

I could've been a contender

Qualitative research on the impact of COVID-19 on young people from diverse ethnic backgrounds

VERSIT



Acknowledgements

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And last, but not least, our thanks go to the 70 young men and women who shared their personal experiences and talked about their needs - good and bad, current and anticipated, individual and collective - in such an open and honest way. We hope that the impact of the work will do justice to their contributions.

Dr Marie-Claude Gervais Director of Research, Versiti



Executive summary

AIMS

This report explores the impact of COVID-19 on young people from ethnic minority backgrounds in England. Its primary focus is on the impact of the pandemic on young people's studies and employment. It aims to identify relevant support s o that young people can thrive in the future.

METHODOLOGY

The research is based on qualitative data with a quota sample of 70 young people aged 16-25 from various ethnic backgrounds, diverse socio-economic groups and representing a mix of GCSE, A-Level, and higher education students, as well as employees, selfemployed, unemployed or furloughed people and a few entrepreneurs. Some lived at home with their family, others in student accommodation or in their own flat. The data was collected via an online research community. The fieldwork took place between 1st and 15th October 2020.

The research team included specialists in research with people from ethnic minority backgrounds as well as a small team of specially recruited and trained young people from ethnic minority backgrounds. They spent two weeks in daily contact with the research participants online, encouraging young people to share their experiences, opinions and needs. They also contributed to the data analysis.

KEY FINDINGS

While the primary focus of the research is on education and work, it soon became clear that, for most young people, this can only be understood in the holistic context of their personal wellbeing and circumstances, as well as their access to family support.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

Education: poor experiences and outcomes

Being in education is a strong protective factor for young people. It shields them from many of the immediate consequences of the pandemic and higher education significantly improves future prospects. However, teaching and learning taking place online provides poorer experiences and has left many behind, especially those with greater support needs and those for whom home study is more challenging. In some cases, it is leading to lower grades, the decision to abandon or postpone education and the decision to switch to the Open University to avoid high tuition fees (given an equivalent student experience). A Levels students felt especially cheated by the poor handling of their grades by central government. The cost of tuition fees is an even greater deterrent to higher education now.

Executive summary (cont.)

Training: fewer opportunities and poorer experiences

Like education, training is now delivered almost exclusively online, which limits the scope for learning and networking. All training for manual roles has stopped and most on-the-job training programmes in corporate environments have been curtailed or postponed. Some have lost their training placements, which they fear will impact significantly on their work prospects.

Work: poorer prospects, more job losses and furlough, lower pay - but delayed impacts for those in education or living with parents

The growing gap between supply and demand in the labour market is making it extremely difficult for young people to find work especially given their limited work experience. Some have lost their jobs, been put on furlough, have had to settle for reduced pay and have been unemployed since the initial lockdown. Those who are self-employed seem particularly vulnerable.

Young people who live in multigenerational households (typically with their parents and/or grandparents but also their own children) face even greater practical and emotional challenges in relation to keeping or finding work: they are restricted in the work they can do because they need to protect vulnerable loved ones at home. Sectoral shutdowns - in retail, catering, hospitality, etc - have a disproportionate impact on young people, who depend on these low-skill and often part-time jobs to pay for their living expenses, studies, tuition fees and accommodation.

There is little evidence of overt ethnic or religious discrimination, but some Black Caribbean and Muslim young people fear that it could impact on their work prospects.

Physical health: low physical activity, weight gain, low selfesteem

While young people' rarely contract the coronavirus, the pandemic is nevertheless damaging to their physical health. Inactivity, boredom and low mood lead to overeating, weight gain and lethargy. The fear of infecting others around them who are vulnerable to COVID-19 also restricts their physical activity.

Mental health: a huge toll that impacts on all aspects of life

The impact of the pandemic on young people's studies, their financial situation, their work and employment prospects as well as day-to-day life is correlated with widespread and sometimes severe mental health difficulties - especially because natural outlets, such as going to the gym or meeting friends - are no longer

Executive summary (cont.)

available to them. For many, life is taking place in an overcrowded home where all activities (e.g. sleeping, eating, working, studying, relaxing) have to be conducted in small spaces with others around.

Virtually everyone reported being affected by social isolation, loneliness, boredom, stress, anxiety and, in some cases, depression. While they hold on to unrealistic expectations, young people also fear being 'failures', not meeting their parents' expectations and facing a life of economic stresses. The general uncertainty of the pandemic, together with the powerlessness to fight against a crisis of such magnitude, lead to a mix of despondency and panic.

COPING WITH COVID-19

While every young person was affected by COVID-19, usually in a multitude of intersecting ways, some fared better than others.

Family support: many benefits and long-term risks for households

Parental families provide a shield against the most direct and damaging financial impacts of COVID-19. Most young people in the sample still lived with their parents (and sometimes grandparents) and siblings and were not yet responsible for large expenditures. Despite a degree of overcrowding and some inevitable strains during lockdown, living at home meant that the true financial toll of the pandemic for most young people was more often a *future prospect* rather than a *current reality*.

However, even before the pandemic, ethnic minority households were, on average, poorer than White British ones, especially in Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, where larger families often rely on a single income to meet their needs. And now that COVID-19 is having a disproportionate impact on the health and employment of ethnic minority communities, the family's ability to support its young people is itself significantly more limited.

Some young people - for reasons that are rarely made explicit - are not close to, or have no contact with, their parents. Their main sources of support tend to be friends, teachers, their faith community and therapists. They are isolated and vulnerable.

Young people who have children of their own are under particular financial strains. In the sample, the young people who were single parents either had to suddenly take full responsibility for their children on their own (without being able to rely on grandparents either) or were cut off from seeing their children for fear of infecting them. With one or both parents impacted financially by COVID-19, these young families were under acute stresses.

Executive summary (cont.)

Given the important role of the wider family in supporting young people and the existing ethnic inequalities in household incomes (including pensions) and savings, we can expect that ethnic minority households *as a whole* will be severely impacted by COVID-19, not just young people. Over time, as household savings are used up, these differential impacts are likely to become more significant.

Finally, young people from ethnic minority communities are more likely than their White British counterparts to be members of a 'diaspora' family, i.e. to have close relatives who live in other countries. They experience greater isolation, cannot rely on relatives for practical support and worry about the health of their loved-ones without being able to help in any way.

While young people are individuals in their own right - with experiences and needs that cannot be equated to those of their family - the research points to the needs to consider the resilience and vulnerability of the young person's family as *a whole* and *over time*.

HELPING ETHNIC MINORITY YOUNG PEOPLE FIND GOOD JOBS

In this sample, before COVID-19, most young people did not lack motivation and high aspirations. They were ambitious, studying and

working hard. The difficulties they face are mainly circumstantial but they will be long-lasting without help to see them and their families through this period.

Many young people, especially those in education, can access careers advice - though not usually of great quality. But without demand in the labour market, careers advice does not suffice. Young people need to get valuable work experience, have structure, find purpose, earn a decent wage and restore the ability to imagine a positive future.

Apprenticeships and job placements are sorely missing and are often viewed negatively by some young people, who believe that they are designed around employers' need for cheap labour, as opposed to the desire to set young people on a career path.

Support for young entrepreneurs is also lacking, though the lack of security for entrepreneurs - especially in such a challenging economic context - suggests that it may not be wise, in the short term at least, to encourage young people to go down that route.

The government's Kickstart Scheme was praised, but most young people in this project did not qualify for the scheme because they were in education or training. Other forms of support are needed.

Recommendations

1. More research is needed to understand the needs of the most vulnerable young people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

This research focussed on young people from diverse ethnic minority backgrounds. It did not focus exclusively on those who are at greatest risk. There is a need to conduct research with those most likely to be left behind in order to develop tailored support.

2. Youth employment interventions should consider the financial impact of COVID-19 on the wider family

Young people from ethnic minority backgrounds often live in multigenerational households. Given higher levels of poverty and a larger number of dependent children in some ethnic minority households - especially Pakistani and Bangladeshi families provisions must ensure that the entire household wealth is not depleted because of COVID-19, deepening and widening economic vulnerability in the future.

3. Young people would benefit from the provision of mental health support at home and in education, training and work settings

The pandemic is taking a disproportionate toll on young people, especially young parents and those who have their own financial responsibilities to meet. The economic and health crisis triggered by COVID-19 are experienced largely as mental health issues, creating anxiety, stress and depression, especially as young people lose the support of their friendship networks and the outlets provided by gyms, clubs and pubs. They are deeply anxious and they fear that they may never realise their potential and always be burdened by financial problems. Many need mental health and life coaching support before they are able to look for work.

4. Use teachers' predicted grades for GCSE and A-Levels in 2021

Given the positive impact of the use of teachers' predicted grades for widening access to higher education, the same approach ought to be replicated for as long as necessary.

5. Design education specifically for online delivery

There is a need to design better educational experiences by making full use of digital resources, and enabling more personalised teaching and learning support. Equipping everyone with the IT resources to access high-quality education from home is essential, as is ensuring that young people from diverse backgrounds know how to learn independently and to access the right support in a timely manner (as many parents are unable to help with learning). Integrating work experience in the curriculum would also help many ethnic minority young people on the first rung of their career.

Recommendations (cont.)

6. Provide online mentoring and networking opportunities

Many ethnic minority young people live in households where 'bridging social capital' - such as mentoring and networking opportunities - is severely lacking. With education not taking place in traditional settings, opportunities that might have arisen through interactions with peers and teachers are no longer available. Alternative arrangements should be made so that young people do not lose out of these valuable opportunities to access such 'noncurricular' benefits in education.

7. Significantly increase the number of paid apprenticeships

Very few ethnic minority young people in this sample would qualify for Kickstarter. Yet, they have deep needs for work, skills development and income generation. Paid apprenticeships for young people must be created on a national scale and actively promoted among people from ethnic minority backgrounds to ensure that they benefit. These ought to be created in a range of sectors and skills set, as well as across the country. These need to appeal equally to young men and women.

Apprenticeships should:

- Focus on transferable professional skills, as well as vocational or technical skills
- Provide active, structure and personalised support
- Be flexible to remove barriers to people with caring responsibilities
- Pay the minimum wage at least
- Lead to recognised formal qualifications
- Where possible, lead directly to employment
- Be promoted where ethnic minority young people 'hang out'

9. Consider reducing higher education tuition fees

If jobs cannot be created fast enough, then consideration should be given to reducing the cost of living or of major expenditures for young people. Given the lower cost of delivering education online for HE institutions, the paucity of work opportunities for young people, and the benefits of higher -education for employability and

Recommendations (cont.)

income over a lifetime, there is a strong case for encouraging more young people from diverse backgrounds to continue their education by lowering tuition fees.

10. Consider subsidising public transport

Most of the young people we spoke to rely on public transport usually buses because fares are cheaper. Transport costs curtail their activity and job searches. During lockdown, this is a less significant issue. But for those who have to go to work, and to support a healthy social life, reducing this expenditure would be helpful.

11. Consider ways of increasing access to affordable housing across all tenures / expand housing benefits

Housing costs, especially in London, put huge economic and psychological pressures on ethnic minority young people. If higher education, apprenticeships and job placements could be tied to cheap housing options, this would encourage many to pursue these options. Generally, investment in social housing, increasing the supply of genuinely affordable housing, support for first-time buyers, support for housing associations, and widening access to housing benefits might all be considered to help young people.

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12. Ensure good-quality affordable childcare

The households of young people we spoke to-especially those from South Asian backgrounds - tend to have more children and are therefore disportionately reliant on high-quality affordable childcare to look for, get and keep work.

13. Make financial literacy / money management classes part if the curriculum

Young people reported experiencing undue stresses because they don't feel in control of their finances and budget. These life skills should be taught as part of mainstream education.

14. Support young entrepreneurs with realistic prospects

Some young people would like information, advice and support to start their own business. Those who have reasonable prospects of making a living from self-employment should receive high-quality support in partnership with venture capitalists/ business angels.

15. Mandate comprehensive, high-quality ethnicity data collection and monitor differential impacts over time

COVID-19 impacts will manifest over time. These need to be closely monitored to avoid widening ethnic, age and gender inequalities.

