour and disengagement from society. Approximately, 35% of the people on the programmes are in or have been in care; the majority are from dysfunctional families and suffer from behavioural problems of all kinds.

The company works closely with the probation service, social services, schools and the health service to create a supportive environment for all participants. In particular, the programmes on offer address the two key elements of Well Being – Feeling Good and Functioning well. Through one to one support and regular progress reviews beneficiaries are encouraged to address and overcome their substantial personal problems and gain confidence and self-esteem. The approach is innovative and effective as evidence produced so far indicates.

As the profile of the City of Hull and the data on the Marfleet area indicates, the young people who attend the sessions are drawn from a deprived area with all its associated problems.

Local Works is a small but dynamic team with a workforce all with the same common desire to help young people reach their full potential. Everyone is treated with respect, regardless of their background. We believe you should treat people how you wish to be treated and we have seen clear benefits in this approach.



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About the Young People

The Young people who took part in this study were aged from 11-18yrs old. All living in Kingston upon Hull, with a postcode of HU1 to HU10.

33 young people gave input to Local Works via the “Keeping in Touch” programme. These were either contacted during lockdown at home or face to face in their school environment (i.e. their school was open as normal / or they were a child of a key worker).

A further 32 young people completed a simple questionnaire designed by Local Works to address the questions described previously. These young people were from a combination of participants in Local Works’ daytime provision (11-16yrs) or from their evening Football sessions (11-18yrs).

A total of 65 young people therefore participated in this study.

We believe approx. 80% of the participants were male, although this was not a question during the study.

Each of the young people came from different backgrounds and living arrangements. Either living at home with parents, grandparents or in a care home provision.

It is reasonable to say that the majority of the young people had some interest in sport / exercise or physical activity. Although we know by talking to them, that their participation with Local Works and sporting activities may not always be motivated by their interest in sport alone but often the connected social aspects (for example: making friends)

One of the advantages was that as the majority of the participants were already known by Local Works, we were able to witness first-hand the impact Covid-19 had. Whether it be a change in their usual behaviours, attitudes or indeed their mood and overall outlook.



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The Study

This study was carried out using 2 different methods:

- “Keeping in Touch” programme
- Questionnaire

“Keeping in Touch” programme

Effectively, the “Keeping in Touch” programme did exactly what it says. Local Works were intent on keeping close and regular contact with the students who attended their provisions. This was not a specific project as such, with start and end etc., but more importantly a commitment to ensure that we follow through with our aims to support our students, particularly at such a difficult time.

There were several ways that staff kept in touch with students or young people who attended the evening football sessions:

- Face to Face in person
- Via telephone
- Via text message
- Via Zoom calls

The member of staff who made contact with the young people is known to them via the daytime or evening provisions. It is fair to say that the young people look up to him and often feedback that he is somewhat of a role model for them. This was a particular advantage when it came to making contact during lockdown. The success rate of contacts was >80% each week. Not only that but the information shared was more forthcoming than originally anticipated, testament again, we believe, to the relationship between the young people and Local Works.

All of the feedback was collated from the contacts made via a separate coordinator. This enabled the information to be collated in a way that was completely independent and provided a second pair of eyes and opinion. (note – all personal information was omitted in this reporting method).

Another important point to mention is the timing. Initially this programme commenced in June and ran through to October. Therefore we were able to see the transition from the heart of lockdown through to eased restrictions.



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The Study (cont.)

Questionnaire

This questionnaire was intentionally designed to be as simple and easy to complete as possible. Taking participants no more than 1-2 minutes to complete.

The participants were given simple instructions and tick boxes with a chance to elaborate if they so wished.

The questions were direct and designed to provide us data that could be analysed when a reasonable number was obtained. In total, 32 questionnaires were completed.

