



# Young people survey – A summary of our findings

*July 2021*

## Introduction:

At the beginning of 2021, we began discussing the prospect of developing a Youth panel at Healthwatch North Lincolnshire.

Young people have historically been a group we have struggled to reach, and whom engagement with at Healthwatch North Lincolnshire has been relatively low. We identified that there are a number of different factors contributing to this, including young people using health and social care services more infrequently, in addition to many young people relying on parents/carers to book appointments for them.

A major concern in this however, was that whilst young people may not feel the need to share their experiences right now, their opinions are still incredibly valuable to help inform the way in which services need to develop to ensure suitability for future generations. The timeline from service design through to full implementation often spans over a number of years, so by getting young people involved in initial patient experience surveys and focus groups, we can identify what they would like from services and therefore help to ensure service suitability for the future.

Whilst setting up a Youth Healthwatch panel group is an effective way to do this and engage regularly with young people -helping us to raise awareness of the work of Healthwatch among a younger demographic- we equally wanted to start off the project with a 'snapshot' of young people's experiences and opinions of the services they *currently* use and their opinions of what is important to young people. By finding this out, it would help to inform future projects and give us an initial starting point.

## Survey structure:

We therefore constructed an online survey which was shared with local colleges, the North Lincolnshire Youth Council, our young volunteers, young carers, and through our e-newsletter. The survey was aimed at people aged 14-25 and asked a variety of questions including which services they had used in the past year, how easy it was to access these services, and what areas of health and social care they believe to be most important to young people. We also asked a few questions about their preferred methods of receiving information about health and social care topics, as this would help to ensure that information about future youth-orientated projects could be shared in appropriate ways.

We were also keen to find out if there had been any changes to the way in which young people had been able to access services over the past year and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, we included a few questions around demographics to help us build a more complete picture of young people's individual experiences, and to help us

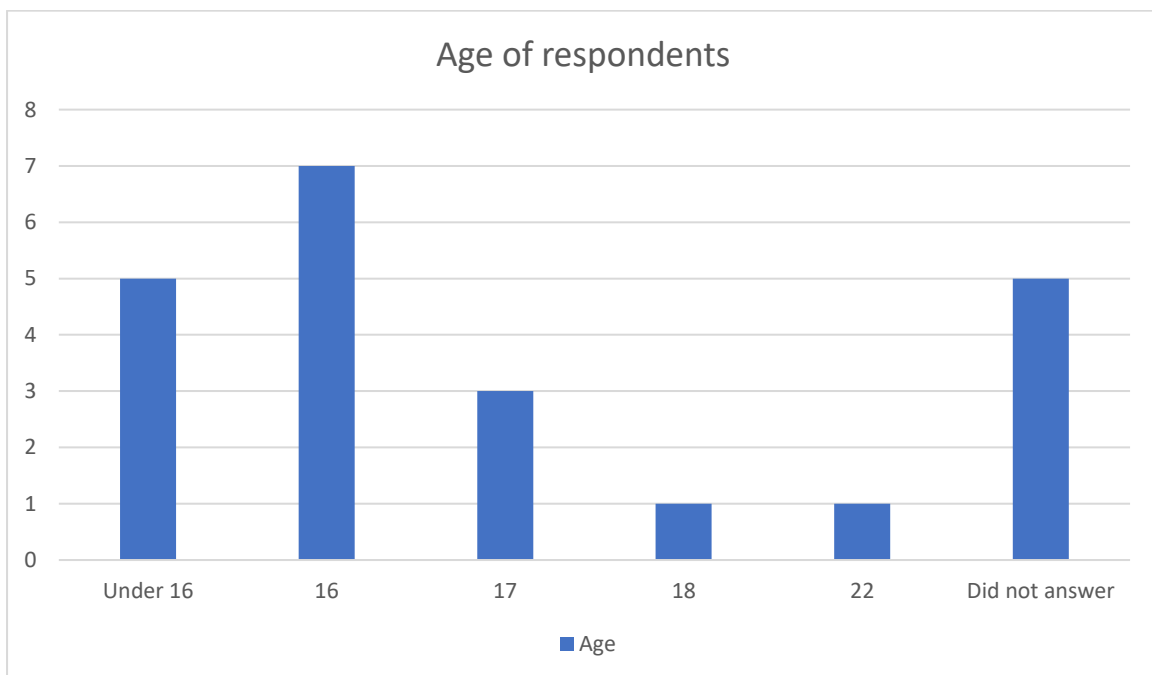
identify if there was a correlation between factors such as age and current education level (e.g, secondary school or college) and whether this impacted their experiences of accessing health and social care services/information.

