



# Working Paper: Covid-19 Mitigation Measures Among Children and Young People



**CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS**

# Working paper: Covid-19 Mitigation Measures Among Children and Young People

## Contents

<b>Key points</b> .....	2
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>2. Transmission of Covid-19 among children and young people in Scotland</b> ...	4
<b>3. Guidance and understanding of measures</b> .....	6
3.1 <i>Introduction</i> .....	6
3.2 <i>Young people</i> .....	8
3.3 <i>Parents</i> .....	9
<b>4. Attitudes to measures and Covid-19 safety</b> .....	12
4.1 <i>Young people</i> .....	12
4.2 <i>Parents</i> .....	15
<b>5. Compliance</b> .....	16
5.1 <i>Young people</i> .....	16
5.2 <i>Parents</i> .....	16
<b>6. Wellbeing Impacts</b> .....	19
6.1 <i>Young people</i> .....	19
6.2 <i>Parents</i> .....	20

## Key points

This working paper summarises the currently available evidence base around mitigation measures for children and young people, including the use of face coverings in schools. It also highlights forthcoming sources. It focuses on wellbeing impacts on young people, understanding of restrictions, communications aimed at young people; and compliance and enforcement. Evidence to date is mainly qualitative in nature or drawn from non-representative surveys. Forthcoming survey research with young people will provide more robust, representative findings.

In terms of the currently available evidence, key points are:

### *Wellbeing impacts*

- There are no quantitative data available to date directly from young people on wellbeing impacts of Covid-19 restrictions, but qualitative research has consistently shown that young people generally are in favour of both physical distancing and the use of face coverings, and appreciate safety measures being taken, within educational establishments.
- Within focus groups with young people from vulnerable groups, some disabled participants raised an issue about physical distancing making communication for deaf and partially sighted people more difficult. No negative impacts of face coverings were identified. The only concern around face coverings raised was by one young carer who felt unsafe due to lack of compliance within their school, and called for stronger enforcement.
- In polling conducted during September, a majority of parents of children under 18 were comfortable with the use of face coverings in schools and on school transport.

### *Understanding of restrictions*

- There are notable levels of confusion or lack of knowledge about current restrictions and rules among young people. In the recent Lockdown Lowdown survey of young people aged 11 to 24 more than half of respondents said that they knew what the rules were in general, but were not sure on all the details. A notable minority also noted in open text answers that they found the rules confusing.
- In terms of parental understanding, recent polling showed an increase in parents of children under 18 saying they were clear on what the guidance means for their children. However, there continues to be low awareness of the detail of the rules, and no evidence of consistently increasing awareness over time. No more than 4 in 10 parents at any time point were able to correctly identify the correct restrictions in any setting or age group. Levels of awareness were lowest for rules outdoors, particularly rules for children aged 12-17.

### *Communications*

- Qualitative research with young people points towards the need for more targeted messaging for children and young people. Research on communications carried out by Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy found that while young people agreed that messaging on social distancing was clear, they felt that messaging around the indirect

impacts of Covid-19 for their age groups was unclear, particularly with regard to issues such as education. Older young people (16+) felt that government information and messaging was not relevant to them, on the whole, and that they would like to be addressed more directly. This is consistent with findings from the Lockdown Lowdown survey and focus groups.

### *Compliance and enforcement*

- In terms of compliance, polling from the end of November found that 10% of parents of children under 12 and 20% of parents of children aged 12-17 said that their child had done something in the past week that was not within the restrictions / guidance. During October and November, around 4 in 10 parents said they had adapted guidance to suit their family's need. The main reason given was their child's mental health.
- There are no quantitative data available to date directly from young people on compliance, but qualitative research suggests there is a recognition by young people themselves that some young people are not complying with rules, particularly around social distancing. However, many young people perceived that other age groups were also not adhering to the restrictions, and that their age group was being unfairly judged by the media.
- Open text answers in the Lockdown Lowdown survey and findings from the focus groups with vulnerable groups suggest that many young people would like to see stronger enforcement of existing rules and restrictions in general.

## 1. Introduction

This working paper summarises evidence on the use and impact of Covid-19 mitigation measures and rules for children and young people in Scotland. Mitigation measures to reduce transmission among children and young people and to adults include the use of face coverings in certain settings including schools and school transport, hygiene, physical distancing, school transport and guidance aimed at young people. The World Health Organisation advise that countries monitor the impact of face coverings on young people in particular, looking at their health, including mental health; transmission of Covid-19; as well as motivators and barriers to wearing face coverings. This paper is an attempt to follow that advice and, indeed, go beyond it by monitoring information from parents as well.

This paper includes information about forthcoming sources as well as existing evidence. For weekly data sources, data included in this paper is up to the end of November.

## 2. Transmission of Covid-19 among children and young people in Scotland

A recent summary report prepared for the Coronavirus (Covid-19): Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues<sup>1</sup> provides an overview of the Scottish and UK evidence regarding the interactions between Covid-19 and school / early learning and childcare (ELC) settings. This includes the role of children in transmission of Covid-19 to other children and to adults; workplace-associated risks to school staff from Covid-19; the approach to reducing risks in schools; and data on attendance and absences.

Key relevant messages from the report are:

- Pre-school and primary school aged children are less susceptible to infection from COVID-19 than adults. The evidence is more mixed for secondary aged young people. There continues to be strong evidence that children and younger people are much less susceptible to severe clinical Covid-19 disease than older people.
- The risk of transmission from children to children and children to adults in primary school and ELC settings appears low, particularly when effective infection control measures are in place.
- In Scotland, as in other countries, the 'second wave' has a different profile to the first, with a much higher prevalence among children and young adults. While this may indicate a potential role of school reopening as a factor, the extent to which there has been transmission within schools is difficult to establish.
- Transmission can occur in household, community and educational settings. It is difficult to separate the risk of infection as the result of behaviour outside schools from the risks arising from in-school contacts. For children, these

---

<sup>1</sup> [Coronavirus \(Covid-19\): Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues - evidence on children, schools, early learning and childcare settings and transmission from Covid-19 - summary report](#)

wider contacts include journeys to and from school, and other activities and gatherings.

- There is no current direct evidence that transmission within schools plays a significant contributory role in driving increased rates of infection among children, but neither is there direct evidence to suggest otherwise. The role of children in transmission remains relatively less well understood, and asymptomatic transmission is particularly problematic to analyse.
- ONS data shows no evidence of any difference between the test positivity rates of pre-school, primary and secondary school teachers and staff, relative to other worker groups of a similar age. The proportion of positive test cases from people aged 18+ who reported they were employed and their occupation was “education/childcare” has remained largely constant since late August at between 3 and 7%.
- International comparators suggest that there is no consistent pattern of relationship between the reopening of schools and increases in case numbers.
- The Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on reducing risks in schools published by Scottish Government sets out non-statutory guidance to ensure a safe and supportive environment for learning and teaching during the pandemic.
- There is clear evidence that time out of school has a detrimental effect on children and young people’s wellbeing, including impacts on developmental and mental health harms. Evidence suggests that the mental health of adolescents is particularly affected. These detrimental effects are particularly prevalent for vulnerable children and young people. School closures put educational outcomes at risk, especially for vulnerable children and young people. COVID-19 increases educational and social inequities for children and young people; this is a key reason for keeping schools open.