QUESTIONNAIRE COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS EXERCISE & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



Name _____

Date _____

Question 1

How has COVID-19 Coronavirus (the lockdown) affected the amount of exercise/physical activity you do? Please tick one:

- I have done a **lot more** exercise / physical activity
- I have done a **little bit more** exercise / physical activity
- I have done **about the same**
- I have done a **little bit less** exercise / physical activity
- I have done a **lot less** exercise / physical activity

Question 2

Which of these have you done during lockdown? Please tick all relevant:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walking | <input type="checkbox"/> Football | <input type="checkbox"/> I have done no exercise/physical activity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jogging | <input type="checkbox"/> Rugby | If so, please tell us why? _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Online exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> Games with family | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cycling | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please tell us: | _____ |

Question 3

What has been your main reason for doing these? Please tick one (the most relevant):

- Stay fit
- Something to do
- Get fit
- Other, please tell us: _____
- Get out the house

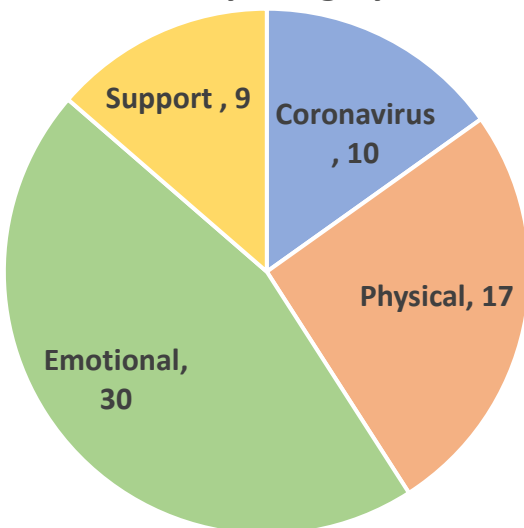
THANK YOU



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Keeping in touch – what did we learn?

Issues by Category



Definitions of Category

Emotional – issues that impacted the emotional wellbeing of the individual.

Physical – issues that impacted the physical wellbeing of the individual.

Coronavirus – issues relating to the direct impact of the virus and lockdown/restrictions.

Support – issues relating to support needs of the individual e.g. family

Each week, the findings from the contacts made with the young people were collated on a central report. A total of 134 successful contacts with students were made over the period. These contacts were either with the student directly themselves, or with a parent or guardian. The contact duration ranged on average from 2 to 5 mins.

The main purpose of the call was to establish if the student was continuing with their work, were on target and if they had any queries or concerns they wished to discuss. However, this was also a clear opportunity for a wider discussion about how they were doing in general with lockdown. What were they up to? Anything interesting? Were they getting out? Keeping active? Socialising? It was these open and relaxed conversations that we found generated topics for discussion and we classed these as “issues” raised.