## Survey Results:

In total, we had 25 responses to the survey, however this included 2 incomplete submissions and one respondent who did not consent to their answers being used. For the purpose of this summary, we have removed these three submissions, leaving us with a total of 22 complete responses.

Of these, five stated that they were under the age of 16, seven stated that they were aged 16, three were aged 17, one aged 18, and we also had one response from a 22 year old.

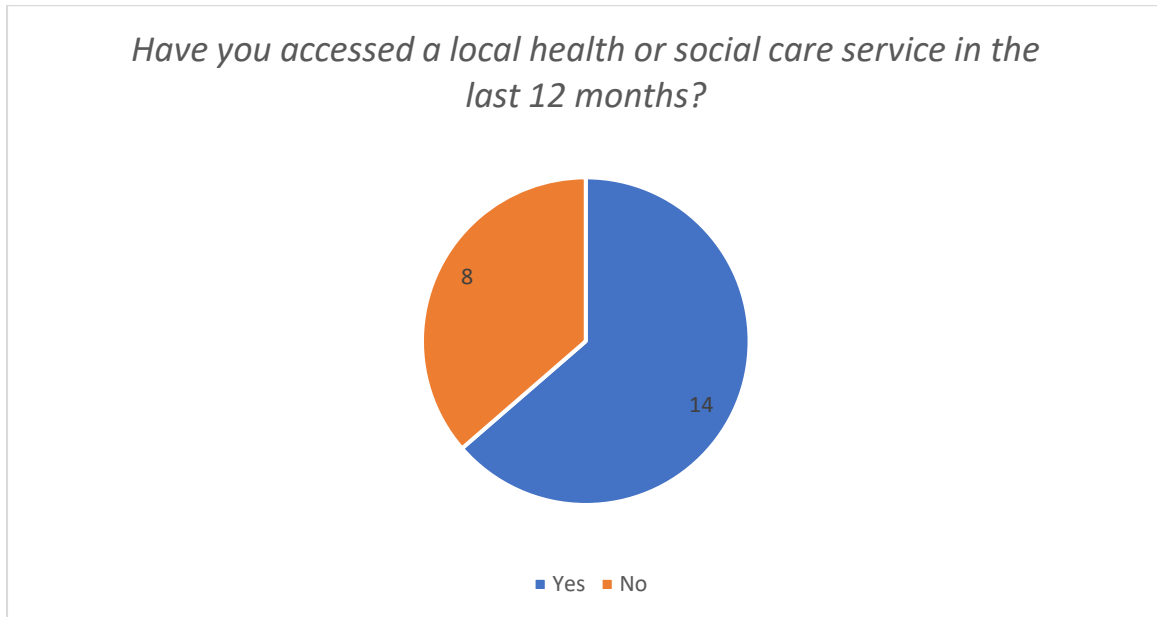
Two of the respondents who completed the survey also considered themselves to have a disability of some form.