Table of contents

Acknowledgements Executive summary	2 3	Lower quality educational and training experiences leave young people feeling dissatisfied and unprepared for the
Recommendations	7	future
BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF THE RESEARCH Background Timeline of COVID-19 Aims of the research	12 13 14 17	 Online teaching impoverishes the student experience Many home environments are not conducive to study Young people fear long-term negative impacts on their job prospects Some despair that they will ever reach their potential or be able to honour their parents
METHODOLOGY	18	 Young people report that training and apprenticeship
The method: an online research community	19	opportunities are fewer
Sample, analysis and reporting	21 22	 Online training is seen as less effective and impactful
Training diverse young researchers to moderate	22	 Conclusions and implications
FINDINGS: THE IMMEDIATE IMPACT OF COVID-19	23	Job losses, furlough, low pay, self-employment and a shrinking labour market make for bleak economic prospects
Introduction	24	 The labour market is shrinking and may be unfair
COVID-19 has triggered widespread disruptions and a mental health crisis for young people	25	 Many lost their jobs, were furloughed or paid less Sectoral shutdowns: impact on student jobs Self-employed young people are at significant risk
 Understanding COVID-19' 	26	 Conclusions and implications
COVID-19 is taking a severe toll on mental health	27	
 Daily life is unstructured, monotonous and unproductive Young people feel that they're missing out on life 	28 29	
 Young parents experience multiple challenges 	30	
 Young people from diaspora families are alone and worried 	31	
 Conclusions and implications 	32	

33

34 35 36

37

38

39 40

41

Table of contents (cont.)

FINDINGS: WHAT COVID-19 COULD MEAN IN THE FUTURE OF YOUNG PEOPLE	47
Introduction	48
 There is no lack of aspiration, only a lack of opportunities Most young people of all backgrounds aimed high Life at 40: Durable intimacy and happy family life Life at 40: Material success and upward mobility 	49 50 51 52
	53
Young people - now and in the future - depend largely on their family circumstances	54
 Parental support plays a significant role in young people's lives 	55
 Despite strains, families provide a vital safety net 	56
 Some cannot depend on their family 	57
Multigenerational households offer mixed blessings	58
 Ethnic minority families face disproportionate financial vulnerability Conclusions and implications 	59
	61
Helping ethnic minority young people find good jobs	62
 Introduction 	63
 Helping diverse young people find a good job 	69
 Making apprenticeships work for diverse young 	70
people	70 72
 Entrepreneurship support is lacking 'Kickstart' is seen as an excellent programme 	12
Youth Futures Foundation - I could've been a contender - Versiti -	March 2021

MEET SOME YOUNG PEOPLE	74
REFERENCES	83
APPENDICES A. Sample of young people B. Description of the Kickstart Scheme C. Reflections on the methodology	86 87 88 89

]]

BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

Background

This report provides a window into the world of 70 young people from diverse ethnic minority backgrounds across Great-Britain as they struggled to adapt to the reality of COVID-19 and the impacts the pandemic would have on their lives, now and in the future.

The background against which this qualitative research was conducted was changing daily. Infection, hospitalisation and death rates from the coronavirus fluctuated each day. Government guidance and support to citizens and businesses - including its furlough scheme - also changed regularly and unpredictably. Schools and universities closed, re-opened, closed again and moved to online delivery.

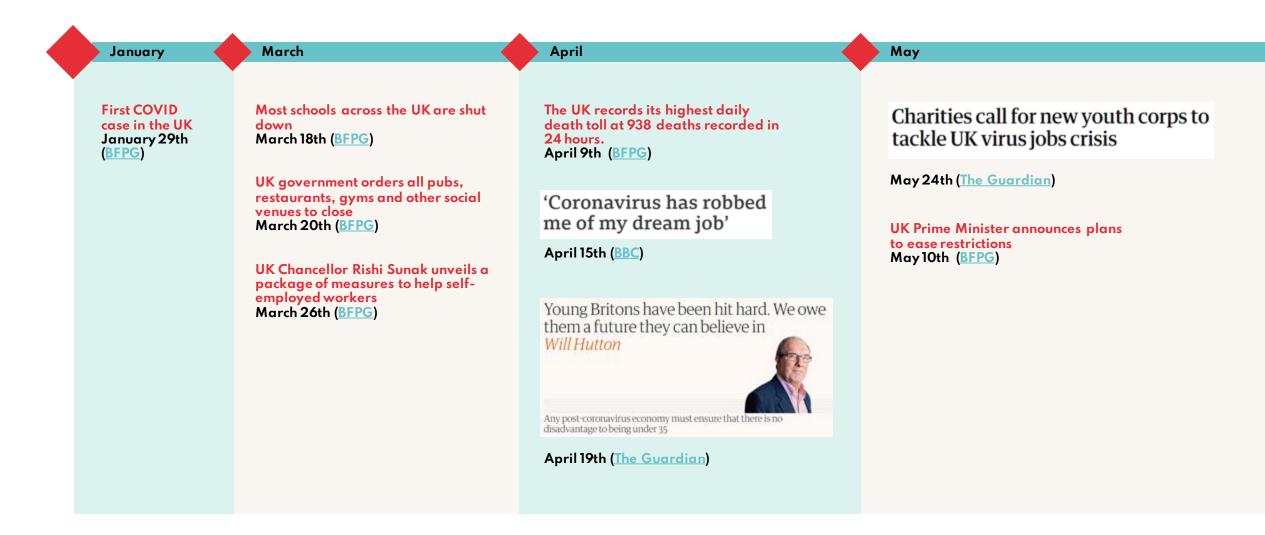
Amid this constant change and uncertainty, two key trends stood out and seemed persistent.

First, it was clear that, while young people were less likely to contract the coronavirus itself, they were much more likely to be severely affected by the economic crisis triggered by COVID-19. Indeed, barely one month into the first national lockdown, young people were already dubbed the 'super-crisis' cohort because their unemployment rates had skyrocketed. By October 2020, it was predicted that one million young Britons would face a job crisis. Second, it was clear that people from ethnic minority backgrounds were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Not only did ethnic minority communities experience higher morbidity and mortality from the coronavirus than their White British counterparts; they also suffered graver economic impacts. On average, people, from ethnic minority groups were about twice as likely to have lost their jobs (partly because they are more likely to work in sectors shut down by the pandemic, such as catering and hospitality) and to have seen their household income reduce. With a significant wealth gap even before the pandemic struck (Resolution Foundation. 2020), this crisis was bound to take a severe toll on ethnic minority people.

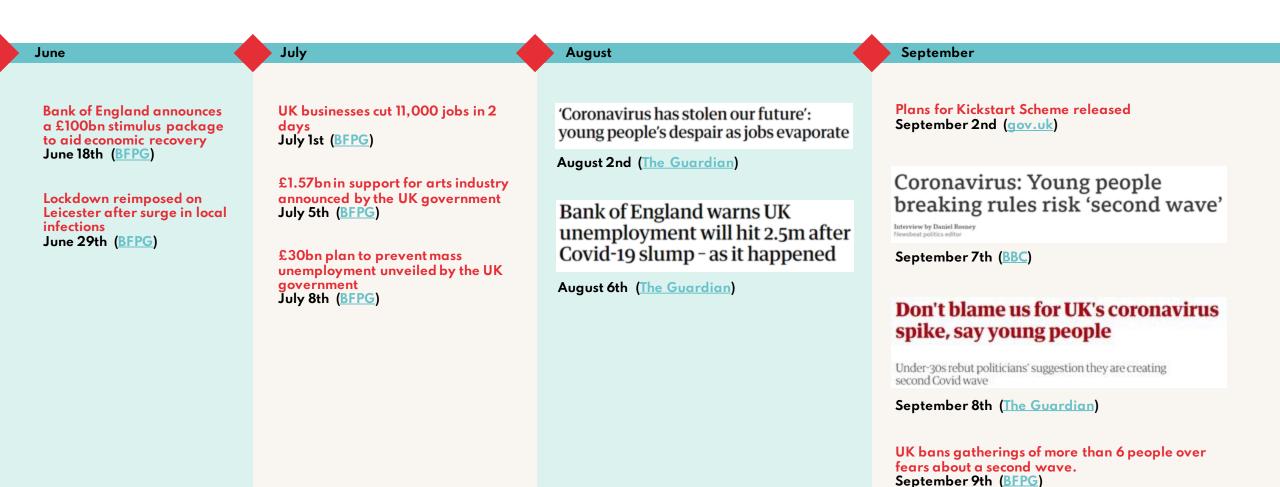
It is against these two dominant trends that we decided to focus this project on the experiences, aspirations and support needs of young people (aged 16-25) from ethnic minority backgrounds. Our aim was to identify their specific needs and to engage them in identifying solutions to mitigate the worst impacts on COVID-19 on their employment and economic prospects.

The COVID-19 timeline overleaf captures the fluidity of the situation.

Timeline of COVID-19



Timeline of COVID-19



Timeline of COVID-19

October

Fieldwork YFF-Versiti October 1st-14th

UK announces a new three-tier system for covid restrictions in England October 12th (<u>BFPG</u>)

'This could break a generation': UK's unemployed young people tell of despair

With coronavirus redundancies hitting those aged 16-24 hardest, we speak to young job hunters

October 13th (The Guardian)

Coronavirus: 1 million young Britons 'face jobs crisis within weeks'

Sixteen to 24-year-olds who are not in full-time education or employment could face significant barriers to work

October 19th (The Guardian)

Covid job losses hitting young people hardest in UK, study finds

Workers aged under 25 more than twice as likely to have lost job in past two months

October 26th (The Guardian)

UK announces 4 week national lockdown in England. Schools, universities and courts will remain open. October 31st (BFPG) November

Furlough scheme extended until the end of March 2021 November 5th (BFPG)

Covid drives 700,000 Britons into poverty, study finds

'At a time of crisis, government action can protect many of those who are vulnerable'. Tory peer says

November 30th (Independent)

Aims of the research

Versiti was commissioned to conduct qualitative research to understand the experiences and impacts of COVID-19 on young people (aged 16-25) from different ethnic backgrounds.

The primary focus of the research is the impact of the pandemic on studies and employment, to identify relevant support needs so that young people of all backgrounds can thrive in future. However, the research made it clear that these impacts can only be properly understood in the wider context of young people's lives.

The research involves a range of young people from Black African, Black Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese and White British backgrounds





METHODOLOGY

The method: an online research community

Online research community

This project used an online research community as its primary method. Online research communities are digital qualitative research tools. They are closed-access platforms where carefully selected people take part in research and co-creation activities, for a set duration, actively guided by researchers.

Versiti selected this approach because it:

- Enables in-depth exploration of circumstances, journeys and needs;
- Provides an open space for young people to express themselves;
- Enables the research team to immerse itself in the lives of young people: by spending time with each person, seeing photos of their home lives, their family, their workplaces, etc;
- Supports detailed qualitative analysis by socio-demographic variables;
- Allows us to present complex information such as about government schemes for young people and get detailed feedback from each participant;
- Is safe, in the context of COVID-19.

This is intended to bring to life and enrich existing survey evidence on the impacts of COVID-19 and to show how experiences in various

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aspects of life cohere for diverse young people. The approach provides rich insight into the **perceptions and lived experiences** of young people from diverse ethnic groups. It is essential to recognise that ethnic minority young people are a diverse and hugely complex cohort, with different forms of social and economic capital, as individuals, families and communities.

Topics explored

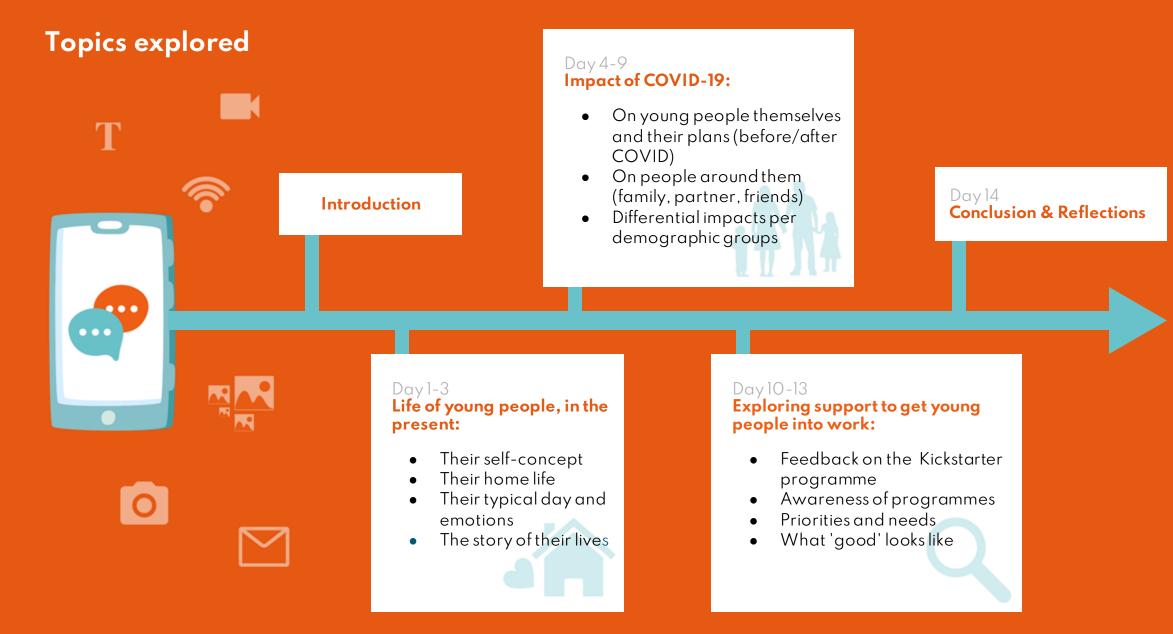
Over a period of two weeks, everyday, for between 20 and 30 minutes, young people joined the community to complete a range of tasks that explored several issues (see overleaf for an overview of the themes discussed).