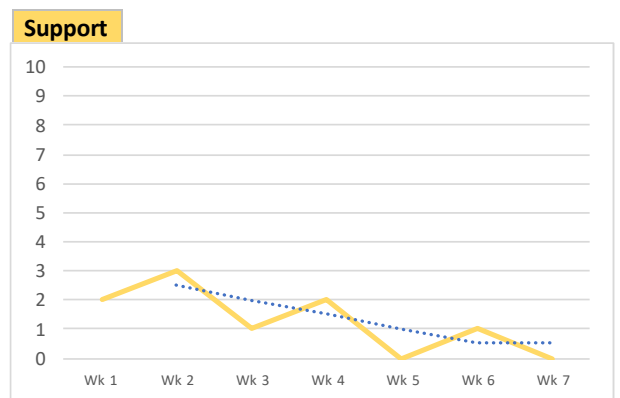
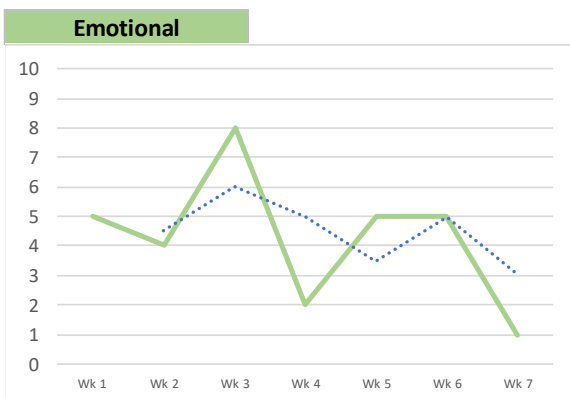
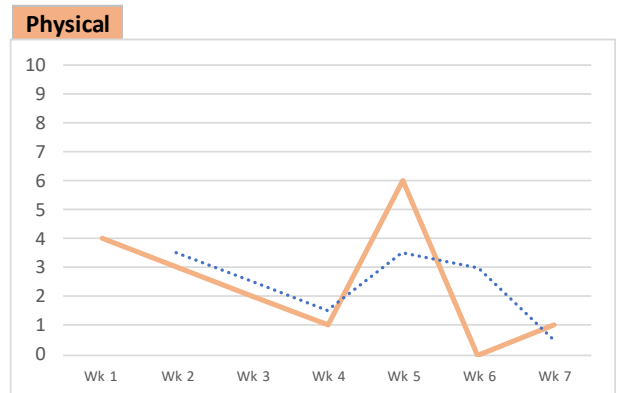
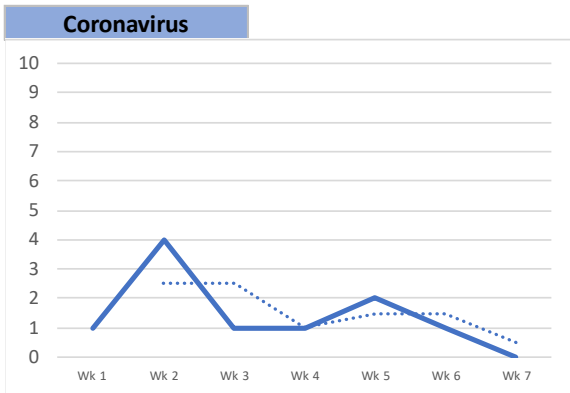
Each issue that was raised was recorded in the central report via the weekly meeting with the central coordinator. These issues were classified in to 4 different main categories as described above: Emotional, Physical, Coronavirus and Support. It is worth mentioning that these categories were intentionally broad and sometimes did indeed overlap. An issue that was thought to be both emotional and physical for example, would be classed for the purpose of this study, as both.

In total, 66 issues were raised. 45% of which were Emotional, 26% physical, 15% Coronavirus and 14% Support.



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Keeping in touch – what did we learn?



Generally, as you can see by the graphs above, the issues reduced over time. Caution must be expressed here as we believe this was partly due to the issues becoming less frequent/severe but also because if the exact same issue had been raised previously, we would not double count. In other words, the issues did not just simply go away.

Some conversations were short and to the point, with often a distinct feel that the student or their parent/guardian explaining that they are keeping up with their work and there were no other issues to discuss. In this scenario, where it was felt the recipient would simply rather not be on the call, the Local Works staff member would use their experience and discretion. In other words, knowing when to try and push a little further with open-end questions or whether it was best to end the call and try again the following week.



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Keeping in touch – what did we learn?

“Grandma has been ill, holiday cancelled and not seeing girlfriend, so bit down” **User E-1, May 2020**

“Lockdown is OK, but bored now, nowt to do.”
User S-17, May 2020

“Really bored as finished everything on Netflix etc. I don’t enjoy being at home more because I don’t get along with my mum and sister” **User S-2, May 2020**

“I support Liverpool, but didn’t even know they had won title.”
User S-9, June 2020

EMOTIONAL

The emotional category really focussed on those issues brought up that clearly were effecting the young peoples emotional wellbeing. This was often an issue derived from lockdown preventing them from going about their normal day and having freedom effectively taken away.

However, it was striking the amount of discussions that related to “boredom” and the lack of challenge. The majority were keeping up with their school work fine, but it was their free time that was clearly impacted and the reference “I’m bored” was common in these calls.

Routine is clearly important to these young people too. Whilst the young people would often joke that no school is a good thing, it was very common for them to reference they are bored without the school routine.

Being at home more often brought its emotional challenges too, with some young people not enjoying an increased time at home. This was due to family living arrangements or sometimes more time with family resulted in more frustration.

One particular issue that was raised, which you can see above was around Liverpool winning the Premier League title. Whilst rather innocuous at the time, this was another clear indicator that the young person was further distanced from the outside world. Home internet access was the cause here, but without lockdown restrictions, this young Liverpool fan would have clearly known and would have celebrated this event.



