



Young People's Response to Medium Term Covid-19 Recovery

Hot Report - May 2020



Overview

A wide variety of young people who are Young Scot volunteers met digitally on Tuesday 5th May over Zoom to explore the priorities of young people in the medium term recovery from the Covid-19 crisis.

This report summarises the output of various activities the young people took part in as part of the two hour digital session, as well as an overview of the 49 young people who attended.

This workshop aimed to explore the following key areas of discussion:

- + The medium and longer-term impacts of Covid-19 on Scotland
- + The positive reforms and shifts emerging from the crisis. This includes both:
 - a. positive changes to behaviours or practices made in response to Covid 19 that we want to keep or harness, and
 - b. opportunities to drive change as a consequence of the crisis
- + The recovery responses that are most relevant for Scotland in light of the impacts and opportunities, including both priorities and early policy ideas.

Additionally, we spent some time exploring how the young people have been spending their time during their period at home; their approaches to staying positive and motivated; as well as the challenges they have been facing.

Digital Session Approach

Due to the restrictions in place during the time of the session, there were adjustments made to the Young Scot operating model and working practices. To ensure that delivery of engagement through co-design continued with minimal disruption, providing young people with opportunities to participate during this time, the session was delivered remotely using Zoom video conferencing and other digital communication tools, such as Menti, a digital questionnaire platform. This meant that an increased number of Young Scot staff were involved in the delivery of the activities to ensure that the young people taking part were supported and encouraged to share their insights and experiences.

The model for delivery meant that the young people met virtually in a shared space as a full group but then completed each of the activities in small group “breakout spaces” led by a member of Young Scot staff. There was also one to one support provided for those

that required additional measures in order to take part, ensuring that the model was inclusive and accessible.

Recruitment and Pre-Workshop Snapshot

The opportunity to take part in the digital co-design session to engage young people widely in the medium-term recovery planning around the Covid-19 crisis was shared with all of our Young Scot volunteers. This included those who have previously or are currently involved in co-design projects, those who have attended events, as well as those who are regular volunteers. Through sharing this opportunity broadly, 59 young people expressed an interest in getting involved. There were other young people who also expressed an interest but were unable to take part at this time who would be interested in getting involved in further opportunities.

In order to ensure a wide variety of young people were represented as part of the digital session, the participants were asked to complete a short survey. This included questions around their age, where they live and how the Covid-19 crisis has affected them. Of the 59 young people who expressed an interest in taking part in the session, 43 took part in the pre-session survey. In order to ensure a wide age range of participants they were asked to share if they were over or under 18. 60% of the respondents were under the age of 18.

In order to better understand and ensure a wide range of experiences were represented, the young people were asked to share how they had been affected during the Covid-19 crisis. 72% of respondents shared that they had been affected in some way, with 28% feeling that they had not been affected in any of the ways suggested. The most common response at 28% felt that they do not have space to themselves. 26% shared that they have not been able to easily access healthcare services that they would usually access, and a further 26% found it difficult to get online due to poor internet connection. Other key issues declared included: their parent or guardian having lost their job or work (19%); it being more difficult than usual to afford food (14%); them or their family struggling to paying rent, mortgage or bills (14%); being alone at home for long periods of time (12%); and a health condition that they live with has gotten worse (12%).

The young people were then asked to share any other ways that they felt they had been affected by the Covid-19 crisis and the lockdown measures. The main ways people shared that they had been affected was with school and university, including exams, workload and general transitions (45%).

"As a final year university student, my final exams have been moved online, and deadlines extended. This may come to devalue my degree; the summative culmination of four years of work."

"My exams were cancelled, and this caused confusion and I am unhappy with the way we will be graded because I believe I could do much better if given a chance to do my exams."

Lots of the young people also mentioned work and income (35%) and mental health issues (32%).

"I am still working at a supermarket and all though many people are no longer working my work has increased substantially. I have been doing 50 to 60 hour weeks, 12 hour days to help with the demand of food."

"I am due to graduate in June. All the jobs I had applied for have been put on hold and in the sectors I am interested in have suspended the vast majority of recruitment. I have moved back in with my parents for the foreseeable until places start recruiting again."