In November, Public Health Scotland also published an analysis of Scottish Covid-19 test data for children aged 4 to 17 during the period term 1 of the 2019/20 school year, linked to CHSP-School records to identify the school the child went to<sup>2</sup>. In addition, statistics on test data for children and young people up to the age of 17, as well as covid-19-related pupil absences, are published weekly<sup>3</sup>. Please note this analysis identifies pupils that have taken a Covid-19 test only, and it is not possible to draw conclusions about asymptomatic cases.

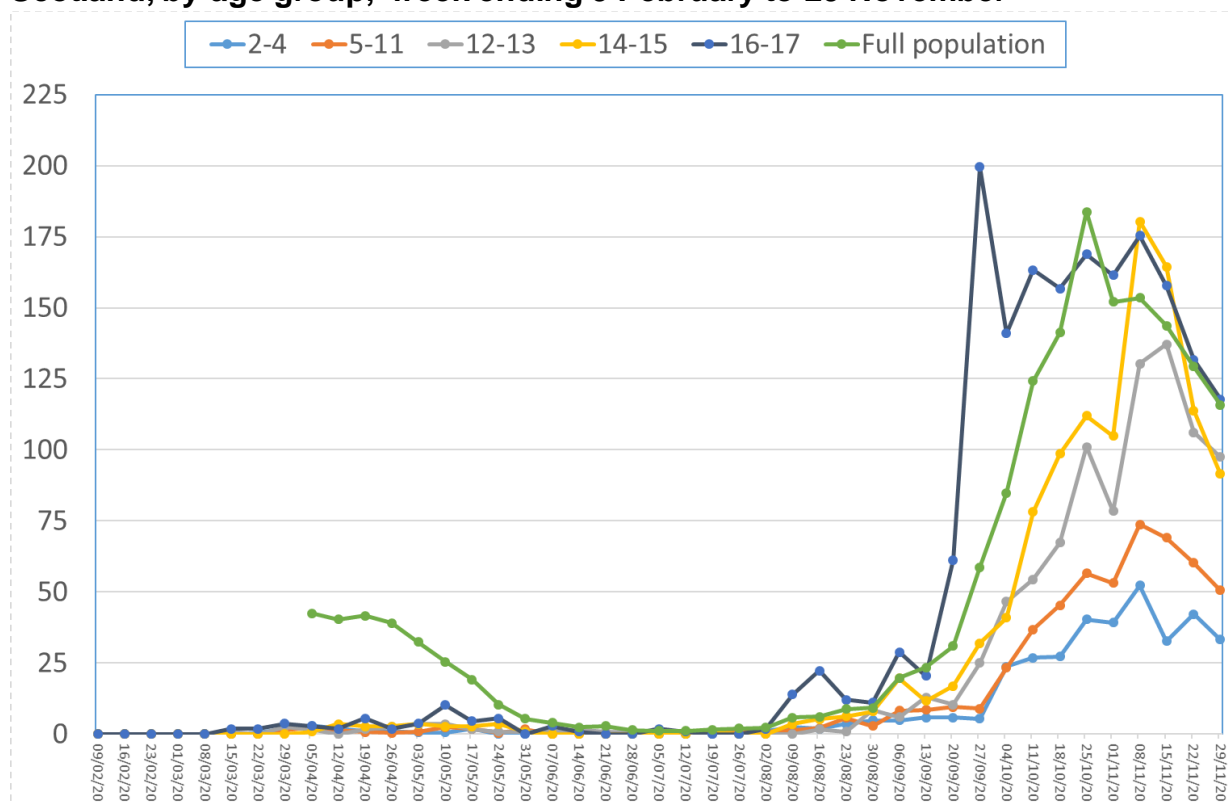
The weekly rate of positive cases per 100,000 pupils and the number of schools with pupils testing positive remained largely stable for the first five weeks of Term 1, with increases from the week commencing 21 September. Among 16-17 year olds the rate peaked at the end of September and has fluctuated at a fairly steady level since, while for younger age groups the increase was more gradual to peaks in early and mid November. Rates in all age groups fell between the middle and end of November. See Figure 1 below.

---

<sup>2</sup> [Covid-19 infections among school pupils in Scotland: Summary Statistics, August to October 2020](#)

<sup>3</sup> [COVID-19 Education Recovery Group: children and young people infographic - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#). This paper includes data up the briefing of 10 December 2020.

**Figure 1 Rate per 100,000 population of positive COVID-19 cases across NHS Scotland, by age group, week ending 9 February to 29 November**



Source: COVID-19 Education Recovery Group: children and young people infographic, 10 December

### 3. Guidance and understanding of measures

#### 3.1 Introduction

Guidance around mitigation measures, and the use of face coverings in particular, has been regularly updated by the Scottish Government over the course of the pandemic in light of emerging evidence. The introduction of the levels system has also led to different rules for young people in schools in different areas. A timeline of key decisions relating to face coverings is provided in Figure 1.

**Figure 2 Timeline of key events and changes in guidance related to face coverings. Decisions relating to schools are highlighted**

6 April	WHO release interim guidance which advises that there is insufficient evidence to support the use of face masks and coverings by the general public
28 April	Scottish Government guidance to advise that members of the public are recommended to wear face coverings where physical distancing is difficult.
5 June	WHO publishes new advice that to prevent Covid-19 transmission effectively in areas of community transmission, governments should encourage the general public to wear face coverings in specific situations and settings

22 June	Scottish Government guidance advising that face coverings are mandatory on public transport and strongly recommended in other settings. This includes all children and young people over five.
10 July	Face Coverings become mandatory in retail settings including hair dressers and shopping centres. This includes all children and young people over five
7 August	Face Coverings are made mandatory in a list of other settings and Face Visors removed from the regulations
30 July	Decision taken that face coverings are not a mandatory requirement for children in schools and are only necessary for staff in certain circumstances. Guidance on preparing for reopening schools is published.
20 August	Announcements made by First Minister that face coverings are to be worn in a larger number of settings, e.g. cafes
25 August	First Minister announces face coverings to be worn in secondary schools in communal areas and on school transport for children age 5 plus to bring them into line with public use. Updated schools guidance is published.
16 October	Face coverings become mandatory in workplace canteens
19 October	Face coverings become mandatory in communal areas in workplaces
29 October	Exemption card launched
30 October	Scottish Government guidance on reducing risks in schools updated to reflect that in level 3 and 4 areas all staff and pupils should wear a face covering in classrooms during lessons in the senior phase

In such a fluid and complex context, data collection is challenging. Any research with young people has a substantial lead-in time, during which relevant guidance and/or level of given areas can change. This means that questions have to be limited to questions around self-assessed understanding of guidance, rather than objective assessments of knowledge of rules at a given time and in a given area.