**Question 1: Have you accessed a local health or social care service in the last 12 months?**

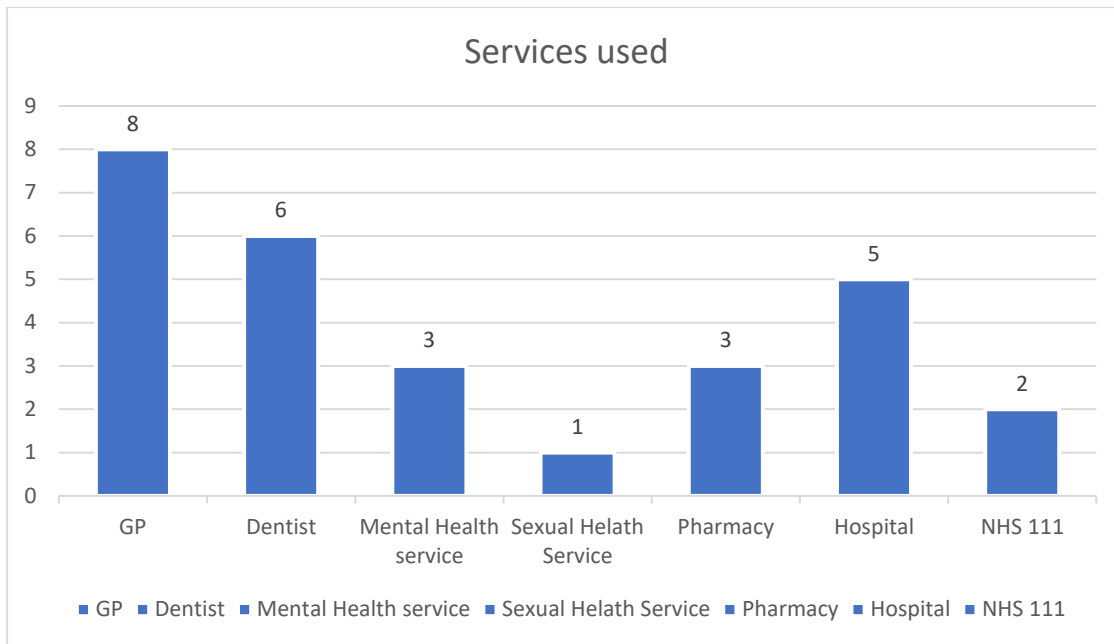
**Q2: If yes, which service(s) did you access? (Please select all which apply)**

14 respondents answered Yes, whilst 8 answered No.



In terms of the services used, the service used the most by young people was their local GP, followed by dentist. Some services such as hospital or mental health support may have been accessed through a GP referral, however this is not something which we asked the respondents to clarify.

The service options which were not used by the respondents included alcohol and drug services, school nurses, SEND Local, LGBTQ+ support, Domestic Abuse Support, and support for young carers.



**Q3: Please tell us a bit about your experience(s). If you used more than one service, you can discuss each in more detail here.**

Overall, the responses we received about services used were positive, however a few comments also mentioned the struggle to get an appointment with the service they required in the first place.

Responses included;

*“They were very helpful and made me feel very comfortable and didn’t rush me they let me take my time talking about my problem.”* (Respondent comments on GP, hospital and mental health services)

*“The college I attend set us up on togetherall and kooth for mental health support, they are quite helpful and readily available. The doctors was very organised for covid, although with the reduced appointment times it is harder to get there from college without missing school.”*

*“My experience with them was good they was really helpful on what i should do and they spoke to me with general chat as well so it wasn’t just silent in the room”* (Respondent comments on GP and sexual health service)

*“I went for a checkup on the condition of my teeth”*

*“Had a phone call appointment with the nurse.”* (Patient discussing their appointment at local GP practice)

*“Used kooth a lot but hospital, doctors have had barely any appointments so haven't been able to do physio”* (Patient commenting on hospital, pharmacy, and mental health support services)

**Q4: Have there been any services you felt you needed to access in the past 12 months, but haven't? This may be because you have chosen not to, or you have been unable to. (Please select all which apply)**

**Q5: Please tell us a bit about why you chose not to access the service/support, or why you weren't able to.**

In terms of question 4, there was a slight shift as 6 of the respondents stated that they felt they needed to access mental health support, but were unable to. A further 4 respondents stated they wished they had been able to access their GP. Other services mentioned included LGBTQ+ support (with 2 respondents mentioning this), in addition to sexual health services, alcohol and drug services, domestic abuse support, and opticians (each with 1 respondent).