"My stress levels have just skyrocketed, it's hard for everyone with so many unknowns but so much of my life was meant to stand on the next few years of my life."

Some young people also said they were worried about their parents, either in general or because they were ill or high-risk.

"I'm definitely seeing that my parents are bearing the burden of the situation at work. They're both keyworkers but in less recognised areas than the main ones which are celebrated on the news and social media. I think this makes things tougher for them watching all the support for others while they themselves go to work every day as usual, except in more difficult circumstances, and it definitely raises stress levels in the household. Ultimately, I think the negative impacts on young people are increased by the difficulties adults around us face, at a time when being able to relax with your family and enjoy time together is so important."

Missing friends was also mentioned five times throughout the 31 responses, while a few young people also mentioned travel plans being affected.

"Like many other people I miss seeing my friends and spend time with them before we go our separate ways to university. I have friends who live abroad who I was also looking forward to seeing this summer. I also miss seeing my wider family and I am concerned about my grandparents and how they are coping."

"My parents insisted for me to go back to Italy (where I am from) which is a decision that I would have avoided if I could have felt safe in Scotland which is now where I feel at home."

Out of all of the respondents only one young person mentioned being positively affected by Covid-19.

"I'm finding time to do lots of things I normally wouldn't get to enjoy as I'd be too busy revising and stressing about exams. I'm spending more time outdoors and because I'm doing things I enjoy, I find it easier to motivate myself to get them done. Of course, it would be great to have all this and the opportunity to see and do things with friends, however it's been a nice chance to have a break from some social pressures and the constant keeping up with anyone and everyone."

Capturing Lockdown experience

At the beginning of the session the participants were asked to take part in an optional Menti quiz online to help to capture a snapshot around how the young people have been experiencing lockdown; what they have been spending their time doing; and beginning group discussions around the challenges they have been facing. This also allowed us to gather an overview of the participants taking part.

With 49 young people taking part in the digital session, the age ranged spanned from 11 to 23 years old. The majority of the participants identified as female at 58%, with 38% identifying as male and 2% identifying as non-binary. There were 27 responses declared when asked about health conditions which have lasted, or are expected to last, at least 12 months, including: mobility; dexterity; learning, understanding or concentrating; mental health conditions; stamina, breathing or fatigue; social or behavioural impairment; and others. When asked about the ethnic group they identify as the majority of participants at 72% identified as White Scottish/White British, with 15% identifying as BAME and a further 6% identifying as mixed and multiple ethnic groups. Of the 33 participants that shared their personal postcode, 22% reside in the lower two quintiles locations. 2% of participants identified as having experience of being in care.

When asked what activity best describes their current education or employment status, 75% declared they were in some form of education, with 47% in school, 6% in college and 22% at university. 4% of participants declared that they were not currently in employment or education.

The participants were asked to share three words to sum up how the previous few weeks had been for them. Stressful and difficult were the main emotions the young people felt summed up the last few weeks. Confusion was mentioned frequently as was boredom. The young people spoke about their mental health, anxiety and depression, with some mentioning missing friends and feeling isolated. There were some of the participants who felt overall positive about the past few weeks, seeing it as a unique time to reflect, reset and relax and an opportunity to pick up hobbies they have been wanting to explore.

When asked what they had been doing during the lockdown period the majority of the young people had been "watching Netflix and TV". The next most popular past time was at 67% having said that they had been exercising. 59% shared they have been reading and baking, with 47% saying they had been doing some form of arts, and 41% having been gaming.

The young people were asked to think about how they had been keeping up to date with information around the Covid-19 crisis, with the majority at 62% saying they had been checking the news daily but not obsessively reading or consuming information. The majority of young people shared that they were getting their information from the BBC or other mainstream news sites such as The Guardian or Sky News. The tailored information from the Young Scot website was also identified multiple times. They also were getting information from social media, in particular Twitter and YouTube. Parents and friends were mentioned frequently as sources of information.

Five Year Impact

Having begun to identify their key concerns and challenges, each group considered the medium and longer-term impacts of Covid-19 on Scotland and how young people will have been affected in 5 years' time.