More generally, there are few representative surveys of young people, due to a lack of sampling frame for young people outwith a school setting, and the very limited opportunities to carry out surveys within school time. As a result, the majority of evidence presented in this paper is based on open sample online surveys which cannot be treated as representative of the population of young people in Scotland, or on qualitative research, which highlights the range of views held and issues faced, but not their prevalence. While these sources of evidence individually do not provide the highest level of robustness, in combination they provide an overall indication of young people's experiences of Covid-19 mitigation measures, and provide context for the forthcoming representative survey of young people.



### 3.2 Young people

In terms of understanding of measures, the Lockdown Lowdown 2 survey<sup>4</sup> is an online survey which ran between 28th September and 2nd November 2020 and received 6,043 responses from young people aged 11-25 across Scotland. As this was an open survey, it is not representative of young people in Scotland. In particular, most survey respondents were aged under 18 and around six in ten were female. The survey ran alongside focus groups with particular groups of vulnerable young people, which are introduced in Section 4.1 below.

The survey asked respondents to rate their knowledge of current Covid-19 restrictions, such as how many households you can meet, social distancing rules and requirements to wear face coverings. 54% of young people said that they knew what the rules were in general, but were not sure on all the details; 43% said they knew what all the current rules were; and only 3% said they did not know what the rules were.

More robust quantitative data from young people will be available from the Young People in Scotland Survey of secondary school pupils carried out by Ipsos Mori running in January 2021, and reporting in April 2021. This survey will provide findings that are representative of secondary school pupils in Scotland. Scottish Government have commissioned questions on face coverings, which will include the following questions on understanding of face coverings guidance (4 point very unclear – very clear):

- How clear or unclear are you about when and where you are expected to wear face coverings?
- And how clear or unclear are you about the reasons why you have to wear face coverings in some situations?

There is a range of information on the related issue of communications and guidance aimed at young people. The Lockdown Lowdown 2 survey asked young people if they knew how to access information about various topics related to Covid-19. The topics that young people felt most confident in accessing information about were information and updates about Covid-19 restrictions (87%) and advice about Covid-19 restrictions (83%). The topic that young people felt least confident accessing information about was financial support that may be available to them (34%).

The survey also provided young people with an opportunity to make any comments around access to information around Covid-19. Just over 1000 open text responses were received. The most commonly raised issue (by 110 responses) was that information on Covid-19 and related restrictions was confusing. Within this, some respondents raised a concern that there is not enough clear information on restrictions affecting them in Scotland, or their local community. As well as the need for clearer information, there were also some concerns about the information being inaccessible. An identified issue was poor internet connection and lack of access to computers. However, some young people (24 responses) felt information relating to the pandemic was clear and easy to find.

---

<sup>4</sup> [Lockdown Lowdown: A survey of young people in Scotland about their 'new normal' lives as lockdown restrictions change](#)

Small scale qualitative research with young people aged 11 to 25 carried out by the Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy (SCPHRP)<sup>5</sup> (Unpublished preliminary findings, December, 2020) found that while young people agreed messaging on social distancing was clear, they felt messaging around the indirect impacts of Covid-19 for their age groups was unclear, particularly with regard to issues such as education. Older young people (16+) felt that government information and messaging was not relevant to them, on the whole, and that they would like to be addressed more directly. This age group also expressed a loss of trust in the UK Government over the course of the pandemic, which was primarily related to the belief that lockdown measures were introduced too late. Many of the young people participating perceived that other age groups were not adhering to the restrictions, and that their age group was being unfairly judged by the media.

Overall, in the above research, young people demonstrated a strong level of understanding about the pandemic and the need for restrictions. They also expressed feelings of responsibility to protect others even if they perceived risk to be low to themselves. Young people also felt a strong sense of responsibility to help others during the crisis but felt there were few opportunities to do so.

The forthcoming TeenCovidLife 2 survey is an online survey of 12-17 year olds on the impacts of Covid-19 on their lives run by the University of Edinburgh. It is based on an open sample and is not representative of young people in Scotland. The survey ran during September and reporting is expected in early 2021. It includes the following questions on trust in information and guidance:

- In general, how much do you trust medical and health advice from the **Scottish Government**?
- In general, how much do you trust medical and health advice from the **UK Government**?
- In general, how much do you trust medical and health advice from **medical workers, such as doctors and nurses**?

### 3.3 *Parents*

Weekly YouGov polling conducted by the Scottish Government (unpublished) contains a number of questions asked of a small sample of around 200 parents of children aged 18 or under, as part of a wider online poll of around 1000 adults aged 18+ across Scotland<sup>6</sup>. While the overall sample of the survey is representative of adults in Scotland, the representativeness of the parent sample is not known. Combined with the relatively small sample size, findings should be interpreted with caution and provide an indication of the prevalence of views and behaviours only.

In terms of understanding of measures, polling from 20-21 October, 27-28 October and 3-4 November shows an increased clarity among parents of children under 18 around what the current guidance means for children. During the 3-4 November