The reasoning provided to us as to why the young people did **not** access the services varied greatly. Whilst some answers reflected those we'd heard from other age groups over the past year (for example not wanting to put additional pressures on the NHS and overall reduced capacity), a number also cited not having used the service before as a reason.

A few respondents also mentioned that they were unsure whether the service they required was still open under the guidance at the time, which indicates that some services were not clear in sharing information regarding their operating status.

Responses we received included;

*“I have been too busy.”* (Respondent comments about mental health services)

*“I don't like to share my feelings”* (Respondent comments about mental health services)

*“I have been aiming to get diagnoses for mental health and a learning disability, but the difficulty getting appointments at, and then physically getting to my GP, along with how long it takes to get learning difficulty diagnoses as an adult (even as a student) have made it a really daunting task. I also don't want to take up valuable resources in such a difficult time.”*

*“I didn't want to risk catching covid 19.”* (Respondent comments about GP services)

*“I chose not to access this in the end because i figured out i could figure out my problems by myself plus i have my friend and boyfriend to help me figure these out without putting too much pressure on them of course”* (Respondent comments about mental health services)

*“They were booked out for the short time they were completely booked out”* (Respondent comments about opticians)

*“Doing work from home and only need the services when i run out off medication i am very anxious because i dont know how COVID will affect me with my condition”*

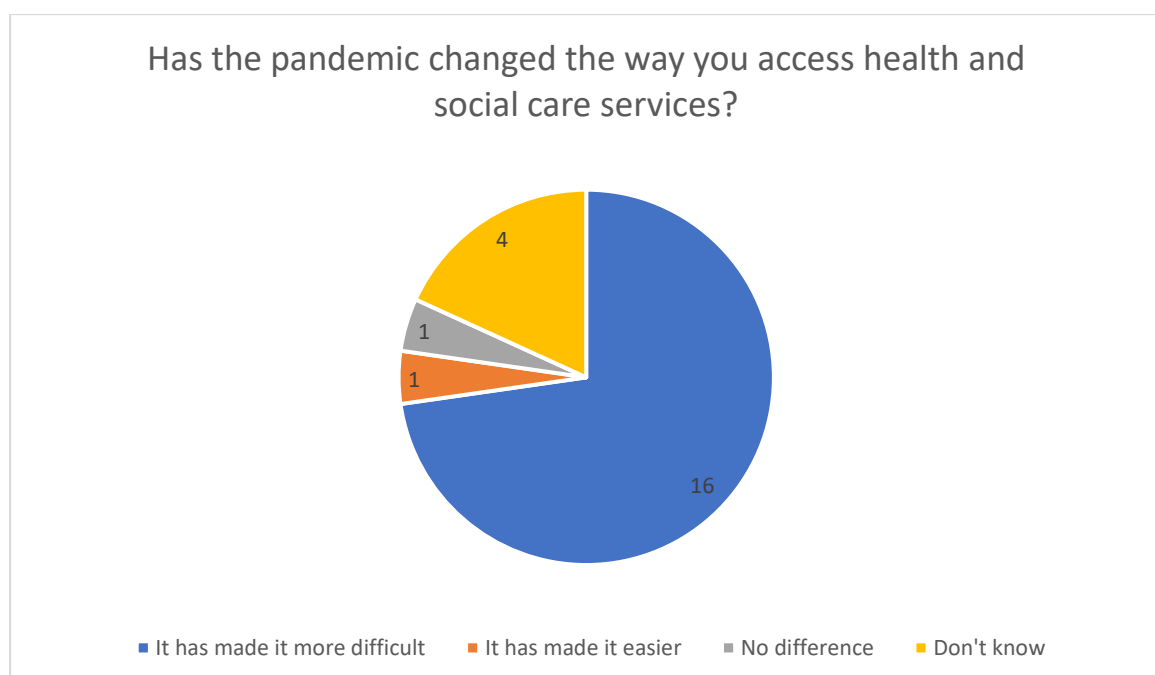
*“Fear of contracting Covid and anxiety of being out and questioned about it”* (Respondent comments about GP, mental health support)