Rather than describing the persona of a young person to consider the impacts, the groups were asked to consider a set of characteristics and interests provided to them, using a "BASE (Behaviour Audience Segment Evidence)" Activity. Each group was asked to create a letter from a young person in the future, to the Scottish Government or record how they felt this would have impacted on them.

Letter One

Characteristics/Interests:

- In full time education
- Lives in an urban area
- Experiences conflict at home
- Is well connected in the local community

Dear Scottish Government...

I'm studying at university, as a result of COVID-19 have been financially impacted. There is conflict at home which has taken its toll. It means I can't stay at home while I study so I'm having to pay for accommodation which I can't really afford. The housing market has been impacted by Covid so finding digs is more expensive and there is less available. This has impacted my mental health.

Part-time jobs have become harder to find as pubs, clubs, restaurants, cinemas, cafes have had to close. There are less jobs available.

While studying, I am struggling to get as much hands on experience which is worrying me about what advantage I will have in finding a job when I graduate. Although I have been able to learn new digital skills I'm not sure I would have.

A positive of Covid is that it brought my community closer together and I feel well connected where I live. More needs to be done to make sure this continued.

I'm not sure if my hopes for the future and my career path will happen now which makes me feel uncertain. I hope I can but time will tell whether my studying was worth it.

Thank you.

Key themes/issues emerging: impact of COVID-19 on education pathways, financial implications (impact on employment, closure of workplace/industries, relational strain of lockdown, impact on housing market/affordable accommodation, impact on hand-on experience opportunities due to social distancing, uncertainty around feasibility of hopes/aspirations. A positive is communities being drawn closer together.

Letter Two

Characteristics/Interests:

- Experience of poor mental health
- Precarious employment
- Lives in a rural area
- Enjoys socialising with people

Dear Scottish Government...

Following the COVID crisis in 2020, I experience significantly poor mental health. I felt this was due to a combination of social isolation, and loss of employment.

I wish that the Scottish Government had improved their remote access for Mental Health services. Signposting for services should have been prioritised in order for me and other young people to access the correct support at the right time.

This would have been made easier by better understanding of who to speak to on specific issues.

Because of this, I believe that adequate mental health services should be accessible for all who need this.

Key themes/issues emerging: signposting and remote access to mental health services, social isolation, loss of employment.

Letter Three

Characteristics/Interests:

- In part-time education
- In part-time work
- Lives in a suburban area
- Occasionally cares for younger siblings

Dear Scottish Government...

During Lockdown I was studying part-time at college. I wasn't able to attend classes for the last couple of months of the year but my college were really good with support. They extended our deadlines for a couple of months and provided good support and technology for learners like me who didn't have a laptop at home.

I did lose my job during the lockdown as the chippy had to close. That was hard because I didn't have enough money to afford bills and other things. I was grateful that we still had income from the government to allow us to buy essentials.

Key themes/issues emerging: education, access to technology, loss of employment, impact on local businesses, poverty, government support

Letter Four

Characteristics/Interests:

- Seeking employment

- Negative experiences of formal education
- Lives in a suburban area
- Is an active volunteer

Dear Scottish Government...

Certain jobs have become harder to get due to the experience that is needed to be accepted for that position.

Services have become impacted due to social distancing which has seen an increase in mental health cases.

Due to inequality people from diverse backgrounds have found it difficult to find employment due to the negative impact of covid-19.

I have saw through this that communities have come together and are more appreciative of Key Services.

Key themes/issues emerging: impact on industries, loss of employment opportunities, negative impact on work experience due to lack of opportunities, social distancing impacting access to services, mental health, inequality. A positive is increased community spirit and appreciation for the role of key services.

Letter Five

Characteristics/Interests:

- In full-time education
- Doesn't live with family
- Lives in an urban area
- Worries about getting a good job

Dear Scottish Government...

I am studying and attend lectures/tutorials. I am having to support myself financially so have a part-time job. My friends are also in the same position.

Life is a balancing act with studies, work and social life. I feel I have been gaining good life skills – setting up for my future path. I am aiming to get my dream job and have some idea about their future but financially it's challenging.

Since covid-19, I need clarity about the funding options that are on offer. SAAS loans need to be reconsidered – they end over summer which can have a major impact on young people - especially at this time when they can't get normal 'student' type jobs.