Response rate

There was almost no sample attrition over the two weeks. The response rate for each one of the 35 research activities was at minimum 87%, with almost all activities being completed by all participants.

Incentives

Young people received $\pounds 100$ each as a 'thank you' for their contribution to the project.



Sample, analysis and reporting

Sample

In total, 70 young men and women from a range of ethnic backgrounds - Black Caribbean, Black African, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese and White British - took part in the project. There was an even split of boys/young men and girls/young women as well as a balanced sample of young people aged 16-20 and 21-25 years-old. See Appendix A for more information.

We aimed to ensure that the sample included young people with different education and employment statuses. Many were still at school, college or university, but some were in training, working (full-time or part-time), unemployed, furloughed or young entrepreneurs running their own business. We excluded 'key workers'. Participants were recruited from different regions in England.

Analysis

The online research community generated a wealth of data and rich insights to which we cannot hope to do justice in this short report. We analysed the data thematically and by segments (age, ethnicity and gender) to ensure that we would identify any significant differences and inequalities by ethnic group, as well as intersectional differences. We also selected a few individuals and created case studies to bring their experiences to life.

Training diverse young researchers to moderate

Both Youth Futures Foundation and Versiti felt strongly that it was important to have the voices from ethnic minority young people in the research team - especially in online interactions with participants - to foster trust, openness and to get richer insights.

We recruited a small number of smart, curious and committed young people from diverse ethnic minority backgrounds to act as online moderators.

Versiti ensured that DBS checks were carried out and that all young moderators underwent NSPCC online safeguarding training. We briefed young people about the aims and objectives of the project, involved them in a research design session, trained them in the use of online research platform software and in online moderation.

For the duration of the fieldwork, young people were closely supervised by senior researchers who provided guidance and ensured quality standards. "As young people ourselves, we know first-hand what limbo is, how it feels like and the toll it takes. Given the topic of this research, being dictated to by researchers with stable income, long-term jobs and good prospects who have benefitted from generational advantage would have felt wrong. We could empathise because we could just as easily have been on the other side of the laptop. We spent two weeks listening and talking to people for many hours so it became a real community. There was a sense of companionship that's been lacking recently. Young people were willing to discuss subject matters that I don't think they would have raised in the same way with older White researchers or face-toface." (Lucas, Mixed Pakistani/White researcher, 21)

"By the end of the project, I realised that all these young people need is a 'rich White dad': someone to build their confidence that they are meant to succeed, to be a safety net and lend them money at times like COVID-19, and with the networks to give them a break." (Amarah, Bangladeshi researcher, 23)

FINDINGS: The immediate impact of COVID-19

Introduction

Education, training and employment are the main focus of this research. However, these must be understood in the context of young people's whole lives and the way they *experience* the pandemic. For example, physical and mental health can have knock on effects on people's motivation and ability to do well in school and to find or keep work. This section focuses on the immediate impact and the *self-reported*, *subjective experience* of COVID-19 on various aspects of diverse young people's lives.

We report on how **COVID-19 has triggered widespread disruptions and a mental health crisis for young people.** Our sample experienced a severe toll on mental health as daily life became unstructured, monotonous and unproductive, and a lingering sense of wasting their youth took hold.

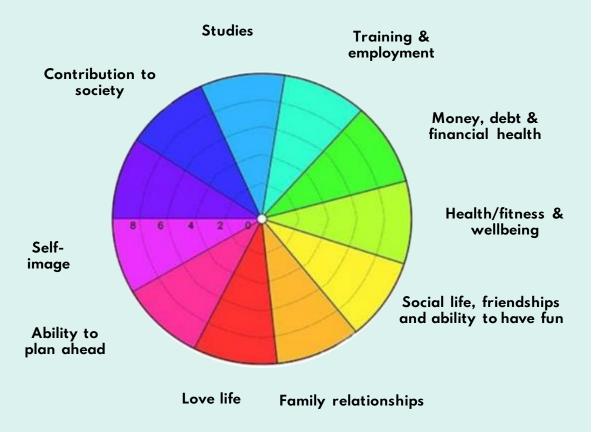
We also report on how **impoverished educational and training experiences left young people feeling dissatisfied and unprepared for the future.** With unsatisfactory online teaching, home environments that are not conductive to study and the lack of opportunities to network or hone their skills, young people in our sample feared the long-term negative impacts on their job prospects. As more and more young people lost their jobs and could not find new ones, were furloughed, had to take reduced pay, and, for those who were self-employed, could not access adequate financial help, many participants reported deep anxiety about never being able to reach their full potential and become 'failures'.



COVID-19 has triggered widespread disruptions and a mental health crisis for young people

Understanding COVID-19

Figure 1: Wheel of Life



To make sense of the impact of the pandemic on young people's lives and to encourage them to think more deeply about their experiences and needs before turning to a discussion of work programmes, we used a projective technique called a 'Wheel of Life' (see Figure 1) and invited research participants to describe, in as much detail as possible, the impact of COVID-19 on all the dimensions included in the diagramme.

This approach made clear that we cannot ignore the wider impact of COVID-19 on the lives of young people themselves. Failure to have a holistic understanding would result in responses that may not need real needs.

The approach also yielded rich insights into the various protective and risk factors - at an individual, family and community level - that are likely to account for long-term differences in the impacts of the pandemic on diverse young people.

COVID-19 is taking a severe toll on mental health

For most young people in our study, COVID was experienced primarily as a mental health crisis. This was clear in their answers to the Wheel of Life. It was also clear in the words they associated with COVID-19.

When we asked participants to write down the 30 words that spontaneously come to mind when thinking about COVID-19, mental health issues dominated. Of the 3,222 words generated, many of the most frequent associations pertained to 'loneliness', 'sad', 'depression', 'boredom', 'isolation', 'uncertainty', 'loss of control', 'stress', 'anxiety', 'worrying', 'fear', 'sadness', 'panic', 'frustration', 'confusion', 'anger', 'tired' or 'drained'. This shows the toll COVID-19 is taking on the mental health of diverse young people.

In the throes of managing the day-to-day reality of COVID-19, longer-term employment or economic considerations were almost absent - or perhaps they are the cause of young people's worries but this is not articulated as such. Words like 'school', 'money', 'economy' appear a few times, but 'jobs', 'unemployment' or 'furlough', for instance, do not figure in the most common associations.

This suggests that any effort to support diverse young people into education, training and employment in the wake of COVID-19 will need to take account of their mental health needs. Focussing exclusively on skills acquisition, without the provision of wider support, is unlikely to be effective.

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Figure 2: Word associations for 'COVID-19'



Daily life is unstructured, monotonous and unproductive

For the vast majority of participants, the pandemic has disrupted activities. The pictures and descriptions young people shared of their daily lives indicate that life has become monotonous and prone to unproductivity. Being cooped up at home, unable to go to the gym, glued to multiple screens, eating more than they should, indulging in unhealthy 'comfort' food and feeling lethargic impacted on their physical health, self-image and mental health.

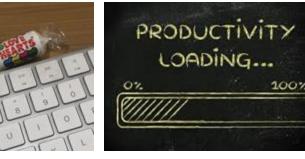
While participants were creative and resourceful in using technology to support their friendships, they also missed friendly hugs, sit-down chats, parties, playing football and all the simple activities that are normally part of a young person's life.

In our sample, **women and young people of South Asian backgrounds** seemed more affected than their male and Black or White British peers.



"It hurts to say this but during lockdown I put on Il kilos. Lockdown hit me hard. There was nothing else to do really, my family was all at home and we were just having family dinners all the time and I was just constantly eating. I feel insecure when others look at me now. My confidence has dropped." (Male, Pakistani background, 21-25)







"During lockdown, the lack of friendship makes me become more and more depressed, the feeling of isolation strongly affects my happiness and well-being. I couldn't focus on my study and sometimes I don't feel like doing anything." (Female, Chinese background, 21-25)

Young people feel that they're missing out on life

The pandemic not only changed current everyday life; it also put plans on hold. As school and university stopped, many aspects of the lives of young people also came to a halt, without warning. Many felt that this period of their life would never be recovered: socialising with friends, going to music festivals, travelling, gaining work experience - and simply being young and carefree - would be lost forever.

"Being a university student, there's a huge emphasis on going out clubbing, to the pubs, to parties and participating in social societies and extra-curricular activities, and now everything has come to a halt." (Female, Black African background, 21-25)

"The closing of clubs, bars and the cancellation of festivals and holidays was tough. So mentally we missed out a lot this year." (Male, Black Caribbean background, 16-20)

While friends would normally provide a natural outlet and source of support with fraught family dynamics, job loss, mental health issues, etc., this was no longer readily available to young people and affected their ability to cope and to focus on education and work. Yet, many participants remained confident that their friendships would survive the constraints of lockdown and that the consequences for their social life will be short-lived.

Some young people (especially White British or Chinese people, who often had greater resources to cope in the first place) reported making good use of the lockdown period. They found that they had more time to develop new healthy routines whilst working/ studying from home.

"It has made me much more fit and healthy as I have exercised a lot more and learnt I don't need to rely on the gym. Being at home more and not working 7 hours a day has meant I can keep up the exercise too, so this is the most consistent I've been and I have a good routine going." (Female, Chinese background, 21-25)

Others used the relative quiet of the pandemic to review their life, think about their priorities and set new goals for themselves. This provided a sense of control and achievement.

But these remained the exception rather than the rule.

Young parents experience multiple challenges

In our sample, seven young people were parents of infants. In all cases, multiple challenges made what should have been a happy time particularly challenging. Across all communities, these young parents experienced significant financial and emotional stresses, often them to raise their children away from their partner, without regular income and without help from their own families.

Here are some of their stories:

A young woman of Pakistani background had her first child during COVID. The baby was born with complications and needed extra care. The mum - who had previously worked as a nurse - gave up her work because of the risk to her baby. As a result, she was struggling with anxiety and depression, as well as money worries.

A White British woman who described her home life growing up as 'tough' - she left home at 15 to live with my half-sister and was 'kicked out of school' - was looking after her child by herself while working as a supervisor in a restaurant until COVID-19 forced the restaurant to close down, leaving the young mum struggling with isolation and money worries. A young man of Black African background had recently become a father but lived away from his girlfriend and daughter. He was upset not to be able to be with them and his girlfriend struggled without his practical and emotional support. There was no one to look after him either, as he became orphaned at the age of three and had since lost his only sibling.

A young woman of Indian background, mother of two young children, was parenting them alone after her partner walked out on her, leaving her devastated and without means.

A young woman of Black Caribbean background - herself one of six siblings, raised by a single-mother who was working three jobs to make ends meet - had a girl of nursery school age. She was raising her alone because the dad lived abroad and contributed little. The young woman gave up her A-Levels to start a paid apprenticeship in financial services. She was coping, living on low but steady income and driven by the desire to provide a safe and loving home for her child.

This limited but consistent evidence suggests that there is an urgent need for dedicated support to address the practical, economic and emotional needs of young parents and their children.

Young people from diaspora families are alone and worried

Unlike their White British counterparts, most ethnic minority young people in the sample were part of what we might call a 'diaspora' family: they had close family members abroad. Living far from their loved ones during a time of global crisis and uncertainty increased their sense of loneliness and isolation, anxiety about the health of their relatives, and powerlessness to help family at a time of vulnerability.

'Usually my dad comes to visit [from Pakistan] in the summer but wasn't able to this year." (Male, Pakistani background, 16-20)

"Lots of us are staying in different countries and we're all quite worried about each other." (Female, Chinese background, 21-25)

"We have been unable to see each other since Christmas given I'd need to take a flight to see my parents and I wouldn't want to take that risk [...] It makes you feel very far, suddenly. Powerless. It's the same for my parents. They are worried because the UK is not doing well. We've all got that additional worry and stress." (Male, Black African background, 21-25) One young woman had lost both grandparents in quick succession to the virus. This took a considerable toll on the whole family, impacting deeply on their emotional and financial situation.