*“Dentist appointment cancelled to Covid-19”*

*“Was a bit afraid havent used some of them before i just put up with them. And with the clinic i wasnt sure if it was open and a privacy thing”* (Respondent comments about GP, sexual health, alcohol & drugs and domestic abuse services)

**Q6: Do you feel that COVID-19 has changed the way you can access health and social care services? (please tick ONE)**

**Q7: Please tell us why**



Some of the responses around why it was more difficult to access services during the pandemic included;

*“You can't see people face to face”*

*“The pressure to not overwhelm health services, combined with the difficulty getting appointments and using public transport”*

*“Because of my anxiety I worry about going into health and social settings .”*

*“its harder to have a face to face conversation with someone.”*

*“You're not allowed to pre book appointments if you ring up you have to go on that day and all the appointments are usually taken by 8:30am”*

*“Because my dad is at risk”*

*“because all the places that I could go to are either (rightfully) closed or (even more rightfully) only open to the deperately sick or critical workers”*

*“Doctors are more hard to reach out to”*

*“A lot of services are currently overrun and I feel as though I would struggle to get in”*

*“Less services running”*

However, one respondent did talk about their positive experience of accessing services, stating;

*“I think it has made accessing things online easier and easier to find information at home, due to increased use in technology.”*

**Q8: Please rate the topics below in order of what you feel is most important to young people (number 1) and what you feel is least important to young people (number 6).**

In addition to asking questions about their lived experiences of services, we also wanted to know what areas/topics the respondents felt were most important to young people.

We provided a list of 6 topics including healthy diet, mental health, sexual health, alcohol & drugs, COVID-19 and education, and asked the respondents to rate them

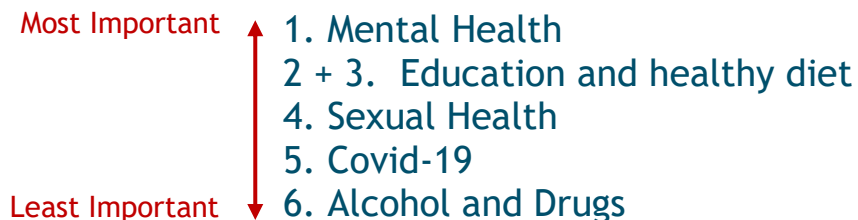


in order from 1 (being the **most** important to young people) through to 6 ( being the **least** important to young people)

Overall, mental health was ranked the most important to young people, with ten respondents rating it as 1, and a further seven as 2 (the top 2 scores). Education and healthy diets were joint second place with ten votes each for the top 2 scores, and alcohol & drugs were scored as the least important, with twelve respondents rating it as a 5 (least important to young people). Sexual health and COVID-19 were scored in the middle.

When asked if there was anything else that they felt was important to young people which was missing from the list, three respondents cited 'family relationships'.