Even if parents support their children the future is uncertain for the economy and also parents' jobs. Regarding job prospects – what business grants and loans are on offer now? How will the hospitality industry survive?

Scottish Government needs to provide more emergency/rainy day funds so that if or when this happens again they have a plan in place. How can the Government plan more in general to be better prepared to cope? There was uncertainty about the long-term –

Government were unable to set out how an end to lockdown would look so how can you do better in the future?

You need to think more about the vulnerabilities in how we live. People need to know and see that there's a way out. Students especially are suffering with an unknown future just now.

Key themes/issues emerging: impact on education, funding and ability to be self-supporting financially, impact on job market, impact on specific industries (such as hospitality), impact on parents jobs/finances which has a knock-on effect on young people. What can Scottish Government do to prevent this from happening again?

Letter Six

Characteristics/Interests:

- In full-time employment
- Lives in a rural area
- Enjoys being independent
- Wants to travel to lots of countries

Dear Scottish Government...

I have still managed to maintain friendships and relationships due to more technology being used but I often feel overwhelmed and don't like that plans have been cancelled. As an office worker, I am getting on to my work system at home, but this can take longer than work which is frustrating. I still have furlough in the back of their mind, could this still happen?

My pay could be reduced which has caused a lot of issues. Due to living in a rural area, I don't have the best internet connection, which inhibits my ability to communicate with people at work. Working from home is harder as the space I am living in is small, however I do have more outdoor space in my rural area which is good. Living further away from people does make me feel more isolated. Travel is unnerving as I don't know the price of travel and its uncertain. Being more isolated, I enjoyed my independence to start with but stopped making as much of an effort with friends which has led to loneliness. Everything in life has taken a step back – I am further behind with work aspirations and travel goals.

There are somethings I am looking for Scottish Government to do: to be honest and provide reassurance to us at this time. I want an opportunity to build life back up again and transparency about the future would help me to do this.

Key themes/issues emerging: loneliness, isolation, concerns about job stability/finances, increased awareness of issues of rural isolation, access to technology, impact on career and life aspirations. Looking for honesty, reassurance and transparency from Government.

Letter Seven

Characteristics/Interests:

- Wants to improve their community
- Passionate about helping others
- Enjoys being creative
- Currently doing a modern apprenticeship

Dear Scottish Government...

I am a creative person. During the Covid-19 pandemic, I channelled this into helping others – my neighbours, messages in shops, rainbows etc.

I am studying a Modern Apprenticeship, but this has been delayed because no one knows how long this could go on for - I could end up being years behind. Some work could be done but my MA is practical so I have been struggling financially and not where I thought I would be with employment. I have a plan and timescale I'm working to but this will likely have to change. I might not be able to find my dream job after my MA because lots of people have changed their jobs. At least I have transferable skills from my MA which might help me find other jobs.

My and other people's priorities have changed because we are more concerned with health and future pandemics but at the same time, I do feel more empowered to make more of a difference and become more involved with my community after coronavirus. I want to bridge the social gap between my age and older generations, helping younger/older generations.

The crisis has impacted my mental health which may impact my achievements e.g my grade at my MA and I worry I will miss out on my graduation but then again I might find different routes as a result of the change. I've not been able to see people as much and I've noticed some of my relationships are drifting apart.

Key themes/issues emerging: impact on education, future hopes, lack of job opportunities, planning catch up on ambitions/aspirations, concerned about health/future pandemics. Feels more connected to community and empowered to engage in community.

Letter Eight

Characteristics/Interests:

- Experience of living in a different country
- Wants to own their own house
- Wants a successful career
- Lives in an urban area

Dear Scottish Government...

A lot of companies have lost a lot of money because of Covid, and I have struggled to get a successful job. This has left me short of money and I can't buy a house. I have had to put hopes, dreams and plans on hold which has had a knock-on effect on the things I wanted to do.

I want to travel and visit other countries, but I can't really do this now. Travel is also expensive – transport feels like it has become less of a priority. Any hopes I had for future overseas internships may also have suffered as a result of Covid.

I have been focusing on getting grades and going to university, but I worry there could be issues there.

I have mental health issues from being isolated for so long. I have known people who have had covid-19.

I have managed to volunteer and support where I can which has been positive.