"We lost both of my grandparents to Covid-19 so it had such a massive impact as we lost not only one but two people. Also it caused my mum to go into a small depression as it was only 10 days apart. We weren't able to see either of them but had to arrange two funerals. It was all very crazy." (Female, Black Caribbean background, 21-25)

Conclusions and implications

Provide mental health support and take a holistic view of the needs of young people in relation to finding and keeping good jobs

- The pandemic has fundamentally disrupted young people's lives and taken a severe toll on their mental health. It also affected their usual support system, leaving young people struggling to focus on their education and work prospects.
- While skills acquisition and work experience are clearly relevant to the ability of young people to find and keep good jobs, policies and programmes must acknowledge the toll that COVID-19 is taking on the mental health of young people and provide holistic support.
- This is consistent with a national survey (Youth Employment UK 'Youth Voice Census' 2020) that found that 35% of young people who are N.E.E.T. ranked 'anxiety' as the second biggest barrier to work, behind 'lack of work experience'.

Provide specialist support to young people who are parents themselves

• Our qualitative evidence found that there is an urgent need for dedicated support to address the practical, economic and emotional needs of young parents and their children. This is consistent with findings from a longitudinal survey of mental health based on more than 53,000 participants (Pierce et al, 2020) which found that parents of children under the age of five were experienacing a disproportionate burden of mental illness during COVID-19.

Specialist provision is also needed for young people who cannot access any parental support

 While the majority of young people could rely on their family to act as a safety net - emotionally, practically and financially - a minority could not access this support. This includes those in diaspora families: they were alone, worried about their loved, feeling powerless to help, and especially vulnerable.

Lower quality educational and training experiences leave young people feeling dissatisfied and unprepared for the future

Online teaching reduced the quality of the student experience

Students in our sample - at all stages in their education - reported dissatisfaction with their educational experience during COVID-19.

Virtually all students discussed how the teaching and learning experience is impoverished when lessons are delivered online. Many reported that they found it hard to understand, focus, ask questions, seek clarification and keep motivated. They were easily distraction. They lacked the skills to learn autonomously and they had reached a stage in their education where parents were not able to support them. Young people need real contact with teachers and other students to stay on top of their studies. Boys and young men seem to find it especially difficult to focus online and risk falling behind.

"All my lectures are online and I don't see any of my professors. Being in my third year, I would expect them to be in contact with us the most but I spend most of my time in my room self-studying." (Male, Pakistani background, 21-25)

"It has made my studies quite difficult. I couldn't get in direct contact with my lecturers in topics I needed a bit more explanation and details. Couldn't get access to the libraries. Couldn't get enough help from my lecturers anymore. Couldn't work with friends in the same way." (Male, Black African background, 16-20) In our sample, some young people reported that the transition to teaching online and the lack of tailored support had already led to poorer exam results than expected.

"I couldn't follow so I messed up and now I have a failed GCSE," (Male, Chinese background, 16-20)

"My grades have gone down significantly as with one subject I used to be an A/B student but I'm now on C/D and with the others I've been failing my recent tests." (Female, Black African background, 16-20)

Many were concerned about the long-term negative impacts on their educational outcomes. The lack of appropriate support also led a handful of young people to stop their education altogether or to change their educational plans significantly.

"I didn't proceed on a course I had started because I wasn't offered any help." (Male, Pakistani background, 16-20)

'Because communication with the school was lacking, I decided to postpone so I miss a year. " (Female, Black African background, 21-25)

Many home environments are not conducive to study

The impact of having to study at home is also greater for those who have deeper support needs and whose home study environment is not conducive to studying. This may be because of overcrowding, lack of dedicated study space, noise, distraction, having caring responsibilities and having to share IT resources, for instance.

"The impact has been massive. I was unable to immerse myself in my work, with me, my dad and my sister all fighting for space." (Male, white background, 16-20)

"Being a single parent meant that it made it harder for me to do this from home." (Female, Black Caribbean background, 21-25)

"We all live together so it's hard to concentrate. There is a lot of TV going on in the background. We take turns." (Male, Bangladeshi background, 16-20)

With 27% of young people from ethnic minority backgrounds especially **Pakistani and Bangladeshi** - live in overcrowded conditions, compared with only 7% of White British children (Judge <u>& Rahman, 2020</u>), the difficulties inherent in online learning are likely to be exacerbated for those young people.



Young people fear long-term negative impacts on their job prospects

Those who were in the process of completing their A Levels and were getting ready for university felt cheated. Many feared that their grades would not reflect their potential, with lasting impacts on their work prospects and incomes.

"My A-Level biology exams were cancelled. This was very important for my admission into university and meant some places rejected me. It also resulted in having to take an extra year at university. There was nothing in place for private candidates sitting exams. Universities said they were flexible but it was quite the opposite." **(Female, Indian background, 16-20)**

They discussed being less likely to gain valuable work experience, which is key to having a strong UCAS application and securing entry in the university of their choice.

"There's the constant stress to do well [because...] teachers could potentially have to predict our grades like last year. On top of that because of lockdown we don't have much to put on our UCAS and the deadline is approaching so having good grades is even more crucial now." (Female, Black African background, 16-20) Students already enrolled at university were also frustrated by their poor educational experience. They were paying high tuition fees but were missing out on many aspects of a good university education and experience: high-quality teaching and IT resources, personalised support, social life, networking and extracurricular activities that would help with their wellbeing as well as their future careers.

"I am still paying full university fees for 'online learning' where we don't even have access to full resources." (Female, Black African background, 21-25)

"COVID-19 has made a dramatic, detrimental and disheartening impact on my further studies to become a fully qualified Chartered Accountant. Before lockdown and COVID, I was on a career path that I had worked so hard for throughout my University experience to achieve my CIMA Qualifications. I was on probation as a Customer Care Advisor at an Accounting and Payroll organisation and, after that period had ended, I was supposed to be transferred over to the Finance Accounts department to begin my journey and studies towards my CIMA. Now that has all been stopped and I have been made redundant due to COVID-19" (Male, Indian background, 21-25)

Some despair that they will ever reach their potential or be able to honour their parents

There were heartbreaking discussions among young people as they began to feel that COVID-19 might rob them of the possibility of ever achieving their goals, reaching their potential and becoming the person they aspired to be and believed they could have become. The fear that they may become 'failures' put many young people **especially boys and men** - under severe mental strain.

"I fear not succeeding and not completing my goals. The fear of failing is worse than death to me." (Male, Pakistani background, 16-20)

"My main worry is being a failure in life. From not achieving anything and working dead end jobs. Not having enough money or spare time to maintain my aspired lifestyle, not living where I want to live and just having problems I know could have been avoided if I had worked harder and COVID had not happened, and having to worry about finances all my life as a result." (Male, Black Caribbean background, 16-20)

"What truly keeps me awake at night is the fear and feeling of becoming unsuccessful. This is a very vague fear but now everything is solely based on careers, money and success. I don't know how we can achieve that now" (Male, Indian background, 21-25) These feelings seemed associated with and worsened by the fear, guilt and shame of not meeting parental expectations. Many young people - **especially those from South Asian backgrounds** - felt they owed a debt of gratitude to their parents for their sacrifices, hard work and unwavering support. They believed they had a duty to succeed, both to honour their parents and, in some cases, to be able to contribute to household finances.

"My main worry is not coming out of University with a 2:1 or a first because I don't want to feel like I let my parents down as they worked their whole lives to support me and to be able to send me away to university to try and make a living." (Male, Pakistani backgrouond, 16-20)

"My own family, but especially my mum, she's always been there for me. So being there for her, doing well, that's always motivated me to improve myself so that I can ultimately become a stronger person and help my family in return." (Female, Indian background, 21-25)

"I owe my parents a lot. I was hoping to be able to start giving back but I can't now. I have to depend on them. It's horrible." **(Male, Bangladeshi background, 21-25)**

Young people report that training and apprenticeship opportunities are fewer

Young people reported vastly reduced opportunities to get on relevant workplace training programmes, especially manual labour apprenticeships, in the wake of COVID-19.

Those who wanted to acquire skills that can only be developed through 'on-the-job' training - like carpentry, hairdressing, operation of heavy machinery, beauty therapy and consultancy, physiotherapy - could not proceed with their training.

'I was out of work for four months due to all the hair salons closing and I was not able to do my training." (Female, white, 21-25)

'I was supposed to train in a workshop but that's gone now.' (Male, Black Caribbean background, 16-20)

Young people also reported that office-based corporate training budgets had been slashed because organisations did not need to train and recruit new people. Those currently in work reported that their employers had cancelled or postponed their training programmes. "In terms of training, my workplace has been very tight with it due to budgets and not wanting to spend a lot of money, especially since they don't think they will be able to recruit those who complete their training." (Female, Bangladeshi background, 21-25)

'Most training contract roles have been cancelled or postponed." (Female, Bangladeshi background, 16-20)

"I have had a secondment cancelled. Training, mentoring, secondment - all that is now being pulled." (Male, Black African background, 21-25)

When most job adverts require that applicants demonstrate experience, the lack of training and apprenticeship opportunities are bound to impact on the long-term work prospects of young people.

Online training is seen as less effective and impactful

The few training programmes that remain are now being delivered online. Much like online teaching and learning for mainstream education, these were said to lead to impoverished experiences as the scope to interact with, and learn from, peers and mentors is dramatically reduced.

"I was meant to join an incubation programme in person but it's moved remotely due to the pandemic. Not great." (Female, Chinese background, 21-25)

"My uni offers courses to gain knowledge of how I will be able to use my degree in real life, many of which I pick as electives throughout the year. Usually they would have us in large groups to bounce ideas of each other and work in person to create an environment that would feel very similar to work. However these have now been replaced with online workshops, which limits social interaction." (Male, Pakistani background, 16-20)

"Training has been very different as everything is remote. I'm someone that finds it easier to study when someone is there in front of me rather than on a PC." (Female, Black Caribbean baclground, 21-25) Young people felt that online training is more generic and makes personalisation more difficult because of the lack of two-way interaction. This reduces the scope for young people to ask questions, establish relationship, shine and earn trust of peers and potential employers. Young people from all ethnic backgrounds and socio-economic groups are affected by this change on the mode of delivery.

Conclusions and implications

Help young people to stay in education

• With evidence from Universities UK (2020) demonstrating that graduates domiciled in the UK earn about £10,000 a year more than non-graduates and that higher education significantly reduces the likelihood of being unemployed, it is imperative to take measures to keep young people of all backgrounds in education.

Use teachers' predicted grades for GCSE and A-Levels in 2021

• Using teachers' predicted grades helps widening access to higher education.

Design education specifically for online delivery

- Every young person must be equipped to access online education from home. This goes beyond the provision of IT hardware: it may involve working with families to identify the best best of supporting home-based education.
- Given how hard young people found it difficult to engage with learning materials online, there is a need to design better educational experiences by making full use of digital resources, and enabling more personalised teaching and learning support.

Aim to replicate the full educational experience online

• Efforts should be made to replicate as many dimensions of the overall student experience as possible - not just the curriculum - since being a part of student societies and able to network are core parts of an education, beyond formal qualifications.

Online training and apprenticeships should be enriched

• New ways of delivering training and apprenticeships - which involve high-quality experiences, encourage peer interactions, develop the skills to work independently and, as far as possible, are tailored to the needs of each person - must also be found.

Increase the number of high-quality paid apprenticeships

- Since more young people are dropping out of education because the experience is unsatisfactory and the cost is too high and, at the same time, there are fewer jobs available, there is a clear need to avoid a growing number of young people becoming N.E.E.T. - with the long-term emotional, social and economic costs associated with this - by creating large-scale high-quality paid apprenticeship programmes.
- Integrating work experience in the curriculum could help many ethnic minority young people on the first rung of their career.

Job losses, furlough, low pay, selfemployment and a shrinking labour market make for bleak economic prospects

The labour market is shrinking and may be unfair

With masse redundancies, large numbers of people being put on furlough and reduced economic activity in general, the labour market could hardly be more challenging, especially for young people at the time of our study.

In our sample, young people of all ethnic minority backgrounds reported a range of experiences and fears - though it is also clear that not everyone takes the full measures of the challenges ahead. This is partly because many are shielded from the worse economic impacts by their families (as discussed later in this report) and because the prospect of unemployment feels remote for those who are planning on continuing their education for some time.

Many participants were anxious about the widening gap between supply and demand in the labour market: they noticed that there are fewer jobs available and an increasing amount of applicants.

"I am worried that I will never get a training contract and never become a solicitor. It is already so competitive and now schemes are being postponed or cancelled. I feel like I don't stand a chance and I feel like my family don't understand how tough it is. When University is so expensive and the debt is so much, not being able to get a good job of quality properly is very worrying to me." (Female, Bangladeshi background, 16-20) 'It is extremely hard to get my hands on an apprenticeship due to high demand but also less companies taking on new employees due to restricted funds. There aren't many options remaining. "(Male, white, 16-20)

"A lot of people have lost their jobs which means that there are more people trying to apply for the same jobs, which makes it difficult to find work. People are not letting you know anything when you send your CV." (**Female, Indian background, 21-25**)

A few individuals (two black young men and one Muslim young woman) expressed concerns that they may be discriminated against in the labour market.