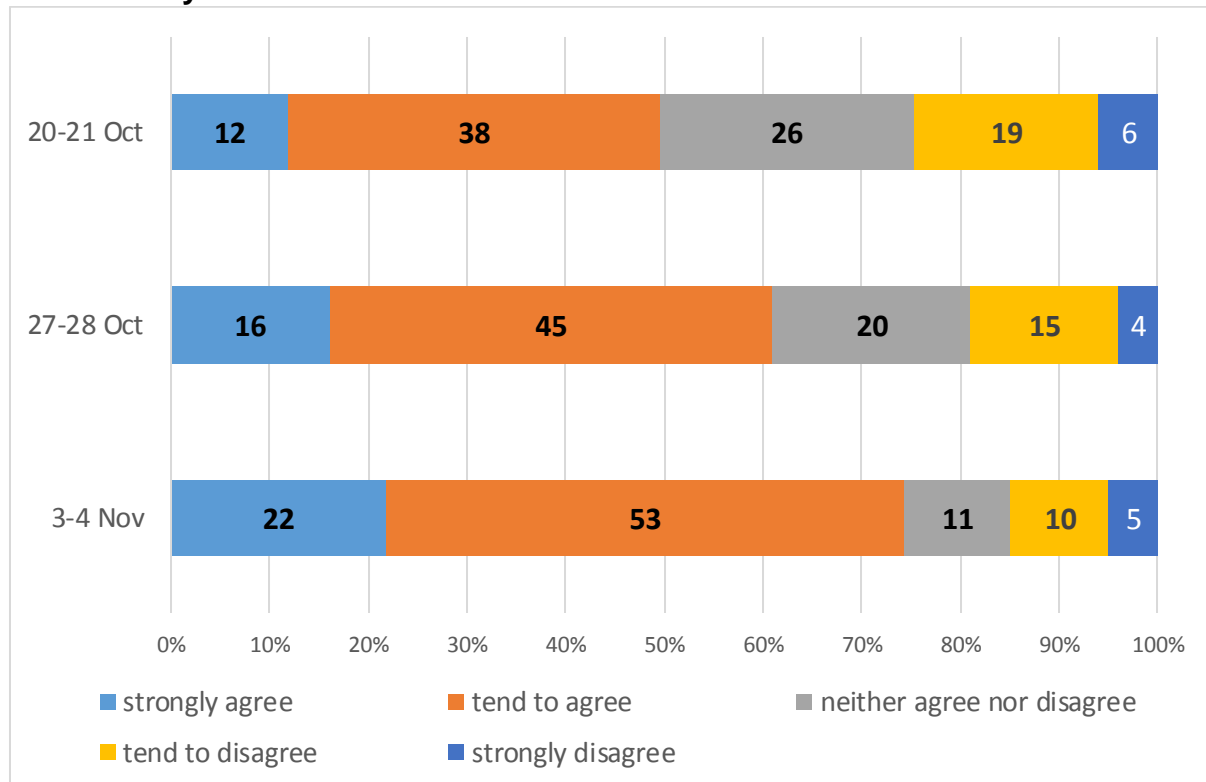
---

<sup>5</sup> [CAHSS funds nine innovative COVID-19 knowledge-exchange projects](#)

<sup>6</sup> The survey is conducted online via YouGov, interviewing c.1000 adults 18+ across Scotland each week. Fieldwork dates are as shown, although a small number of interviews usually take place on the morning of the following day. YouGov apply weighting to the data to match the population profile to adjust for any over/under representations and to maximise consistency from wave to wave.

polling 75% of parents of children under 18 agreed that they felt clear what the current guidance/restrictions meant for their children, an increase from just 50% during the 20-21 October polling. See Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3 Agreement with ‘I feel clear what the current guidance/restrictions mean for my children’**



Sample sizes: 20-21 October 221; 27-28 October 190; 3-4 November 215

Polling between 29-30 September and 24-25 November asked parents of children under 18 to identify the correct restrictions for their children indoors in private homes; indoors in public spaces like a café; and outdoors in private gardens or public spaces, from a list of five options. This suggests low levels of awareness and no evidence of consistently increasing awareness over time.

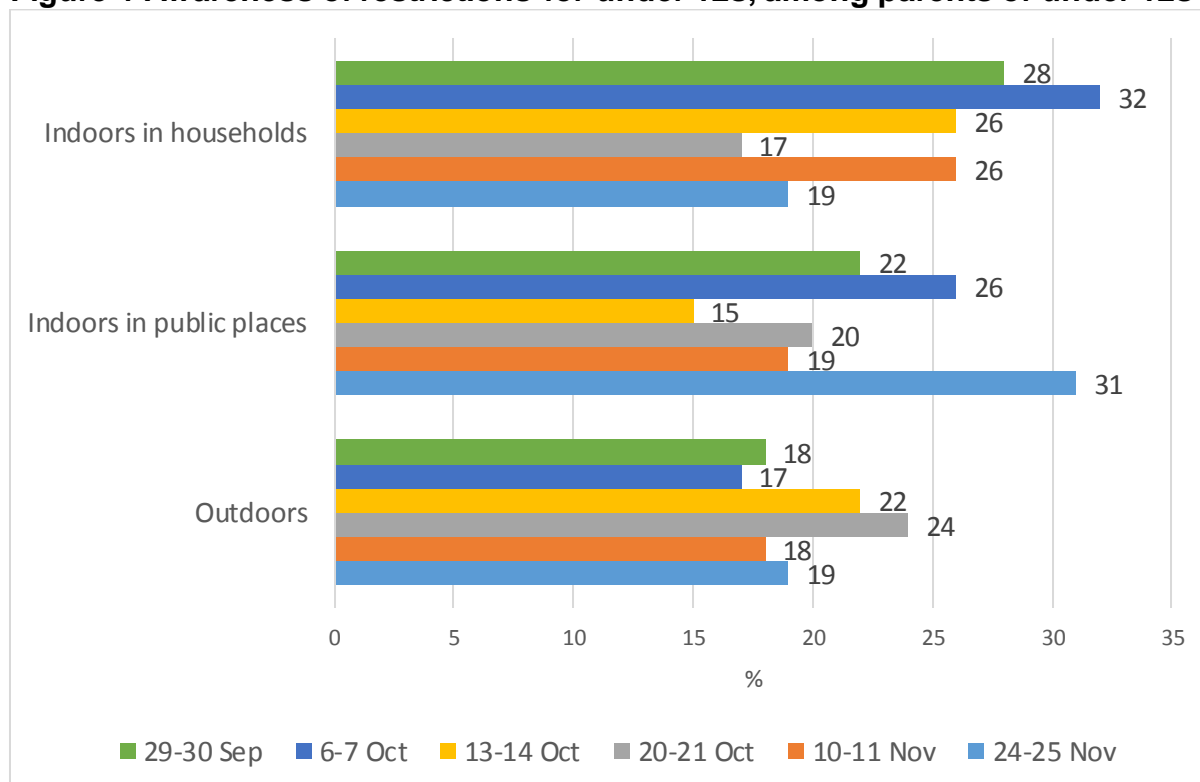
During the 24-25 November polling, among parents of under 12s, 19% were able to identify from a list of possible options the guidance for children indoors in private households<sup>7</sup>, 31% for indoors in public spaces<sup>8</sup> and 19% for outdoors<sup>9</sup>. See Figure 4 below.

<sup>7</sup> 24-25 November: in Levels 2-4 ‘must not meet people from any other households socially, unless in your extended household’, in Level 1 6 people/2 households (children don’t count to number of people); 10-11 November and before ‘must not meet people from any other households socially, unless in your extended household’

<sup>8</sup> 24-25 November: in Levels 1-3 ‘can meet in a group of maximum 6 people from maximum 2 households – and children under 12 don’t count to the total number of people but do count to the number of households’, in Level 4 hospitality not open; 10-11 November and before ‘can meet in a group of maximum 6 people from maximum 2 households – and children under 12 don’t count to the total number of people but do count to the number of households’

<sup>9</sup> 24-25 November: in Levels 2-4 ‘can meet in a group of maximum 6 people from maximum 2 households – and children under 12 don’t count to the total number of people or to the total number of households’, in Level 1 can meet more than 6 people from 2 households; 10-11 November and before

**Figure 4 Awareness of restrictions for under 12s, among parents of under 12s**



Sample sizes: 29-30 Sep 153; 6-7 Oct 142; 13-14 Oct 149; 20-21 Oct 149; 10-11 Nov 149; 24-25 Nov 136

Among parents of children ages 12-17, awareness from a list of possible options of the correct guidance was slightly higher for indoors - 32% identified the correct guidance for young people in private homes<sup>10</sup>, and 35% indoors in public spaces<sup>11</sup>, but awareness was very low for outdoors<sup>12</sup> – just 8% of parents identified the correct guidance. See Figure 5 below.