Key themes/issues emerging: impact on education, housing market, financial implication, had to change plans/hopes/dreams, mental health impact of covid, impact on travel and internationalism.

Letter Nine

Characteristics/Interests:

- Seeking employment
- Lives in a rural area
- Lives with grandparents
- Enjoys being active

Dear Scottish Government...

I have faced higher competition for jobs, and fewer opportunities. During covid-19, I began to support independent retailers, and smaller businesses locally but I find it hard to find everything in the local shops sometimes.

I found my social life during covid-19 especially difficult as there was poor wifi and phone signal in my area.

I struggled not seeing people at school as that was my main source of contact with friends. I feel I have lost social connections due to this. I also found social skills hard after not speaking to people, and spending lots of time with my grandparents, and not people my own age.

There was a big impact on my mental health, especially with the fear of living with elderly people and the fear that I would infect them.

There has been a big impact on the local industries of tourism and hospitality which I had been interested in.

Since covid-19 I have been more grateful and feeling a more carpe diem attitude to life. I have joined a local running club and had more social activities with friends.

Key themes/issues emerging: impact on job opportunities, impact on local industry, less access to goods, impact on social life, issues with digital access/connectivity, impact on friendships and social life, concerns about health of loved-ones, impact on mental health, accessed local groups.

Positive Change

Having discussed the priorities, challenges, and impacts that young people are experiencing as part of the Covid-19 crisis, the groups were then asked to explore the positive reforms and shifts emerging. This include both positive changes to behaviours or practices made in response to Covid-19 that they want to continue and harness, as well as the opportunities to drive change as a consequence of the crisis.

Positive Changes and Gold Stars

Each small group was asked to identify the things they have seen individually, nationally, internationally or in communities that have been positive and innovative during this time, considering who would receive their "Gold Stars". This could have been things that have been adapted to work in the current environment, innovative new ideas, or societal shifts.

The most common "Gold Star" identified throughout the groups was the NHS, with mentions of front line workers, services such as "Attend Anywhere", A&E services and their reduced waiting times, and support for individuals with complex needs. There were also multiple mentions of the "Clap for Carers" initiative as a positive and inspiring activity to take part in within communities.

Other key workers were also identified including other healthcare organisations, supermarket assistants, those making PPE, and teachers still working to assist their students and provide education to children of key workers.

Kindness and a sense of community and support was highlighted by several groups as inspiring and positive during this time, from those who are going above and beyond to help others in their communities, to a smile and show of support while out walking. Supporting the elderly and vulnerable groups in the community was highlighted, with those trying to lift the spirits of their neighbours through playing music, and specific inspirational individuals like Captain Tom Moore.

Several of the groups of young people specifically highlighted the positive leadership being shown by the First Minister, Ministers and Government workers, coming together to share key messages and approaches.

Third Sector organisations providing support in a wide variety of ways were mentioned, including the content being developed by Young Scot with interviews answering the

questions of young people; youth organisations such as LGBTYS; organisations supporting those with additional support needs such as Autism Scotland; and mental health charities such as SAMH.

Other mentions included those who are actively participating in social distancing; parents/carers supporting their children throughout the crisis; and organisations providing free courses, study guides and access to arts and culture.

New Opportunities and Building Blocks

From the positive adaptations and activities, each group then considered ideas and solutions they have seen or been thinking about that could be taken forward in future. This could have included new opportunities to drive change as a consequence of the crisis, or key areas to focus on and take forward.

Healthcare

Opportunities to think about healthcare in a different way was highlighted several times, with suggestions of online consultations and the “Attend Anywhere” app to help to reduce waiting times and enable people to have better access, as well as increasing remote access and resources. Ensuring young people have access to support for those with additional support needs, specialised needs due to their environment and mental health support were considered vital. The importance of hygiene both individually and in public places to keep up the new approach to cleanliness was identified as an opportunity to be explored. There was also interest in showing appreciation more broadly for key workers, making “Clap for Carers” an annual initiative, as well as a newfound appreciation for services such as the police.