"I feel the chances of [finding a good job] have lowered even more due to the current pandemic and due to possible employment discrimination during job interviews. [...]I am worried about facing employment discrimination as I wear a hijab, I feel as though this has happened before but there is no way of truly finding out as it isn't made obvious that that is the reason for not being employed " (Female, Pakistani background, 21-25)

This additional layer of self-doubt and distrust that one may be able to find work commensurate with one's skills and potential is damaging self-confidence and undermines sense of belonging.

Many lost their jobs, were furloughed or paid less

Since the start of the pandemic, there has been a large increase in unemployment and a large fall in employment for young people aged 16-24. At some point between March and the end of July 2020, almost two million jobs held by young people (aged 16-24), and almost half (47%) of all eligible jobs, were furloughed (Powell, 2020). The unemployment for young men increased even more dramatically than for young women (Youth Unemployment Statistics, 2020).

In line with national evidence about the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on the employment of young people, many youth in our sample who were in paid employment (either part-time or full-time) before the pandemic lost their jobs.

"I lost my job, which I loved, and took the impact of COVID-19 as a personal disheartenment and that has had an impact towards my motivation, determination and focus to attain other employment." (Male, Indian background, 21-25)

"I lost my job due to COVID. I went on the benefits, which is quite upsetting." (Female, Black African background, 21-25)

Those who managed to keep or get a job sometimes had to accept lower wages.

"After many months, I managed to find a job but the pay was reduced to the minimum wage." **(Female, Indian background, 16-20)**

Some mentioned being put on furlough. For these young people, receiving only 80% of their previous salaries was not enough to make ends meet. It forced them to have to dip into their savings or to borrow from parents or on credit cards.

"I was furloughed for around 5-6 months and even though I was on a small wage anyway, it got even smaller, so I can't even imagine what it must have been like for people who have real responsibilities." (Female, Black African background, 21-25)

"I was furloughed, which was an absolute struggle to get everything that was vital paid for and also not having the ability to save." (Female, Indian background, 21-25)

While it is not always easy to attribute job losses to discrimination, one Black Caribbean man reported being treated unfairly.

"I lost my job due to COVID. I was promised furlough for 3 months minimum, then later was only paid for I month. I had to go back and forth with my manager, even resorting to assistance from a tribunal worker as I was wrongly dealt with. This was stressful." (**Male, Black Caribbean background, 21-25**)

Sectoral shutdowns: impact on student jobs

According to research by the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS, 2020), young people have been hardest hit by the lockdown: employees aged under 25 were about 2.5 times more likely to work in a sector that is now shut down as other employees. The current research brings to life the reality behind these figures.

Many young people in our sample worked in the retail, leisure and gyms, catering and hospitality sectors. They often relied on parttime work in restaurants, pubs and clubs (where tips, which are not covered by the furlough scheme, used to make up a significant proportion of their income) to pay for their education and living expenses. This seems to be more impacting on university students, whose tuition fees remained unchanged but whose income has significant reduced. Without parental support, many will incur sizable debts.

"I'm currently looking for work but all the retail and entertainment companies are going out of business. They are all the perfect jobs for students so I am not sure what I'll do." (Female, Indian background, 16-20)

'I was working part-time in hospitality but these jobs are gone now. I can't see when they will come back. I don't know how I will pay for my studies without that job because tuition fees are just so high, plus student accommodation and everything else." (Male, white, 21-25)

"I was furloughed. I got paid my wages but as a waitress, I often relied on tips to top up my wage and that was not included in my monthly pay. Since then, I have found it very difficult to find a second part-time job." (Female, Black Caribbean background, 21-25)

Those aiming to work or already working in the performing arts are finding their prospects particularly challenging.

"It's been awful. I work in the Theatre and Arts industry and all of that got shut down. The only work going is voice-over or radio work and that's only if you have your own studio set up at home." (Female, Black African background, 21-25)

"COVID has made me worry about it a lot more as the entertainment industry has been hit really hard with loads of jobs going down the drain. I always worry about where I will even start once I graduate." **(Female, Black African background, 21-25)**

To support young people, there is a need to provide targeted help to the sectors which rely on young employees and to offer further protections for people in precarious employment.

Self-employed young people are at significant risk

Some self-employed young people reported having been unable to work and earn for many months, especially those working in shutdown sectors (e.g. trades, personal fitness, beauty), with the real risk of long-term unemployment and poverty.

"I had no employment, no income at all from March to September." (Male, Black Caribbean background, 16-20)

"My biggest stresses are financial. With the current pandemic going on, I have struggled to take my business from a small one to a bigger more successful one. Timing wasn't great as i was just starting to hit my stride when we had to shut the gyms. I've struggled to get back to the comfortable position i had prior the lockdown. I was not able to afford bills or eat properly. I did some park workout sessions with as many clients as I could train at the time and managed to keep afloat. My parents helped us out as well as my girlfriend's family and her general income." (Male, Black Caribbean background, 21-25)

It is unclear from the responses whether they are covered by the furlough scheme.

Entrepreneurs and self-employed young people have had their businesses and plans severely disrupted. These young people need a degree of stability and predictability, as well as short-term financial support, to overcome COVID-19 challenges.

"I think this will have additional long-term financial constraints with companies being reluctant to spend additional to take on new projects. This will mean I will continue to bankroll certain areas of the business." (Male, white, 21-25)

"I haven't been able to put in practice my project, it took me 5 months of non-profits to start revising alternative ways to keep the business going." **(Male, Black African background, 21-25)**

"The support I will need is to be able to continue working if all this COVID stuff is going on it is affecting the amount of people wanting to get their hair done so for things to sort of go back to normal and stop worrying about catching it ." (Female, white, 21-25)

Conclusions and implications

Support young people to access and stay in education or access apprenticeships or other work-related programmes.

• Given the scarcity of jobs in sectors that traditionally employ young people, this period of crisis should become an opportunity to help as many ethnic minority young people as possible to stay in education or access work training so that they are prepared to (re-)enter the labour market once economic activity resumes.

Monitor job losses, furlough and pay by ethnicity, age and gender

• There is robust evidence on the impacts of the COVID pandemic on job losses, furlough and pay. However, there is a need to understand how these three factors *intersect* in relation to employment data to understand disproportionate impacts and identify where resources are most urgently needed.

Support sectors that disproportionally employ young people

• The concentration of youth employment in sectors shut down by COVID should be addressed through targeted government support for those sectors.

Consider including tips in furlough calculations

• Young people are already in low-paid jobs. For many who work in the hospitality sector, if tips are taken out of furlough calculations, earning 80% of their fixed salary is not enough to make ends meet.

Legislate against zero-hours contracts

• Young people and people from ethnic minority backgrounds are over-represented in the most precarious forms of employment, such as zero-hour contracts and agency work. There should be greater protection to ensure that economically vulnerable young people from ethnic minority backgrounds do not become even more fragile in the wake of the pandemic.

Support self-employed young people

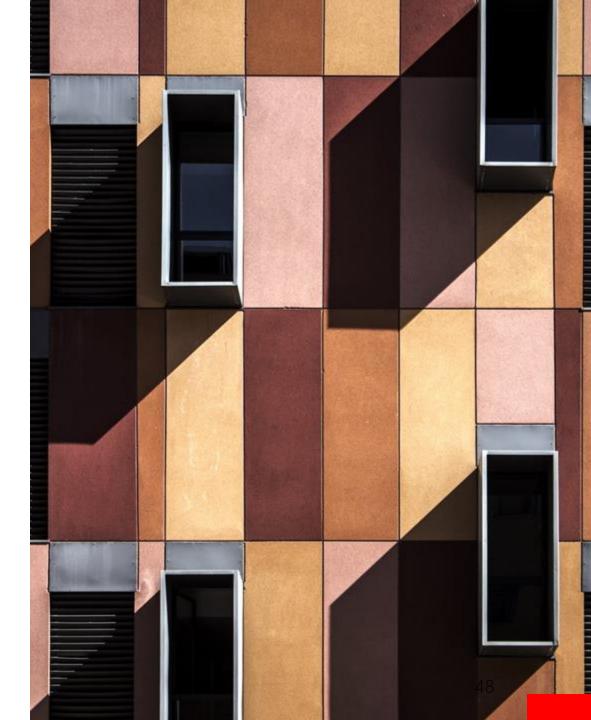
• Self-employed people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds have been deeply affected by the pandemic. There is a need to ensure that eligibility criteria for self-employment income support are inclusive of young people. Efforts should also be made to support eligible young people with making claims. What COVID-19 could mean in the future of young people

Introduction

In this section, we discuss young people's subjective experiences and needs holistically - not just for each young people individually but also in relation to the **wider economic, social and family capital** each young person can mobilise to mitigate the impact of the pandemic in relation to education, training and work.

In our sample, we found **no lack of aspiration, only a lack of opportunities.** Most young people of all backgrounds aimed high in terms of their future family life, material success and upward mobility. However, **young people - now and in the future - depend largely on their family circumstances.** It became clear that families from various ethnic backgrounds had differential abilities to support their young members. Thus, while the experiences reported by young people in the immediate throes of the pandemic do not suggest strong ethnic inequalities - young people of all backgrounds feel that they are 'in the same boat' and that their entire generation is being sacrificed considering the wider social and economic capital of families gives a real sense of how ethnic inequalities can be expected to widen significantly over time unless large-scale but targeted action is taken.

The end of this section then focuses on what **young people themselves say would help them in their job search**, what can be done to make apprenticeships works for them, the perceptions of the paucity of entrepreneurship support and of the government's Kickstart programme.



There is no lack of aspiration, only a lack of opportunities

Most young people of all backgrounds aimed high

The Intergenerational Foundation (2010) analysed data from the European Social Survey (a biennial poll which measures the social attitudes of 57,000 respondents across 29 European countries) and found that young people in the UK were viewed much more negatively than in other European countries. For instance, British young people (in their 20s) were viewed with the least respect of any country; came near-bottom for being friendly, competent, viewed with admiration and having high moral standards; and were more likely to be viewed with contempt and pity than in any other country.

While the data is a decade-old, there is no obvious reason to expect that these attitudes have changed significantly. Yet, the young people who took part in this project did not meet this stereotype: they contributed generously to the research project over two full weeks; the average response rate for each activity was around 95%, which shows how dedicated our diverse research participants were; their answers were considered, fulsome and honest.

Collectively, they struck us as being introspective and respectful. Given a proper space to explore their experience and a platform to express their views, they rose to the occasion. It is also clear that these young people had high aspirations. They wanted to do well. For instance, we asked research participants to source pictures that represent what they imagined their life would be like at the age of 40. Two key themes dominate:

Emotional life: There are frequent references to life-long marriage, children, happy family outings, dogs and cats and, perhaps more surprisingly, many fair-skinned people.

Material success: Responses are replete with images of money, large homes, luxury cars, exotic holidays and designer handbags.

Given the circumstances in which the young people in our sample currently live and the likely detrimental impact of COVID-19 on their economic prospects, they will need to be guided as they explore options. More opportunities must be made available and clear pathways provided to access them.

The following two slides are collages of the some of the photos posted by young people to illustrate their lives at age 40.

Life at 40: Durable intimacy and happy family life





























Life at 40: Material success and upward mobility











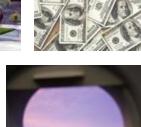
















Young people - now and in the future depend largely on their family circumstances

Parental support plays a significant role in young people's lives and outcomes

Most young people in our sample were dependent on their family for various key aspects of their lives. The family was central to their emotional, practical and economic stability.

The large majority of young people in our sample had either not left home yet. But many had returned to live at home because of the pandemic. Faced with the closure of their universities, the loss of work, reduced income and social isolation, young people preferred to remain, or return to stay, with their parents and siblings. In some cases, this were also underpinned by more positive cultural norms in relation to multigenerational living.

This is consistent with government statistics (ONS, 2011) that show that, even a decade before the pandemic, households from a nonwhite ethnic minority background were more likely to live in "other" types of households (such as multigenerational households) compared to White households.

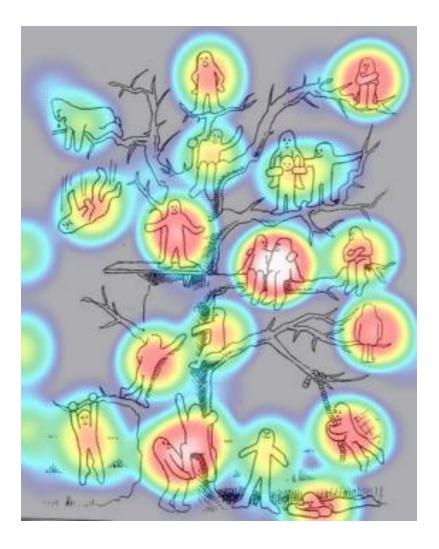
Most young people reported that parents give them pocket money, pay for transport, helped with university fees and student accommodation, lent them money, helped with gym fees, etc.