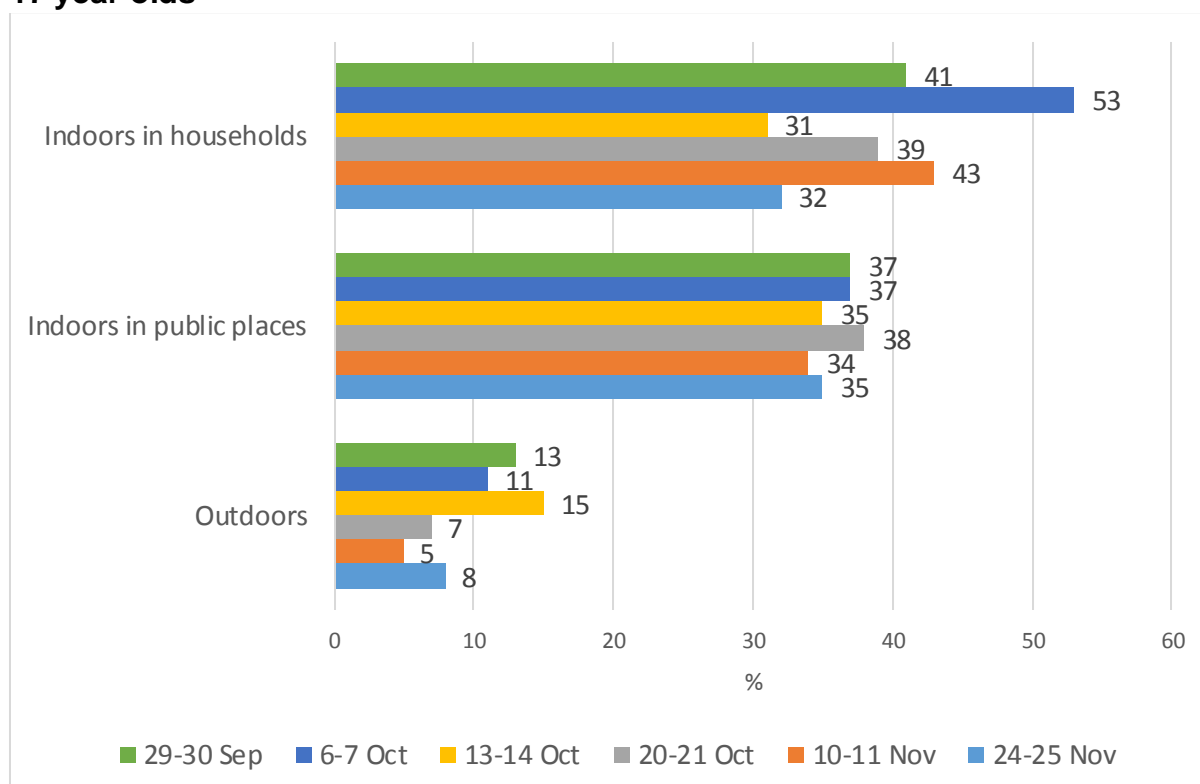
'can meet in a group of maximum 6 people from maximum 2 households – and children under 12 don't count to the total number of people or to the total number of households'

<sup>10</sup> 24-25 November: In Level 2-4 'must not meet people from any other households socially, unless in your extended household', In Level 1 'can meet in a groups of no more than six people aged 12 or over from 2 households'; 10-11 November and before 'must not meet people from any other households socially, unless in your extended household'

<sup>11</sup> 24-25 November: In Level 1-3 'can meet up in a group of maximum 6 people aged 12 or over from 2 households maximum at a time', in Level 4 hospitality not open; 10-11 November and before 'can meet up in a group of maximum 6 people aged 12 or over from 2 households maximum at a time'

<sup>12</sup> 'can meet up in a group of no more than 6 people aged 0-17 from 6 households maximum at a time'

**Figure 5 Awareness of restrictions for 12 – 17 year olds, among parents of 12 – 17 year olds**



Sample sizes: 29-30 Sep 92; 6-7 Oct 80; 13-14 Oct 102; 20-21 Oct 107; 10-11 Nov 84; 24-25 Nov 81

#### 4. Attitudes to measures and Covid-19 safety

##### 4.1 Young people

The Lockdown Lowdown 2 survey (28th September to 2nd November 2020)<sup>13</sup> asked young people who had returned to in person learning whether they felt that their educational establishment had re-opened in a safe way. Almost two thirds (63%) of respondents agreed that this was the case, while 17% disagreed.

The survey provided an opportunity for young people to highlight anything they would like changed about the current arrangements for their educational course. There were 2,543 freely typed responses to this question. The majority of young people did not want anything changed (1,140 responses).

The most common theme in the open text responses (148 responses) was that safety measures within their school needed to be enforced or increased. These measures included the use of face coverings, social distancing and sanitisation practises:

"I think there should be more social distancing measures and stricter mask and hand sanitiser rules."

<sup>13</sup> As noted above, this was an open survey, and is not representative of young people in Scotland

In addition to the survey, the Lockdown Lowdown 2 project included five focus groups with a total of 37 vulnerable groups of young people aged 14 to 24<sup>14</sup>. The focus groups took place 8th and 29th of October 2020 and the following vulnerable groups were covered:

- Young Carers
- BME young people
- Disabled young people
- Young people with experience of custody and/or the criminal justice system
- Care experienced young people

The topic guides for the focus groups covered prompts on Covid-19 mitigation measures, with some additional detail in the disabled group. It should be noted that as the focus groups took place between the 8th and 29th of October 2020, this was prior to the new restrictions which made the wearing of face coverings mandatory in class for senior phase pupils. It should also be noted that the focus groups covered a wide range of topics, both specific to the lived experience of the particular vulnerable groups, and more widely on young people's experience of Covid-19, and were not specifically focused on Covid-19 mitigation measures.

Young people in the focus groups were appreciative of mitigation measures taken in educational establishments:

“In a way, nothing's changed but it has changed. Our college paid for a proper fog tunnel with people to man it. The precautions they're taking are unbelievable, I'd be happy to stay in college all day. The way they've done it, it seems so seamless ...I don't think anything's too difficult, stay two metres apart, bring your own lunch, wear a face mask. They've got that many hand sanitiser stations throughout the college that they're always like two metres apart from one another – there's that many of them.’

Participants agreed with social distancing, although found it difficult to do in schools and when socialising with friends in public. Some reported their friendship groups not adhering to physical distancing. However, for others physical distancing was less of an issue:

“Social distancing hasn't really made that much of a difference, we've been going to the park and stuff and meeting with other folk, it's not really bothered me. We haven't been able to hug, or that, but we've been sticking to the rules.”

One place where many young people felt that mitigation measures and physical distancing were not adequately enforced was public transport.