Community

Community support and kindness was identified as a key issue that should be taken forward, where the most vulnerable are supported, those living rurally feel connected and a sense of togetherness is created. There was an appetite for supporting local businesses and encouraging people to shop and make use of local services. Alongside this a need for an international sense of togetherness was highlighted, with communities, countries and people working collectively.

Education

Multiple opportunities were identified around education, from ensuring funding and support; the need for using a wide range of approaches out with traditional education;

adapting to the challenges faced and creative new methods; and a focus on course work and classes rather than solely on exams.

Transport and Environment

Active travel and alternative transport methods other than the car were identified as an opportunity to harness or encourage behaviours, with a focus on reducing emissions and pollution levels and the impact this could have on the environment and climate change. With many young people accessing the cycling paths and routes, a focus on resourcing and improving these would allow young people to continue to get involved in active travel beyond the Covid-19 crisis. The cost of transport is a topic frequently identified as an issue for young people and continues to be as they consider which options might be the most sustainable and environmentally conscious.

Employment

Employment was highlighted in multiple contexts, from young people being supported to access alternative routes to employment, to the need for training to ensure the young, developing workforce are adaptable and flexible with the ability to step in to support multiple roles and react to changing environments. A positive shift in employers' attitudes was identified with the workforce and staff being prioritised ahead of profit and the opportunity for businesses to support each other through shared resources. Alongside this was the support and opportunities provided to those experiencing unemployment and accessing the furlough scheme, to be explored further following the Covid-19 crisis.

Futureproofing

Several groups highlighted the need to consider how Scotland is futureproofed in order to be prepared in any future crises, to act decisively on issues at an earlier stage, and avoid underestimating the severity or impact of similar situations. As part of this an opportunity was identified to ensure that people are kept up to date, to understand how they could be affected and their role and responsibility in the situation. The young people highlighted the leadership within the Scottish Government, with the approach they were taking to keeping the public and young people informed.

Making Use of Technology

Opportunities for innovation in how technology and social media can be used positively was identified across multiple areas. Access to arts and culture online in new and innovative ways was identified as something that could be developed, alongside encouraging people to be more creative digitally. Using technology to improve the lives

and wellbeing of individuals was highlighted, from teaching older generations how to use technology so they feel more connected; working flexibly and homeworking; to digital court systems similar to Children's Hearings.

Being Active

Increasing the numbers of people becoming more active and take part in sport was identified as an opportunity, to encourage the continued engagement in physical activity both at home and through new practices, as well as a new found appreciation of sporting events, such as the Olympics.

Wellbeing

Alongside the focused support needed around mental health for young people, wellbeing was highlighted with renewed appreciation. Considering how "reset time" or downtime can allow young people to be encouraged to be reflective and allow opportunities to get involved in activities that support their wellbeing and interests, as well as finding balance between remote and face-to-face engagement.

Priority Policy Areas

The young people were asked to consider both priorities and key policy ideas that the Scottish Government will need to address as part of the Covid-19 crisis recovery responses that are most relevant for Scotland in light of the impacts and opportunities.

Some of the policy areas suggested included: Education, Healthcare, Mental health, Employment, Housing, Public finances, Arts and Culture, Environment/Climate change, Equalities and Rights, Business, Transport, Brexit etc.

The young people prioritised their top key areas by placing them on a Radar tool in their small groups, with any conversations captured throughout discussions.

Mental Health

Mental health was identified by the young people to have a big impact on the wider population due to lockdown and social distancing. This was highlighted in a variety of ways, from being unable to seek the relevant support due to the measures in place around social distancing, a feeling of lacking purpose meaning that people are struggling to keep busy and deal with isolation and loneliness. It was identified that those who have previously never experienced poor mental health could struggle, with their routine being impacted and a lack of understanding of new feelings or indications that they may be experiencing poor mental health and strategies on how to manage this. Young people are facing new and unexpected challenges, from losing loved ones, anxieties around the crisis, to concerns and difficulties in transitioning back to "normal life". The need for resources and support for mental health first aid and suicide prevention courses was identified as an opportunity to explore.

Environment

Environmental issues have been identified by young people to be a priority area both in the Covid-19 crisis and outwith. Concerns around time being limited to make positive change for the future were highlighted, with the opportunity for change and implementing new radical and innovative ways of reducing pollution. The young people highlighted that the lockdown measures have shown positive impacts worldwide of what can happen with less pollution and are keen for immediate actions to harness this.