"Now that I am not working, I am ashamed to say that I depend on my family for help." (Male, Bangladeshi background, 16-20) "I am truly grateful to say that my dad's work kept our family stable during these times so this aspect has not impacted me." (Male, Pakistani background, 16-20)

"My family has helped me emotionally a lot during this difficult time to process the disappointment at having plans disrupted by COVID." (Male, Black African background, 21-25)

"I don't know what I'd do or where I'd be without my family. They are everything. They are there for me and my siblings whenever we need anything, even though we know it's not easy for them. They have their own worries because my dad lost his job and my mum is at home looking after everyone." (Male, Bangladeshi background, 16-20)

Despite strains, families provide a vital safety net



We asked young people to consider the image on the left, to place 'pins' on the three characters that best represent how they feel and to explain their selection. The answer reveals that each young person experiences a range of mixed emotions and experiences.

Negative emotions and experiences are expressed, with many young people feeling resentful, isolated, left hanging, dropped, holding on for dear life, reaching out for help or flat out on the ground. Some feel guilty that they are letting others down.

Despite these strains, positive emotions and experiences revolve primarily around the support and love most young people receive from their family (parents, siblings and the wider family), friends or partners. Most young people felt at least somewhat surrounded and helped.

"My family and close friends. They are the only ones I trust. I know they will always be honest and have my best interest at heart." (Male, Black Caribbean background, 16-20)

'My parents are my rock. I would never share problems and issues with the world." (Female, Chinese background, 21-25)

'My mum and auntries are my safety net. I don't know what I would do without them." *(Female, Bangladeshi background, 21-15)*

Some young people cannot depend on their family

Not all young people can rely on their families, though. For a range of reasons, some young people in the sample did not enjoy the economic, practical and emotional safety net that parents typically provide. In some cases, parents were no longer alive or they lived in another country. In rare cases, relationships were fraught and links had been cut with parents and siblings, which left young people highly vulnerable, both emotionally and economically.

"Well, family and I are no longer talking. The closeness drove us mad and it left us quite upset with each other." **(Female, Black African background, 16-20)**

"It caused a strain on relationships and caused many arguments. I need to find a place to live now." (Female, Black Caribbean background, 21-25)

In our sample, some young people's parents were simply unable to help financially because they had lost their jobs, been furloughed and were on low income.

"My dad has his own takeaway business and also works as a taxi driver on weekends. Due to Covid, my Dad's business has not been doing well. He hasn't been getting that many customers as people are in lockdown and also his takeaway was closed for several weeks when the outbreak first happened. He faced a huge financial loss because of this.... ... It was also hard for him to bounce back when the takeaway opened again as he was scared of this risk of Covid spreading to the family. What worries my Dad most is if he will need to close his takeaway down if he isn't making enough money. He has worked at the takeaway for over 20 years and is worried this will happen. He doesn't believe there are any opportunities for him. He hasn't had any help through this at all." (Female, Bangladeshi background, 21-25)

If the impacts of COVID-19 were already felt at the time of the study, one can only expect that they will have a cumulative effect over time, as many families will be stretched beyond limit, with consequences for all members. In such cases, young people could be at greater risk. They will need help to cope with the multiple impacts of the pandemic on their lives.

Multigenerational households offer mixed blessings

Recent research (Aviva. 2020; Burgess & Muir. 2020) found that a third of all UK households are multi-generational, mainly due to adult children living with parents. While there is no recent data on the percentage of ethnic minority households that have two, three or four generations under the same roof, at the time of the last Census, South Asian (Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi) and Black (Black Caribbean and Black African) households were more likely to live in such arrangements (ONS, 2011).

In general, the motivations for multigenerational living are diverse and reflect multiple intersecting structural pressures, including an ageing population, rising housing costs, the cost of higher education, increases in divorce rates and, among ethnic minority communities in particular, cultural norms. In many ways, multigenerational living arrangements are economically advantageous and offer considerable protection against the economic impacts of COVID-19.

However, in the context of a pandemic, young people in our sample also feel they impose additional constraints. Overcrowding makes home working difficult. Ethnic minority young people who live with their parents and grandparents or have children of their own are also restricted in the kind of work they can do. Given the higher rates of morbidity and mortality from COVID-19 among ethnic minority people and among older people in general, Young people who live with older adults express fear of passing on the virus and do not want to put them at greater risk because they are working with the public or relying on public transport to go to work.

"It's caused me to be very anxious as I have others who are vulnerable to COVID at home. It's stressful to go out to work." (Male, Pakistani background, 21-25)

"I can't really leave the house to find work because my parents are at risk." (Female, Bangladeshi background, 16-20)

Parents of babies and infants are understandably keen to protect them as well, which restricts the job roles they can look for. One mother of a premature baby took extended maternity leave.

"If Covid hadn't struck, I would be back at work by now. But as my baby has a low immune system due to being born a preemie and it has made me not want to go back to work because I am really afraid of catching the virus and bringing it home to my little one." (Female, Pakistani background, 21-25)

The cost of living also increases - with more people using electricity and heating bills going up - putting some households under strain.

Ethnic minority families face disproportionate financial vulnerability

With young people becoming more and more financially reliant on their families, the resilience of a young person's wider family will play a key role in determining their ability to cope with the impact of COVID-19.

However, evidence shows that ethnic minority households are much less financially resilient than their white British counterparts. It is a greater struggle for them to make ends meet. For instance, in 2019, a significantly higher proportion of Black people reported they were finding it 'quite' or 'very difficult' to manage financially compared with those from other ethnic backgrounds (ONS, 2020) as compared to other ethnic groups. During the pandemic, Black households were also the least likely of all ethnic groups to have enough financial assets to cover a 20% loss of employment income. Similarly, men from Bangladeshi background were four times as likely, and Pakistani men were nearly three times as likely, as white British men to have jobs in shut-down industries (IFS, 2020).

Thus, for many ethnic minority parents, having to support young people while also facing a greater likelihood of having lost their own jobs, been furloughed and having fewer savings, is taking a toll on the entire household and could jeopardise the financial health of all its members, now and in the future.

Conclusions

Reduced career prospects and income

Impoverished educational/training experiences

Impoverished social experiences

Coronavirus / lockdown

Government interventions

Family

- Parental lack of education
- **Risk factors**
 - Multigenerational household

COVID-19 impact on young person's experiences and outcomes

• Financial help

factors

- Help with housing
- Emotional support
- Practical support
- Protective Multigenerational household

Depending on the family situation and individual risk factors, our study suggests that there are important differences between young people in the impact of COVID-19 on their employment outcomes.

Faced with reduced career prospects and income (including because they have been made redundant, furloughed or had to settle for reduced hours and/or pay), impoverished educational and training experiences, and temporary but severe disruptions in their social lives, not all young people are impacted in the same way.

COVID-19 has deepened existing inequalities. The scale of the impact depends on their own resilience but, more importantly, it depends on the extent to which their families can support them both financially and emotionally. This is especially true among the younger ones, but it applies to most young people.

Thus, young people from middle-class families that have savings, have space to study or work from home, can afford to keep young people in education and training without income for a little longer will fare much better than those who are on low income, have no savings and are overwhelmed by the scope of the pandemic. Living in a multigenerational household can be both a risk (where dependent infants or older people with vulnerable conditions are are present) and a protective factor. This is clearly patterned by ethnicity but not in any straightforward way.



Consider the financial impact of COVID-19 on the wider family

• Young people expressed being dependent on their family for financial or emotional support. Young people from ethnic minority backgrounds often live in multigenerational households. However, some cannot depend on their family due to a lack of financial resilience from the main provider.

Commission research to make projection of household vulnerability by ethnicity over time

• There is a gap in evidence and in projections on the long-term impact on COVID-19 on the economic resilience and vulnerability of households, by ethnicity.

Devise policies and programmes based on projections

• Such evidence and projections should be used to ensure that policies and programmes are in place to mitigate against the worst impacts of COVID-19 for whole households. Without this household-based planning, there is a risk that ethnic inequalities will deepen over time, engulfing entire households.

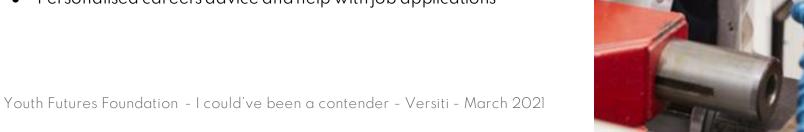
Helping ethnic minority young people find good jobs

Introduction

Having spent the first nine days of the research community exploring young people's lives and aspirations as well as their experiences of COVID-19 and the impact on their lives, we then spent four days focussing on young people's awareness of relevant careers' advice and work programmes near them, their views on the government's Kickstart Scheme programme and the type of support they felt would be most valuable to them.

We asked young people what would help them most both with respect to getting a good job. There answers include:

- Increasing the number of decent secure jobs, especially in their local area
- More paid apprenticeships and internships
- A simple way to find out about work and training opportunities
- Subsidised public transport
- Good quality affordable childcare
- Affordable high education that does not saddle them with debts
- Compulsory financial literacy and capability classes in school
- Mental health support
- Personalised careers advice and help with job applications





Young people in our study recognised that they need help - all sorts of help - in order to get a good job. But they were also clear that there are many structural factors that stand in their way and which need to be addressed for them to have a fair crack at getting a good job.

In the context of COVID-19, they felt that the main problem was the sheer paucity of good jobs for them to apply for. Thus, increasing the number of decent secure jobs was the main priority.

"Simply more jobs on the market would be a massive help. (Male, Black Caribbean background, 21-25)

"I managed to get a part time job but I am on a O-hour contract. There is no guarantee of a shift which causes worries when you have accounts to pay." (Female, Bangladeshi background, 21-25) Young people were keen to access **paid apprenticeships and internships (see later).** Unless apprenticeships and internships are well paid, young people from poorer families said that they would not be able to take them up. Opportunities have to be available at all levels - not only in manual roles.

"As an apprentice with an apprenticeship wage, it can be hard to manage your money so getting help with money management would be helpful." (Female, Indian background, 16-20)

"A massive one for me would be paid internships/work experience at the big firms - like big tech, banks, PWC, KPMG, media agencies and the likes. They exploit young people by getting them on unpaid placements or really low paid and ultimately only the rich kids who are funded by their parents can generally take these." (Male, Indian background, 21-25)

Raising awareness of opportunities was

also important so that this does not depend on word of mouth, networking and other opaque strategies that benefit some young people more than others.

Young people wanted local employers to visit their schools and universities and to attend employment fairs.

'Employers should come to schools and unis." (Male, Pakistani background, 21-25)

They also called for a **simple integrated job opportunities portal** - with multiple easy-to-use filters in order to find out where they might be able to apply for relevant work.

"An easily accessible and navigable platform that has work opportunities for young people in my area (in my chosen sector) all in one place." (Female, Chinese background, 21-25)

"One sole app or website for every job/ apprenticeship should be used with thorough filters on what type of job and in what field, where, etc. At the moment there at too many sites that are used, making it hard to keep track of what you have applied for." (Male, white, 16-20)

For young people, it seemed especially important to find jobs that are available locally. Most could not afford to move away from home; most did not drive; many complained about the cost of public transport. Younger people (16-20) and women seemed especially impacted by the nature of their **local labour market**. Jobs or training opportunities must be easily physically accessible because young people are more likely to work part-time, to earn less and to have caring responsibilities.

"More individual and personal help on what the opportunities are in the area." (Female, Bangladeshi background, 16-20) "Local jobs are very important to young people because many don't drive and can't afford transport and, if they work part-time, they don't want to spend more time and money on travel than they earn." (Female, white, 16-20)

A large minority of young people especially girls and women - mentioned that the lack of affordable and reliable public transport was an important barrier to seeking and keeping work.

"I'm put off going out there for work and always searching for things locally because the oyster card prices are ridiculous." (Female, Bangladeshi background, 21-25)

"Transport coverage when you secure a job interview." (Female, Indian background, 21-25)

"Young people need support with transport! The fact that the cost of transport could hinder your progress in securing a job when you're unemployed is crazy." (Female, Bangladeshi background, 21-25) "More effort for people to get cycling would widen the range of jobs young people can get to without paying fares - a 'cycle to work' scheme for young people." (Male, Black African background, 21-25)

"I currently use the bus the majority of the time but if I could afford to take the tube that would help with my punctuality." (Male, Bangladeshi background, 16-20)

Young parents (especially women) also needed **good quality affordable childcare** in order to get a job. This is true at the best of times but, in the wake of COVID-19, young parents have lost the free and trusted support of their parents because they themselves are too vulnerable to look after their grandchildren.