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Keeping in touch – what did we learn?

“Coronavirus is good cos getting out of school. It will be around for a while. Going out with mates, everyone is out, but not social distancing”

User S-1, May 2020

“Enjoying lockdown. I don’t know anyone who has had it so not really anything to worry about”

User S-18, May 2020

“I’m unable to get upstairs, so not sure what he is doing all day.”

Grandparent of User S-11, May 2020

“Mum has been ill. She is diabetic and I know she is higher risk, so I’m trying to support her more”

User S-2, May 2020

CORONAVIRUS

The calls would sometimes generate a discussion about Coronavirus / Covid-19. However, this was less than expected with only 15% of the issues related.

Throughout the conversations, the general feeling was that the Coronavirus was not too much to worry about. It was often referenced as something “good” or positive as it meant being out of school, but the other issues raised as a consequence would clearly disagree here.

When restrictions were not being followed, Local Works would always stress the importance. Whilst it may not seem too much to worry about for them, they should also think of others, particularly the elderly.

SUPPORT

If during the discussions, it was felt that there was a slight question mark over the young person getting enough support during this period, this was raised as a “support” category issue. Purely for the purpose of this reporting. Any safeguarding concerns would be reported in the usual manner and urgency.

These issues, representing 14% of the total were mainly about family environment and relating to spending more time than usual at home with family.

The particular issue raised here by User S-2 clearly showed a very conscientious and caring nature of the young person. Something that the Local Works staff member complimented and of course monitored the situation closely throughout the remaining calls.



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Keeping in touch – what did we learn?

“Not doing anything. I miss football, not just playing, but seeing everyone”
User E-7, July 2020

“Lockdown is great. Getting real good at Fortnite and Call of Duty. Not getting out or doing any exercise really”
User S-19, June 2020

“Looking forward to going back to Local Works so can start playing football again.”
User E-4, May 2020

“He is practically nocturnal, only comes downstairs to eat.”
Parent of User S-7, May 2020

PHYSICAL

Physical issues represented 26% of the total issues raised. The theme here as expected, was often relating to not being able to get out of the house.

A common and recurring reference was made to gaming, Youtube and Netflix. These seemed to be the fallback situation when going outside was not an option. On occasions, the way it was described was that some of the young people spent their full days on devices. Late nights and lack of sleep due to this was also mentioned.

When these discussions took place, Local Works provided the young people with different ideas on how to adapt and keep active during lockdown. Going out for a walk/jog or perhaps taking advantage of the free online fitness videos that Local Works were making.

As time progressed, there were growing requests for some sort of normality to return, particularly in the form of going outside and playing a team sport such as football. Those who were participants in the Local Works evening football sessions particularly stressed their desire for these to return. Again, the reasons for doing so lied not just in the physical activity, but it meant they could see their friends and start socialising again.



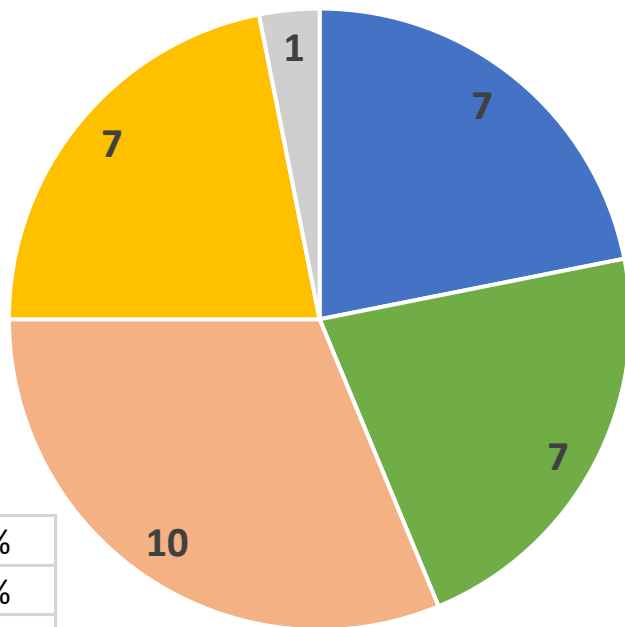
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Questionnaire – what did we learn?