The majority of participants agreed that face coverings should be worn in public and no participants expressed problems with wearing them in school. Some explicitly stated that they had no negative impact on them:

---

<sup>14</sup> [Lockdown Lowdown: the Voices of Seldom Heard groups](#)

“It shouldn’t be a questionable thing to wear a mask or not, if it is scientifically proven that wearing a mask will limit the spread of coronavirus then I personally don’t think this affects my freedom in any way.”

The only concern around face coverings raised was from a young carer, who felt that others were not wearing face coverings when required or not wearing them correctly, making them feel unsafe due to the impact that this might have on their family:

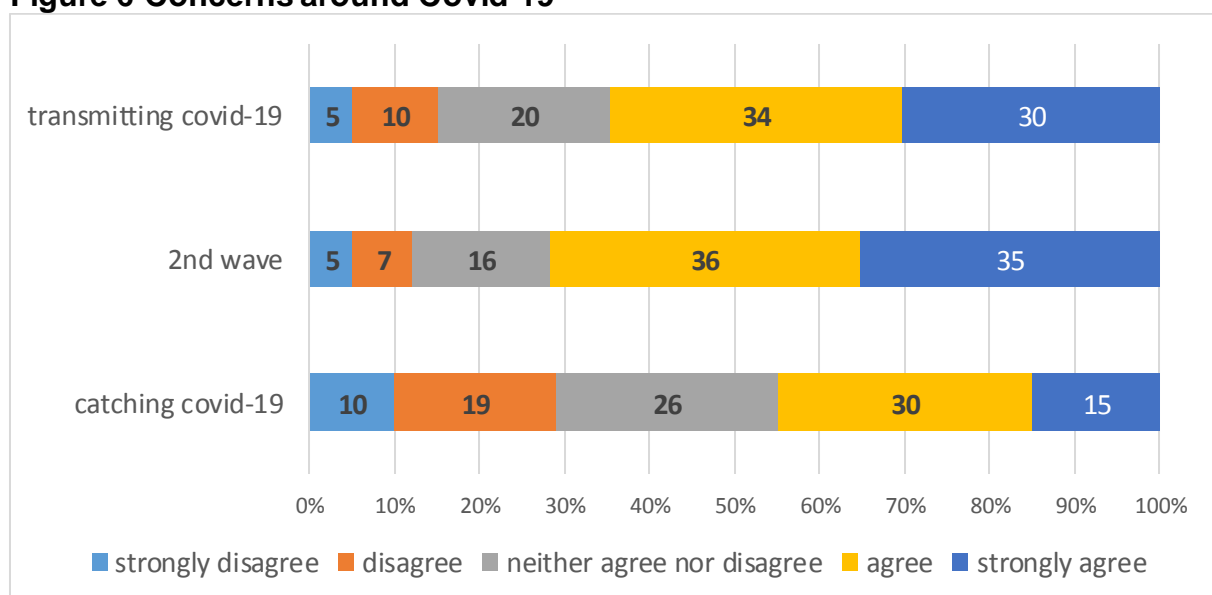
“Since we’ve [been] back at school, they brought in that you need to wear masks in corridors, but at my school a lot of people aren’t really wearing masks. Obviously I’m a young carer, and the person I care for is at risk, so it’s a big risk me going into school and mixing with people, obviously there’s rules at school but I see them at the weekend and they’re not following the rules. I feel unsafe at school. I don’t want to get it from someone and put my dad at risk. I’m still going into school for now, but my mum is keeping an eye on numbers, and if it gets too risky they’ll keep me and my brother at home.”

Only one participant said that they had seen see-through face coverings/visors being used in an education setting. They had had a positive experience.

Young people that had an exemption from face coverings found that this was managed well through lanyards in both school and shops, although one participant had witnessed an incident where an individual with an exemption lanyard was stigmatised by another passenger on public transport.

The Lockdown Lowdown 2 survey also asked young people how concerned they were about Covid-19. Around seven in ten were concerned about a second wave, just under two thirds were concerned about transmitting Covid-19 to others and just under half were concerned about catching Covid-19 themselves. See Figure 6 below.

**Figure 6 Concerns around Covid-19**



When asked if they had any further thoughts on these issues the most common concerns were fears around transmitting Covid-19 to others, decline of their mental health during the Covid-19 outbreak and worries about vulnerable family members.

The forthcoming TeenCovidLife survey discussed in section 3.2 contains some questions on wider safety concerns around Covid-19 in schools (agree - disagree scale)

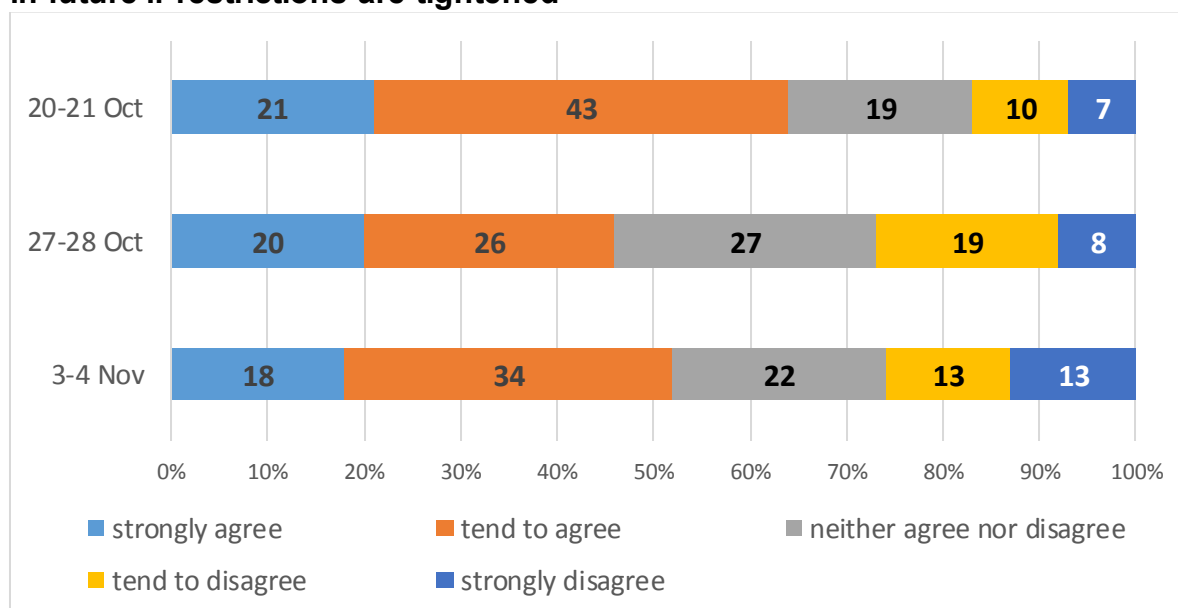
- It is safe for me and other pupils to return to school full-time
- I worry that returning to school will increase the risk of **me** getting Covid-19
- I worry that returning to school will increase **my family's** risk of getting covid-19

Reporting is expected in early 2021.