"Childcare is another big issue for me. I pay for breakfast club, after school club and nursery currently which alone is over £500 a month (I get some help off the government but not enough). Usually my nana and grandad would help more but currently are unable to as they are vulnerable. I definitely think the cost of childcare should be looked at, especially during these times when the full provision is not being offered." (Female, Indian background, 21-25) As discussed earlier, the **cost of higher education** was seen as an important barrier to getting a good job among many young people from ethnic minority backgrounds. They often reiterated that they could not afford to pay high university tuition fees that will lead to long-term debts, especially now that they cannot see that well-paid jobs will be available for their generation.

"It would be amazing if university would be more affordable! Seeing so many countries that we almost border have free universities or 2000 euro a year is beyond believable." (Female, Black Caribbean background, 21-25)

"If there were discounted degrees for certain public sector careers eg teaching, NHS jobs, police etc. I don't have a degree but I would definitely go if it was cheaper or discounted. Or even adult courses or higher education courses." (Female, Black Caribbean background, 21-25) Young people also believed that they need help with **financial literacy and capability.** They argued that this should be provided to every student in secondary school as they felt ill-prepared to face economic realities.

"Advice about managing money, debt and mental strength to help you be prepared for the rollercoaster that is life as a young adult. All these things are never taught to us in schools. It all depends on your household and surrounding to help you pick up these life skills. Unfortunately not everybody is lucky to have this." (Male, Black Caribbean background, 21-25)

"Schools need to provide more in-house support to young people about managing money, health and wellbeing like a compulsory citizenship course alongside all courses." (Male, Bangladeshi background, 16-20)

"It would be great if we were taught within school about money and money management and generally life such as different bills and our rights. How to save or invest money, what to do if you get into money troubles/dangers of debt. I know far too many friends that have used credit cards like its a virtual game of sims." (Female, Black Caribbean background, 21-25)

Young people knew that financial literacy is very important but had no ready means of accessing this knowledge.

Unless their parents were able to pass on a degree of financial literacy and capability, young people were left illequipped and anxious about their financial life and prospects.

Money management and housing
because, as young people, these are
things that not taught about and when you
find yourself in situations where you need
help, parents give advice that may haveand attordable ho
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worked in their day but not in ours." (Male, Black Caribbean background, 16-20)

A particularly important aspect of financial literacy for young people was **housing advice and support**.

"We need more accessible education, finance and housing advice. This is something we have a lot of pressure on however we have never been spoken to about this stuff and we never know where to start. Compulsory sessions in school for young would make life easier in the long run. It would help with mental health as some people leave uni and have no idea what to do so they get stressed and feel like they're failing." (Female, Black African background, 21-25)

Beyond housing advice, **access to social and affordable housing** - **across all tenures** - was a major issue for young people. "I have a mortgage but I don't know anyone else my age with mortgage and a lot of my friends and family struggle with rent and bills due to increases every year." (Female, Black Caribbean background, 21-25)

A range of approaches will need to be considered to increase housing support in order to help young people with education and work. Young people suggested the following:

"Some regulation over housing to avoid people being able to charge insane rents and foreign investment making the housing market completely artificial." (Male, Black African background, 21-25)

"More government support for those who have had the opportunity to save up for a deposit." (Female, Chinese background, 21-25)

"Extending housing benefits to more young people." (Female, Bangladeshi background, 21-25)

Given the extent to which young people reported common mental illnesses as well as depression in the wake of COVID-19, it is not surprising that many stated that they needed **mental health support** to find and keep the right job for them. Many felt too demotivated to embark on job searches.

"A lot of people after the whole pandemic have lost motivation to start looking for work, therefore if there is anything that helps people make that first step, I think would make a big difference. Some sort of employment program that teaches individuals essential skills that can be used to help get jobs, for example interview support, help with CV's and communication and others skills, etc." (Male, Pakistani background, 16-20)

"Support from jobcentre to help and understand people's issues treat people equally and respectfully without making judgements." (Male, Bangladeshi background, 16-20) "More help and advice should be available regarding mental health - this would really help me right now." (Female, Indian background, 21-25)

Young people often reported not understanding the world of work: what work entails, what might suit them, what skills they need to acquire in order to secure specific roles, etc. They believed that more could and should be done in school to ensure that young people are prepared for the world of work and increase employability.

"More help in schools about life after education and how to get into work. The education system is focused on the present and on making sure you pass your exams but they never discuss the future, ultimately dropping you in the deep end. That's why a lot of people struggle to find jobs after uni: they aren't really advised on how to use their skills for certain jobs or what connections they even need to make to ensure they get a job." (Female, Black African background, 21-25) "Knowing how the whole thing works and what employers want to see from a potential worker would help. I feel that young people including me don't know much about employment and there needs to be more education. Some people know exactly how to get into the job that they want whereas others like me don't know what to do so." (Male, Pakistani background, 16-20)

In this sample, almost half of young people were aware of careers advice services near them. Awareness was higher among young people currently in education or in work, though some who recently lost their jobs mentioned that they were getting some careers advice from Job Centres.

But this was often too generic. Young people need direct and personalised support through their job search so that

they access **personalised support** when they need it.

"Good careers advice in school from young is important. Relevant and based on an understanding of you as a person." (Male, Black Caribbean background, 21-25)

"If I am not good enough to apply for the job, I will take some additional courses or training to improve my skills. Someone needs to tell you what you need to learn in order to get the job you want and then point you in the right direction." (Female, Chinese background, 21-25)

"My university careers advice service was rubbish. They did not help at all. Law is such a competitive field and they did not help with offering individual advice etc." (Female, Bangladeshi background, 21-25)

"Support should be provided for all people of all backgiot for all people of all backgiot finishing uni." (Female, Pakistani background, 21-25) (outh Futures Foundation - I could've been a contender - Versiti - March 2021

"Receiving assistance and advice with my CV and knowing all the viable options I could take with my degree and work experience would help. There should be websites dedicated to hiring and molding young employees into professionals in their respective fields. And for people to be there if we had any queries or worries when it comes to full time employment." (Male, Black African background, 16-20)

"I think I literally made all the mistakes possible in my job search before I got there, and the process was very, very painful. The help/advice that would have been the most useful was interview skills and advice to prepare for companies that run full-day assessments." (Male, Chinese background, 21-25)

All this suggests a a **pressing need for more apprenticeships**: on a large scale, paid and readily accessible to young people of all backgrounds. "More apprenticeships and 'learn as you work' opportunities. More internships offered by companies." (Female, Black African background, 21-25)

"What would help to secure employment is to be able to get more training in a working environment, to be able understand how it works and what type of communication is used. Work placements are a great opportunity to be able to secure employment." (Male, Pakistani background, 16-20)

Given the importance of apprenticeships, we turn to how apprenticeships need to be structured in order to appeal to diverse young people and to meet their needs.

Making apprenticeships work for diverse young people

It is clear from the entire project that apprenticeships have a major role to play in helping young people find good jobs. We therefore spent some time teasing out what young people would want from on-the-job training. They told us that their ideal apprenticeship programme would have the following attributes:

• Content

The content of on-the-job training programmes should be wideranging, in order to attract young people with different skills sets, training needs and employment ambitions. There is a perception that apprenticeships can be focussed exclusively on vocational and technical skills. They are seen to be of lesser relevance and value for those in the arts, humanities or social sciences, where opportunities are few. Young people need apprenticeships to give them a mix of sector-specific skills and knowledge, as well as transferable skills that will be valuable in a range of employment contexts, such as project management, people management, health and safety training, safeguarding training, marketing and communications, etc. stimulating. They are looking to be challenged. They want to avoid repetitive and routine tasks. Currently, some young people fear that apprenticeships are more a source of cheap unskilled labour for employers than a proper training ground for them.

• Active, structured and personalised support

Key to the appeal and success of any apprenticeship is the level of care that has gone into planning and communicating what participants are expected to do. Young people are looking to have clear objectives set at the start of the programme and to have stepby-step support to achieve these objectives. They want to know that they will be actively supported, supervised and mentored throughout the programme so that they learn valuable skills.

• Flexibility

For young people who have caring responsibilities - mainly women - flexible working arrangements are a precondition to being able to take part. To meet their needs, some apprenticeships should be structured around reduced, condensed or flexible hours, as well as remote working (where practicable and desirable).

Making apprenticeships work (cont.)

• Pay and rewards

Young people need apprenticeships to be paid. Many are concerned on-to-job training programmes are often unpaid, low paid or otherwise deemed 'exploitative' and even 'humiliating'. COVID-19 seems to have opened the door for unscrupulous employers looking to have cheap or free labour. Young people feel vulnerable to such exploitation and need to be reassured about the terms of their apprenticeship before they sign up. They would like to be paid at least the minimum wage - and those with caring responsibilities might need a better wage in order to pay for childcare. The most interesting unpaid apprenticeships are taken up by middle-class young people whose parents can afford to subsidise them and exclude many talent young people from ethnic minority or working-class backgrounds.

• Formal qualifications

Apprenticeships should lead to formal recognition and qualifications. Learning new skills is not sufficient in the current labour market. Young people also need to have 'something to show for': a credible certification for their work which potential employers will recognise and value and that will significantly increase their employability.

• Inclusion

Creating apprenticeships across a range of sectors and skills levels, ensuring that young people are paid and putting in place flexible arrangements are all key to inclusion and accessibility. But there was little appetite for apprenticeships targeted on the basis of ethnicity or faith. In the context of apprenticeships, these dimensions of social identity did not seem relevant to most young people: they only wanted apprenticeships that develop on the skills and credibility they need. They made 'personalised' support which would include recognition of the individual, familial, cultural and economic circumstances of the young person, but not be available only to certain groups of beneficiaries on the basis of their ethnicity, race or skin colour.

Notwithstanding the above, inclusion mattered a great deal to young people. They wanted opportunities to be promoted where ethnic minority young people are, make them feel included and welcome, and be paid enough to enable them to take up the opportunity. Young people who were in schools, colleges and universities were likely to have ready access to work placements. Participants who were not in education, however, talked about the need to promote apprenticeships on social media, in shopping malls, on buses, in gyms, and in other places where they naturally 'hang out' - not just in JobCentres.

Entrepreneurship support is lacking

Perhaps because of the uncertainty caused by COVID-19, there was relatively little appetite for starting one's own business in this group. Young people seemed keen to reduce risk and to have as much certainty as possible with respect to their work and income. No one in our sample had been prompted by the pandemic to start their own business.

Nevertheless, there was a perceived dearth of good quality support for young people seeking to start their own businesses. Only six young people were aware of entrepreneurship support.

The only sources of support for young entrepreneurs mentioned by research participants were generic online resources, major banks and The Prince's Trust.

"Support for young entrepreneurs which I am aware of are things funded by specific banks or institutions such as the Barclays Rise program." (Male, Black African background, 21-25)

"Having my own business was something that came to me recently when I realised that I don't like the idea of working so hard to make someone else money. I'm not sure what the long term consequences of this plan are for me, in terms of covid it has probably hindered my creativity to think of business ideas etc." (Female, Bangladeshi background, 21-25)

"I would say that the ideal entrepreneurship programme would be an online pool of options available for young people looking to start their own businesses." (Male, Indian background, 21-25)

'Kickstart' is seen as an excellent programme

We asked young people to provide their feedback on the government's Kickstart Scheme (see Appendix C for the description used in the online community).

Because we did not specifically recruit young people claiming Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment, Kickstart was not always directly relevant to young people in the project. Those currently in education or who planned to remain in education are unlikely to benefit from Kickstarter. Those already in apprenticeships, training or in work do not need this programme. Many also have higher educational and professional aspirations and do not relate to the target group for this programme - **especially among Indian, Chinese and Black African young people.**

Nevertheless, young people were extremely positive about Kickstart. There was a consensus that the government must help with employment and that help with jobs should target young people as a priority.

"Dear Boris Johnson, you need to carry on giving young people like myself and others opportunities to get a job, for instance like the kick starter scheme that was developed was a good strategy, also open various apprenticeship for young people to join and continue to open doors for them giving them the smallest opportunity to apply and succeed." (Male, White-British, 16-20) No one felt capable of assessing whether the scope/scale of funding is sufficient.

It is important to note that many young people described Kickstart as 'too good to be true'. They found it hard to believe that the government could care about people like them. They also did not trust that the government could actually deliver something that would be good for young people like them and sometimes dismissed the programme as just another instance of 'big talk'. **Boys and young men from Black Caribbean and Pakistani backgrounds are the most likely to express a lack of trust in government** - a fact that may need to be taken into account when communicating the programme.

To make Kickstart even more appealing, young people argued that it needs to be widely promoted in their communities; to have very clear and simple eligibility criteria; to be paying programme participants (not be just a 'cheap option' for employers) and to know that Kickstart can lead to long-term paid employment and, ideally, set them on a career path.

Implications of this section

Implement programmes like Kickstart

• The young people we spoke to were highly supportive of this programme. They believed it is right to prioritise young people N.E.E.T. and that the Kickstarter programme is essential.