Question 1

How has COVID-19 Coronavirus (the lockdown) affected the amount of exercise/physical activity you do?

- A lot more
- A little bit more
- About the same
- A little bit less
- A lot less



A lot more	7	22%
A little bit more	7	22%
About the same	10	31%
A little bit less	7	22%
A lot less	1	3%
	32	100%

QUESTION 1

This question was completed by all 32 participants and they were asked to tick one box to best describe how the lockdown has affected the amount of exercise/physical activity they did.

What first strikes about the results of this question was the very varied response, with not one of the 5 answers being a clear stand-out. However, only 1 person was honest enough to admit that they were doing “a lot less” exercise as a result of lockdown. Somewhat contradicting to the anecdotal evidence from the “Keeping in Touch” programme that painted a very different picture.

7 participants thought they were doing a little bit less, so in total only 25% thought they were doing less than what they did before. 31% thought they were doing the same and 44% believed they were actually doing a little/lot more exercise and physical activity than they did before.

We can only speculate on why this is the case. One theory being that they simply did not realise the impact or they simply did not want to admit via this question or lose any reputation.



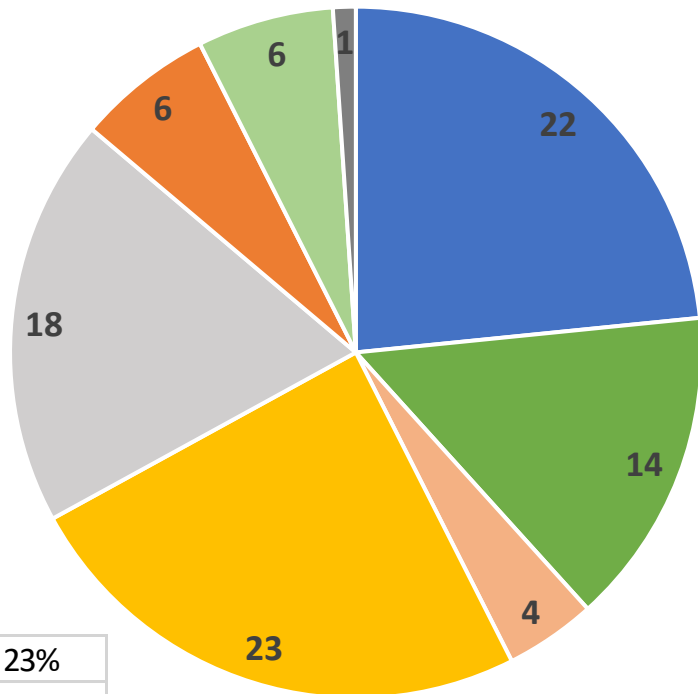
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Questionnaire – what did we learn?

Question 2

Which of these sports / activities have you done during lockdown?

- Walking
- Jogging
- Online Exercise
- Cycling
- Football
- Rugby
- Family Games
- None



Walking	22	23%
Jogging	14	15%
Online Exercise	4	4%
Cycling	23	24%
Football	18	19%
Rugby	6	6%
Family Games	6	6%
None	1	1%
	94	100%

QUESTION 2

Here the participants were asked to tick which of the activities they had done during lockdown. They could tick as many as they wish and there was space for other activities to be stated if they were not mentioned.

Interestingly, football was ticked 18 times, although actually participating in a game of football was very difficult during lockdown. Due to closure of sports facilities, this would have to have been in the park/streets etc.

Cycling was a popular answer ticked 23 times by the 32 participants. Our interpretation of this, knowing the young people and from the Keeping in Touch programme, would be more “going out on my bike with mates” rather than going for a long bike ride.

Again, one of the participants was completely honest enough to admit that they had done no physical activity whatsoever during lockdown.