Education

Education was highlighted in a variety of ways as a priority for young people going forward. There were a series of concerns identified: uncertainty around course work,

exams, and final grades; applications and confirmations of university and college courses; missing out on key opportunities such as transitions from primary to secondary school and placements as part of courses; and adjusting to working from home but with anxieties about having to transition back into classroom environments. The young people felt there was a lack of clarity in their varying situations, with a lack of resources and support, especially for those who are unable to connect and access learning digitally.

Rights and Equality

It was highlighted that the young people felt there is a need for more to be done to protect diverse groups, both during the crisis and following. Digital exclusion was a key concern identified, with access to education meaning those without digital resources will be at a disadvantage, and uncertainty about access to services. Following the Covid-19 crisis, the probability will be that those same young people will experience the impact more acutely when they go back into learning environments. There is a need to consider how to support young people to get the right information and education that they may have missed out on during the crisis, alongside dealing with the social implications of not being able to contact friends and family. One of the young people also identified that due to additional support needs the information they were receiving was not always clear and accessible, meaning their understanding of the situation was difficult.

Health

Healthcare both during the Covid-19 crisis and following when returning to “normality” was a concern for the young people. The need for measures to be put in place to ensure routine engagement with the healthcare system can continue without a build-up and extended waiting times was highlighted by the groups, with an awareness of the increased resources locally required to manage this. There were also concerns around resurgence in the Covid-19 virus and what lesser restrictions may mean for the crisis, as well as measures being put in place to deal with this. Many of the young people felt the impact of family members being key workers, how this is affecting their home lives and how to appreciate the work that they have done during the crisis.

Transport

Public transport and how young people access this was highlighted by multiple groups. With many young people relying on public transport, a need to ensure this remains affordable with no immediate price increases was identified, alongside ensuring all disrupted routes are available especially for those from rural areas. It was also identified that it is vital to ensure that social distancing is being adhered to on public transport, eliminating the chance of virus spreading again. Together with the concerns raised,

young people felt there was also an opportunity to make better use of public transport to affect climate change.

Employment

There were a variety of concerns around employment raised by the young people, both as individuals and more broadly for their families. The young people highlighted the potential loss in future opportunities, with less income and stress put on them and their families. There was also a focus on supporting local businesses and charities to ensure their businesses can continue, as well as the opportunities to be more creative and flexible with remote working and empowering rural communities.

Feedback and Evaluation

Following the small group activities, the young people were asked to complete an evaluation of the session to capture what worked in this style of engagement, what could be improved and their aspirations for next steps.

When asked if they had enjoyed the session on a scale of zero to ten, with ten being absolutely yes and zero representing definitely not, 45 young people responded with an average of 8 out of 10. They were then asked if they felt the session was useful on the same scale. From 45 responses there was an average of 7.7 out of 10. When asked if they felt the session was relevant to them, there was an average of 8.3 out of 10.

The young people were asked if they would like to take part in more Co-design sessions like this one. 29 out of 45 respondents said, "definitely yes", while 11 said they would but with fewer attendees, 4 said that any future attendance would depend on the topic area, with 1 responding that they weren't sure.

When asked if there was anything they found difficult or could be improved about the session, the issues identified included some technological difficulties that had to be overcome; the number of participants taking part was a challenge to some; as well as looking to have more time to discuss the topic in more detail.

The participants were asked to identify something new that they had learned through the session. The most common responses included:

- + using the Zoom platform and the variety of functions as part of this
- + hearing the views, perspectives and experiences of other young people
- + awareness of the Covid-19 focused resources on the young.scot platform.

There were a variety of suggestions when asked how digital engagement with young people could be improved, from testing out different numbers of participants taking part in activities, to grouping participants by interests, ages and volunteer opportunities.

Finally, the group were asked what they would like to see happen following their involvement in the digital session. The majority of the young people highlighted that they would like to see the Scottish Government taking their feedback and insights into consideration when developing the plans and policies, as well as receiving feedback on how their input has affected changes going forward and taking part in further co-design activities in the future.

Contact

For more information about any aspect of the work detailed in the report, please contact:

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