#### 4.2 Parents

YouGov polling carried out for Scottish Government from 20-21 October, 27-28 October and 3-4 November shows a high level of worry among parents of children under 18 that schools or childcare will close again. During the 3-4 November polling 52% of parents agreed that they were worried, an increase from the previous week (46%), but lower than during 20-21 October polling (64%). See Figure 7 below.

**Figure 7 'Agreement with 'I am worried that schools/nurseries will close again in future if restrictions are tightened'**



Sample sizes: 20-21 October 221; 27-28 October 190; 3-4 November 215

In terms of parent's attitudes, polling from 22-23 September<sup>15</sup> on restrictions for children in general found:

- 73% agreed that 'It is better for children to follow the restrictions than have schools close again'
- However, 18% agreed that 'Following restrictions is more harmful for my child than catching Coronavirus'

<sup>15</sup> Sample size 222



- 41% agreed ‘There is no need for children to follow restrictions if they are meeting friends they go to school/nursery with’

Polling from 1-2 September specifically on face coverings found (please note findings should be treated with caution due to small sample size<sup>16</sup>):

- 79% of parents of secondary school children were comfortable with their children wearing face coverings while moving about the school in corridors and in confined communal areas
- 75% of parents with children aged 4-17 using school transport were comfortable with their children wearing face coverings on school transport

An open sample, non-representative poll carried out in August by Disability Equality Scotland on its website<sup>17</sup> asked respondents if they had any concerns about the use of face coverings in schools and on school transport. 343 individuals reported and 87% of these had no concerns. Concerns were reported around:

- stigma for those exempt from the regulations
- the impact of face coverings on pupils with hearing impairments and others who rely on lip reading and facial expressions for communications
- affordability and availability of face coverings
- the lack of use or enforcement of face coverings on school transport, particularly when school transport is shared with the general public

## 5. Compliance

### 5.1 *Young people*

The Scottish Government Marketing and Insight Unit has commissioned qualitative research with non-compliant 16-39 year olds to explore motivations for non-compliant behaviour and barriers to compliance (August 2020)<sup>18</sup>. The youngest groups (16-17 and 18-24) focused more on the positives of lockdown than other age groups and were more affected by boredom, with older groups more focused on the difficulties they faced. Compliance had reduced as some restrictions were lifted and rules became more complicated, many were confused about the restrictions in place and peer influence was a major factor affecting behaviour.

### 5.2 *Parents*

YouGov polling carried out for Scottish Government from 24-25 November shows that 10% of children under 12 did something in the past week that was not within the restrictions / guidance, according to parents. This was a decrease from 20% in the 10-11 November polling. The most common activity outside the restrictions in the most recent polling was meeting with other children in someone’s home, other than for the reason of childcare (6%).

---

<sup>16</sup> Samples sizes: parents with secondary school children: 84; parents with children using school transport 94

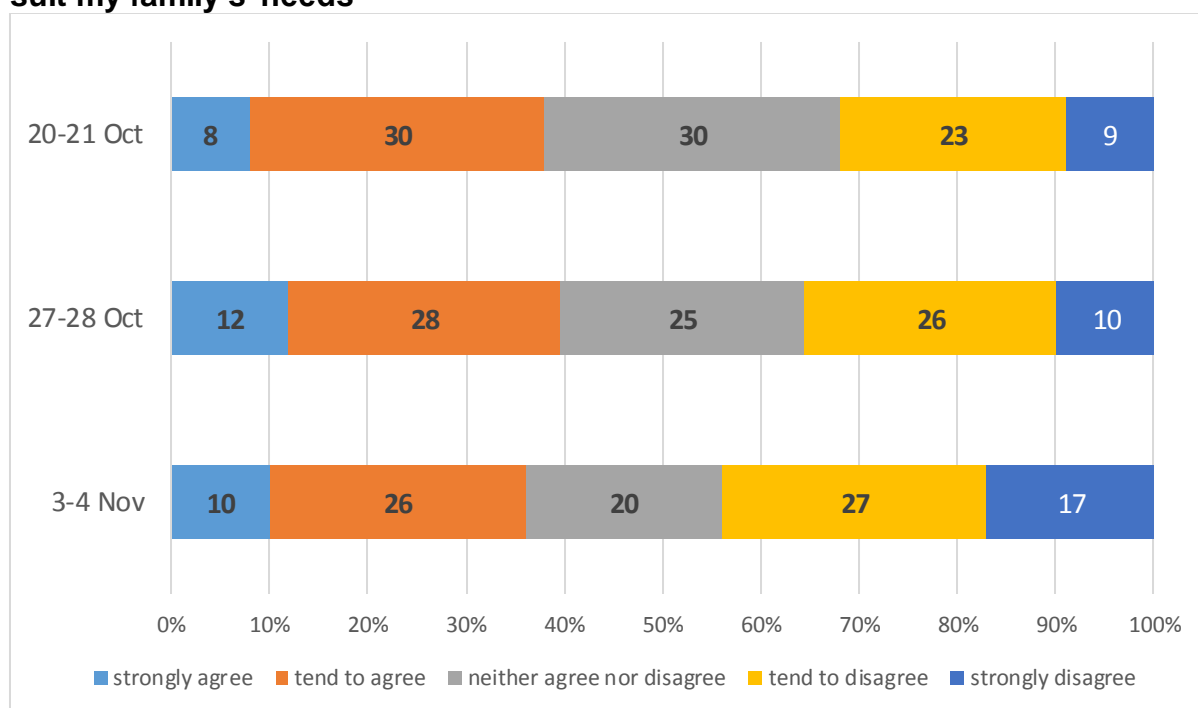
<sup>17</sup> [Weekly Poll – COVID-19: Face Coverings in Schools \(Week Beginning 31 August\)](#)

<sup>18</sup> Insight gathering research, JRS, 21 August 2020

Polling from 24-25 November also shows that 20% of children aged 12-17 did something in the past week not within the restrictions / guidance, according to parents – an increase from 11% in the 10-11 November polling. The most common activity outside the restrictions in the most recent polling was meeting with more than 6 people from 2 households indoors (8%) and not distancing at least 1 metre from other people aged 12 or over not from your household (7%).

Polling from 20-21 October, 27-28 October and 3-4 November shows a consistent level of around four in ten parents of under 18s admitting to adapting the guidance to suit their family’s needs. During the 3-4 November polling 36% of parents agreed that they were adapting the guidance<sup>19</sup>, similar to 40% in the previous week and 38% during 20-21 October polling. See Figure 8 below.

**Figure 8 ‘Agreement with ‘I have been adapting the guidance/restrictions to suit my family’s needs’**



Sample sizes: 20-21 October 221; 27-28 October 190; 3-4 November 215

In the 27-28 October polling, parents of children under 18 who said they were adapting the guidance (please note findings should be treated with caution due to small sample size<sup>20</sup>) were asked about their reason for doing so (from a pre-coded list of options). The main reason provided by parents for adapting the guidance was the mental health of their children (41%), followed by applying common sense (35%), to help improve their own mental health (30%) and to allow them to work (26%).