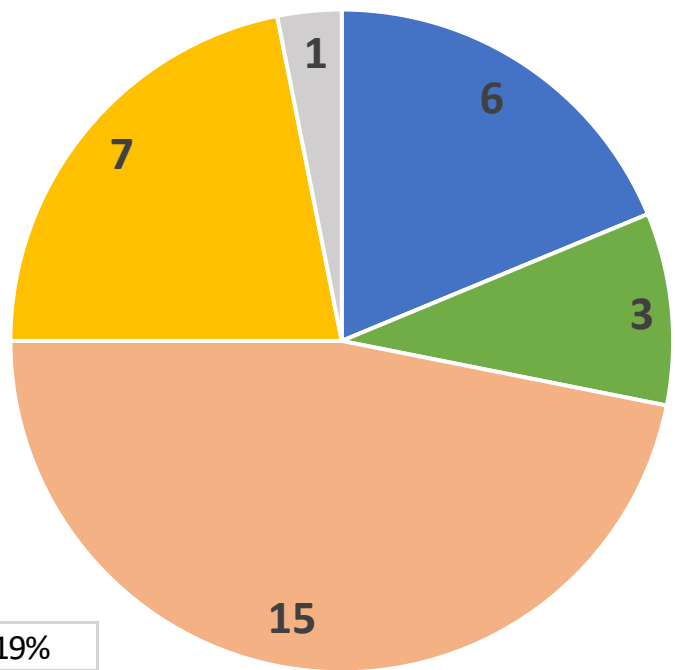
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Questionnaire – what did we learn?

Question 3

What has been your main reason for doing these sports / activities?

- Stay Fit
- Get Fit
- Get Out House
- Something to do
- Other



Stay Fit	6	19%
Get Fit	3	9%
Get Out House	15	47%
Something to do	7	22%
Other	1	3%
	32	100%

QUESTION 3

We then asked the participants to think about their main reason for doing these sports / activities. All 32 participants were to tick one of these options that best described their main motivation.

Only 26% said their main motivation was about getting/staying fit. A surprisingly low number. However, an alternative way to look at it would be, 69% felt that their main motivation was about getting out of the house / something to do. This clearly suggests that the young people were actually more concerned with the social aspects of exercise and physical activity rather than the health and fitness aspect. We should not underestimate the power of connecting with friends and having the opportunity to talk face to face, leaving all the issues (particularly Coronavirus) behind. Additionally, we know some of the young people also missed the interaction with staff, particularly those who looked up to and showed admiration for their role models.



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Summary

A total of 65 young people participated in this study which exceeded our expectations. We were particularly impressed with the honesty and willingness to open-up and discuss issues, particularly when we communicated face to face.

The questionnaire brought about a somewhat surprising result in that the vast majority (75%) thought that despite the lockdown restrictions, they were doing the same or more exercise and physical activity. We can make assumptions as to why this is, but in reality, the real quality feedback came in those open discussions when issues came to light. The most common of issues that were raised were about the emotional impact of lockdown, particularly the boredom factor and not being able to do those things that were previously taken for granted. This included physical and sporting activities themselves but often more importantly referred to as an opportunity to mix with other people of similar age, interests etc. The social aspect cannot be underestimated.

Those who were part of the Keeping in Touch programme were of an average age of 16yrs, compared to 14yrs of those who completed the questionnaire. A relatively small age gap but certainly significant in this context when you consider the additional challenges and support etc.

Covid-19 itself as a direct issue was often downplayed by the majority of the young people. It often felt like it was seen more of a restriction and rule setting without a real comprehension for the destruction it was causing. This is understandable to some extent as the knock-on effect it was having could be seen as just as damaging, particularly to emotional wellbeing. All of the issues reduced in numbers as time went on during lockdown, however we strongly feel that they simply did not go away, despite our valiant efforts.

The biggest impact to these young people was having to stay at home a lot more than usual. This brought about different challenges such as living arrangements and family issues. With regards exercise and physical activity, the preferred "go to" was often gaming, internet and TV. It was noticeable in the early stages, this seemed positive, however as time progressed it was brought up on several occasions and recognised they were overused (e.g. playing late at night and not getting enough sleep) and even becoming more boring themselves after time. Nothing quite beats the real thing.



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Covid-19 has impacted everyone, but we hope this report helps demonstrate to some extent the particular impact to our young people. Not having the freedom to go out, see friends and play sporting activities has clearly resulted in young people facing a real task to keep themselves challenged, motivated and with a healthy mind.

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