Consider supporting young people in their everyday expenses, by subsidising transport costs and expanding housing benefits.

- Transport costs curtailed the job searches of many young people. During lockdown, this is a less significant issue. But for those who have to go to work, and to support a healthy social life, reducing this expenditure would be helpful.
- Housing costs, especially in London, put huge economic and psychological pressures on ethnic minority young people. If higher education, apprenticeships and job placements could be tied to cheap housing options, this would encourage many to pursue these options. Generally, investment in social housing, increasing the supply of genuinely affordable housing, support for first-time buyers, support for housing associations, and widening access to housing benefits might all be considered to help young people.

Support young entrepreneurs with realistic prospects

 In some of the online community discussions, young people expressed the desire for information, advice and support to start their own business. Those who have reasonable prospects of making a living from self-employment should receive high-quality support in partnership with venture capitalists/ business angels.

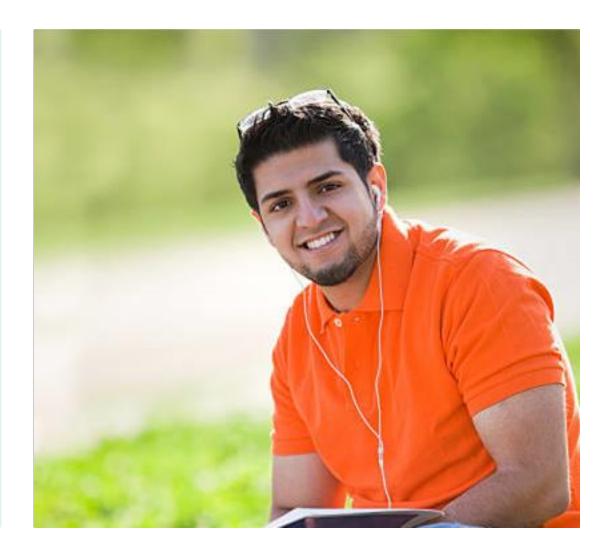
MEET SOME YOUNG PEOPLE (names and images are changed)

Habib: blessings and anxieties whilst living at home

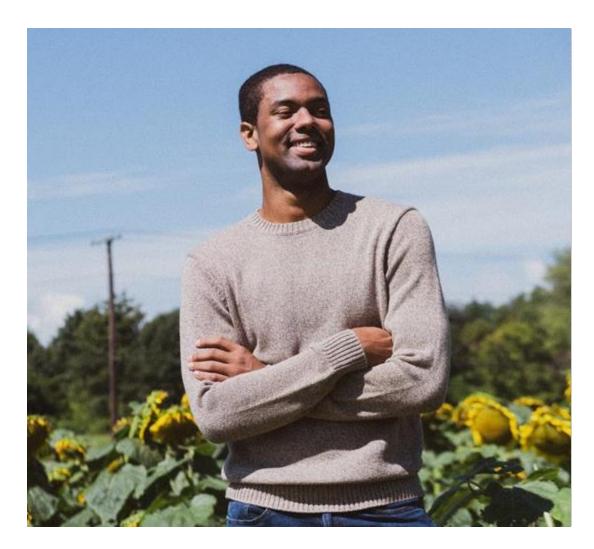
Living with his parents, brother and grandfather has been a blessing to Habib. He's a Pakistani boy whose life is quite relaxed and financially protected by his parents, although he does feel like he should pay for his own clothes and leisurely activities.

Despite this cosy home environment, Habib is extremely anxious about his future and also doesn't thrive well during the pandemic. He feels like there's gaps in his knowledge and that teachers have been unable to help him. Furthermore, he has felt less motivated to do work because of the negativity and unpredictability of everything going on. His future is one big question mark to him, as he was already unsure what do do before the pandemic (e.g. study, get a degree or take a gap year). Initially he wanted to study abroad in Denmark, where some of his mother's side of the family also resides, but these dreams have now shattered.

The whole situation is making him feel down and he's been unable to enjoy things he usually would enjoy such as playing video games or going out. In terms of friendships, he feels that he has less friends or people to talk to which has severely impacted his social life.



Jamir: balancing work, studies and parenthood



Jamir is a Black African young man and a father whose relationship with his daughter has watered down due to lock down measures. The fear of infecting his daughter also puts tremendous strain on his girlfriends, as she was left to take care of their daughter on her own for seven months.

Jamir lives in another city from his daughter and girlfriend. This is extremely tough on him, as they're all he has in life. At the age of three, Jamir was orphaned. Four years ago, he also lost his only sibling: a younger brother. Despite this, he's grown up as a resilient young man.

Currently he shares a house with three other tenants. He combines his full-time studies with part-time work as a chef. His life at university has been impoverished: being unable to ask for face-to-facefeedback, go to the library or socialise.

Before COVID struck, his plan was to establish a business in China and move there with his little family whilst travelling between China and the UK for additional branches. However, right now, these plans are on hold: he simply wishes to settle down with his family.

Abidemi: navigating future careers in the arts

Abidemi is a 21-years-old Black African woman who's in a happy relationship. As an undergraduate student living in university housing with three other girls, Abidemi enjoys spending time with her housemates. She pays for her own expenses by working part-time as a sales assistant in a clothing store. Her income took a hit during lockdown.

Like many other soon-to-be-graduates, she's worried about entering the workforce in an extremely competitive market. Music and singing have always been her passion but COVID makes a career in the arts appear even more insecure than before so she is considering her options.

Her plan now is to graduate with a 2:1 or 1st class degree, then proceed into a business-related master's degree. This buys her an extra year and the hope is that she'll become more employable by building expertise in multiple sectors.

She can't say she's happy with life but believes this route will give her the most opportunities in life - she hopes music will be a part of her life later down her career.



Meera: a single mother, struggling with depression



As a single mother of two young children, the pandemic has been extremely challenging and depressing for Meera. Her children haven't been able to visit their dad as often and he stopped contributing to child maintenance because he was made redundant. She is under huge financial pressures, combining work at a supermarket and part-time studies to become a teacher's assistant.

She used to be able to depend on her parents for free childcare but they are too vulnerable to COVID-19 to be able to help her out. Having to pay for childcare for two children so that she can go to work and study is tough.

Meera has struggled with depression for a while already, but the pandemic has amplified this. She's gained weight, feels unfit and her social life is almost non-existent - she says she has even lost the will to want to have fun. She is working on her mental health, combining antidepressants and counselling sessions.

Despite her struggles, she's still finding hope in her children, her dog and her friends. With the help of her family, she bought her own house. She is highly sceptical of the government and doesn't believe the virus is as deadly as 'they make it out to be'.

Arup: family provider looking for financial stability

Arup is a Bangladeshi man who works as a project manager. He grew up in Rochdale with eight siblings and now lives with his sister and mum. He is the sole financial provider for his household whilst working from his room. He is under huge pressures for a young man.

Arup feels he can rely on his mum, sister and partner for emotional support but he has no one to turn to for financial support.

Work-life balance and financial worries keep him up at night, which impacts his overall health. He likes to work out in his spare time and would love to have his own mixed martial arts gym but this looks like a distant dream.

Despite his love of the gym, Arup put on two stones in six months. Most of his days were spent at home, eating, worrying and putting on weight. All this has really dented his self-esteem and self-confidence.

He could do with time off for regular physical activity and possibly a mentor that could check in with him on financial matters as well as make sure he is generally OK.



Daniel: resilience and stress as a young entrepreneur



Daniel is a grounded and secure, White-British man who is ahead of the curve, even though he didn't go into higher education and faced some troubles during his childhood. His parents' divorce forced him to grow up quickly - buying and selling anything he could get his hands on from 11 years old. Now, he definitely marries reality and ambition as a business owner and homeowner. Currently he's employing 40 people and relies on some senior partners for advice.

However, the pandemic is affecting Daniel's ability to plan ahead and extend his business across Europe to bring in new revenue streams. He recently opened a new office in Poland with the plan to expand and potentially relocate, but he's had to shut down this office and make those staff redundant.

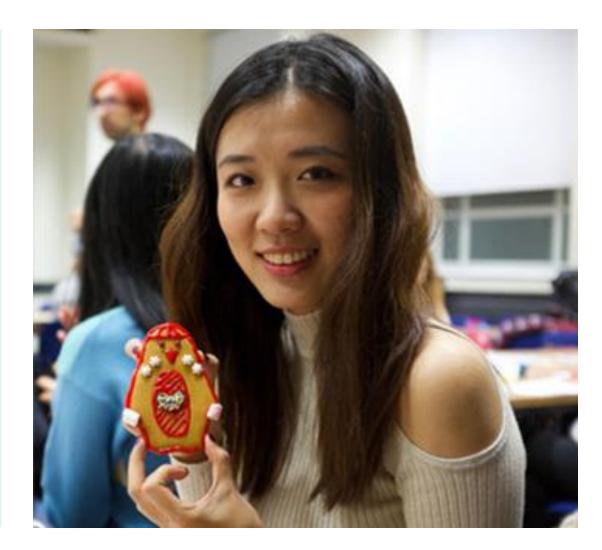
His main stressors include overthinking about work and finances (mainly investments). Being in the countryside helps him combat stress and have some quiet time. He moved to the Peak District to live on his own with his dog. He gets on well with his parents and sister who live less than an hour away.

Mei: social entrepreneur with international dreams

Five years ago, Mei moved from Malaysia to the UK for her studies. She briefly worked at a social enterprise and then decided to take the non-profit entrepreneurial route. Mei has no relatives in the UK and is ethnically Chinese. She lives on her own in Cambridge and is working on a venture aiming to improve animal welfare in Africa.

She doesn't feel like COVID has affected her too deeply and, indeed, she seems to be coping well. But last summer, she was meant to join an 'in-person' incubation programme which is now going to be delivered online - resulting in poorer experiences and much reduced ability to network.

The pandemic also has implications for her student and work visas as well. Mei intended to work in the US for a year on completion of her studies, but this is no longer possible.







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APPENDICES

A. Sample frame of 70 young people

	Black African	Black Caribbean	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Chinese	White	Total
GENDER								
Male	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	n = 35
Female	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	n = 35
n =	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	N = 70
AGE								
16-20	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	n = 35
21-25	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	n = 35
n =	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	N = 70
EDUCATIONAL ATTAI	NMENT							
No GCSE	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	n = 5
GCSEs	2	5	3	2	2	1	2	n = 17
A-levels	2	2	3	6	2	3	4	n = 22
Foundation/HND	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	n = 4
Undergraduate	3	1	1	2	2	4	1	n = 14
Post-Graduate	0	0	2	0	1	2	0	n = 5
Unknown	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	n = 3
n =	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	N = 70
EMPLOYMENT STATU	IS							
Employed	3	3	4	5	3	2	5	n = 25
Unemployed	4	5	5	5	5	6	2	n = 32
Self-employed	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	n = 5
Unknown	2	2	1	0	2	0	1	n = 8
n =	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	N = 70

B. Description of the Kickstart Scheme

Description of Kickstart programme used in the online community

The government is launching a new scheme called 'Kickstart' to create hundreds of thousands of new, fully subsidised jobs for young people across the country, starting this November.

Those aged 16-24, claiming Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment, will be eligible. Funding available for each six-month job placement will cover 100% of the National Minimum Wage for 25 hours a week – and employers will be able to top this wage up.

A total of \pounds 1.6 billion will be invested in scaling up employment support schemes, training and apprenticeships to help young people looking for a job. This includes:

- Businesses will be given £2,000 for each new apprentice they hire under the age of 25. This is in addition to the existing £1,000 payment the Government already provides for new 16-18-year-old apprentices and those aged under 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- A £111 million investment to triple the number of traineeships in 2020-21, ensuring more young people have access to high-quality training.
- \pounds 17 million of funding to triple the number of sector-based work academy placements in 2020-21.
- Nearly £900 million to double the number of work coaches to 27,000.
- Over a quarter of a million more young people to benefit from an extra £32 million investment in the National Careers Service.

C. Reflections on the methodology

At the start of the online community, we asked participants to tell us about their expectations from the project: what 'success' would look like for them. Their answers were consistent and focussed on five key aspects:

- feeling that they could discuss their experiences in-depth, freely and openly;
- feeling listened to and properly heard;
- being able to share with and to learn from young people in the community;
- the research project yielding insights about the experiences and needs of young people;
- feeling that their contributions make a difference and have a positive impact on the lives of other young people.

It is too early for the insights to have made any real difference, but all young people felt that the research had met these expectations. A few commented that they would have liked more opportunities to interact with other young people. A few found the process more time-consuming than originally thought. But the experience was overwhelmingly positive.

We would add, however, that the approach relies extensively on the written form (even though people can choose to answer by uploading a short video). Young people with the deepest support needs - such as Gypsy & Traveller or neurodiverse young people may be excluded by this methodology and would benefit from a face-to-face approach.



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