In the 17-18 November polling, parents of children under 18<sup>21</sup> were asked some additional questions around how and why they adapted the guidance. This found that:

- 19% agreed that ‘It’s okay for my child(ren) to go into their friend’s house if I don’t go in with them’

<sup>19</sup> Wording changed from ‘have been adapting’ to ‘currently adapting’ from 27-28 Oct

<sup>20</sup> Sample size 79

<sup>21</sup> Sample size 210

- 24% agreed that ‘I am finding it more difficult to follow restrictions with my children now the days are darker and colder’
- 25% agreed that ‘I am making sacrifices in some areas of my life (e.g. not going to places like pubs and restaurants) so I can bend other rules to allow me and my children to spend more time with friends and family’

Polling from 22-23 September (referring to restrictions before 22 September) found that 26% of parents of children under 12<sup>22</sup> reported that their children had done something that was outside the guidance, most often meeting more than one household outside (20%). 20% of parents of children aged 12-17<sup>23</sup> reported that their children had done something that was outside the guidance, most commonly not keeping a 2 metre distance from friends when meeting up outside of school (14%).

Polling from 1-2 September<sup>24</sup> specifically on face coverings (please note findings should be treated with caution due to small sample size<sup>25</sup>) found that only 66% of parents of 12-17 year olds who go to school<sup>26</sup> were confident that their children will wear face coverings while moving about the school in corridors and in confined communal areas, while 71% of parents of 4-17 year olds who go to school and use school transport<sup>27</sup> were confident that their children will wear face coverings on school transport.

The Covid-19 Early Years Resilience and Impact Survey (CEYRIS)<sup>28</sup> of parents of children aged 2 – 7 included questions on physical distancing. This was an open sample survey and cannot be treated as representative of parents of children of this age. It was completed by 11,234 respondents.

This survey was conducted when households were permitted to meet outside with one other household under physical distancing conditions. However, the physical distancing requirement for under 12s outside was removed towards the end of the fieldwork period for this survey.

Parents whose children had met up with other households were asked a series of questions about keeping their child two metres apart from other households.

The findings highlight the difficulty of physical distancing for this young age group. Specifically, the survey found:

- Parents and carers of 34% of the children had decided not to keep their child 2 metres apart from people when meeting other households.
- 76% of the parents and carers agreed that they had found it difficult or stressful to enforce physical distancing measures with their children.

---

<sup>22</sup> Samples size 159

<sup>23</sup> Sample size 103

<sup>24</sup> Please note this research was carried out before face coverings were mandatory in class rooms for senior face pupils.

<sup>25</sup> Samples sizes: parents with secondary school children: 84; parents with children using school transport 94

<sup>26</sup> Sample size 84

<sup>27</sup> Sample size 85

<sup>28</sup> [COVID-19 Early Years Resilience and Impact Survey \(CEYRIS\) Report 2 Play and learning outdoors and social interactions](#)

- The parents and carers of half of the children (50%) agreed that while they had tried to ensure physical distancing was maintained by their child, they had not been able to.
- The parents and carers of just over half of the children (52%) agreed that their child had found physical distancing difficult or upsetting.
- The parents and carers of 60% of the children agreed that although their child tried to maintain physical distancing, they easily forgot.
- The parents and carers of 36% of the children agreed that children did not understand the need to maintain physical distancing.

The forthcoming TeenCovidLife 2 survey discussed in section 3.2 includes questions on compliance with mitigation measures:

- **Compared to before the Covid-19 lockdown**, are you washing your hands more **now**?
- Are you trying to keep your distance from other people who don't live with you when leaving your home?
- How often do you wear face coverings on public transport and in shops?
- People should wear a face covering when entering enclosed spaces (e.g. on public transport or in shops).
- If you are asked to stay at home because you have been in **close contact** with someone who **tested positive for Covid-19**, how likely are you to stay at home, **even if you feel well**?

Reporting is expected in early 2021.

## 6. Wellbeing Impacts

### 6.1 Young people

There is limited data on wellbeing impacts to date. As noted above, the Lockdown Lowdown focus groups found that most participants agreed with social distancing, face coverings and appreciated the safety measures taken by educational establishments.

With regards to physical distancing, disabled participants that were hard of hearing or partially sighted found that the 2 metre requirement made it hard for them to hear/see others:

“Social distancing, but that’s got one barrier for me, it comes back to the hearing thing I have to tell my new teachers when you’re speaking to me please don’t stand more than 2m away. If social distancing increases to 3m then I wouldn’t be able to tell what they are saying.”

“Having a sensory impairment keeping 2m, is a massive challenge for blind and partially sighted people. [...] It’s been the biggest challenge for me. Although now, sighted people are allowed to guide blind and partially sighted people, this has made us more relaxed as a community. I am trying to be as independent as possible but it’s good that I know have the chance to get a guide when I’m walking about if I choose.”

However, a participant with autism found the increased personal space beneficial. A question was raised by one participant about their sports team not being allowed to play, and felt that this negatively impacted their mental health in a way that outweighed Covid-19 safety concerns.

There were no concerns raised about face coverings other than the lack of compliance and enforcement discussed in section 4.1 above. One disabled participant had experience of a FE teacher using see through face coverings, and found this a positive experience.

Questions asking whether young people agree or disagree with the following statements will be included in the representative Young People in Scotland Survey of secondary school pupils running in January 2021 (5 point strongly agree – strongly disagree):

- Wearing face coverings makes me feel anxious
- It's harder to connect with other people when one or both of us is wearing a face covering.
- Other people have made me feel uncomfortable for wearing a face covering
- I find it difficult to understand teachers when they are wearing a face covering
- I find it more difficult to follow lessons when teachers are wearing face coverings

The survey will also include two agree/disagree statements around the rules for meeting others (5 point strongly agree – strongly disagree):

- The rules around meeting others are having a negative impact on my relationships with my friends and family
- The rules around meeting others are having a negative impact on my mental health

## 6.2 *Parents*

Public Health Scotland are currently running the **CEYRIS wave 2** survey of parents of children aged 2-7. The survey is live between the early and mid-December and reporting will be in early 2021. This contains the following questions on face coverings (5 point strongly agree – strongly disagree):

- My child is happy to wear a face covering
- My child seems unfazed by others wearing face coverings
- My child gets upset at seeing others wearing face coverings
- My child finds it difficult to understand people speaking if they are wearing a face covering



© Crown copyright 2021

You may re-use this information (excluding logos and images) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/> or e-mail: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk). Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

The views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and do not necessarily represent those of the Scottish Government or Scottish Ministers.

This document is also available from our website at [www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot).  
ISBN: 978-1-80004-535-4

The Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

Produced for  
the Scottish Government  
by APS Group Scotland  
PPDAS812126 (01/21)  
Published by  
the Scottish Government,  
January 2021



Social Research series  
ISSN 2045-6964  
ISBN 978-1-80004-535-4

Web and Print Publication  
[www.gov.scot/socialresearch](http://www.gov.scot/socialresearch)

PPDAS812126 (01/21)