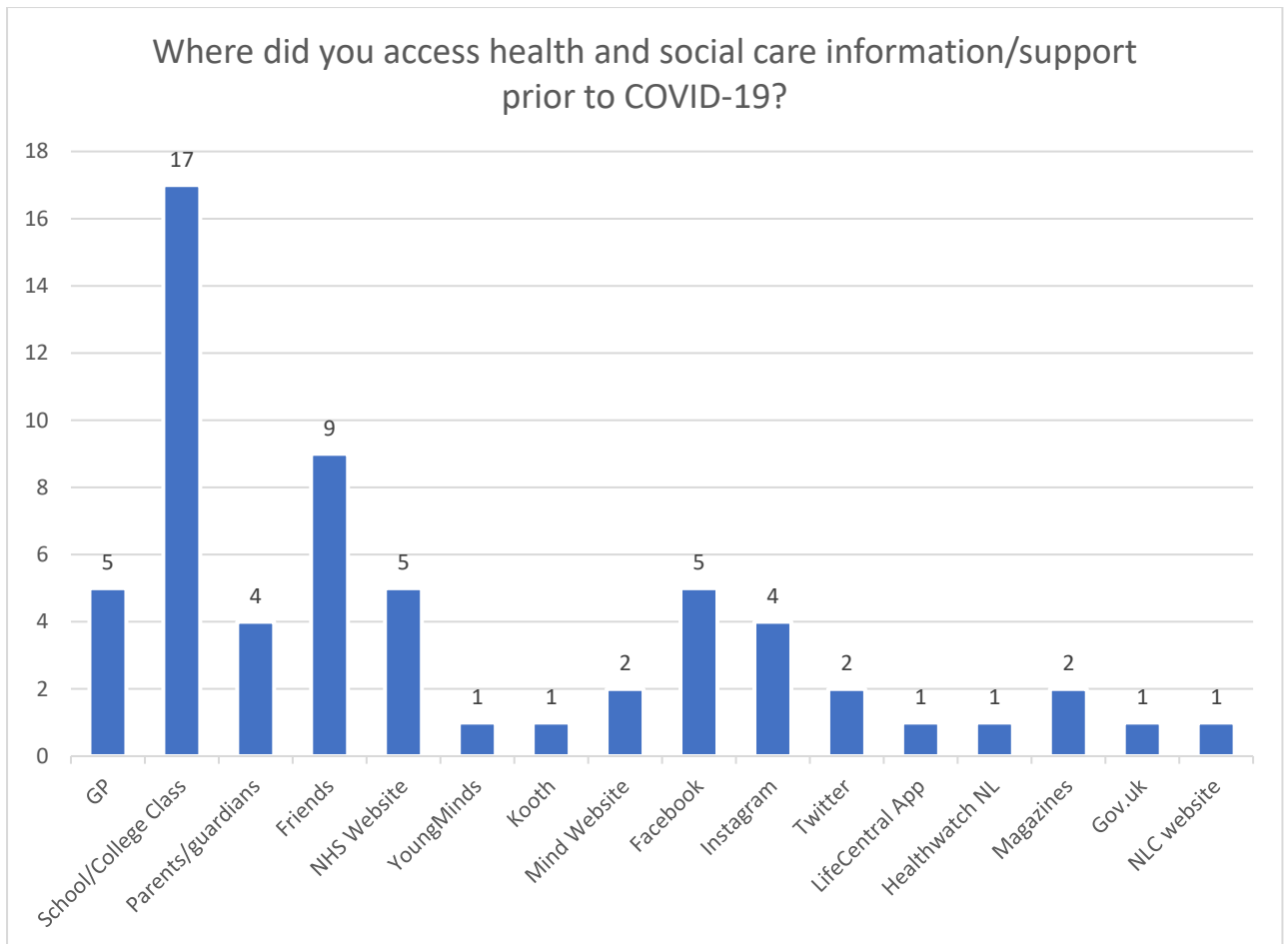
#### Average ranking:



#### ***Q9: BEFORE the COVID-19 pandemic, where did you get information or support about these topics? (Please select all which apply)***

In response to this question, the majority of young people stated that they received information/support from their school or college classes, indicating that for most students, health and social care topics are still part of the curriculum.

Nine respondents also stated that they received information or support from friends, and a further four from their parents. Five respondents stated that pre-COVID-19, they used the NHS website, and the same number of young people also answered that that they'd accessed professionals such as their GP.



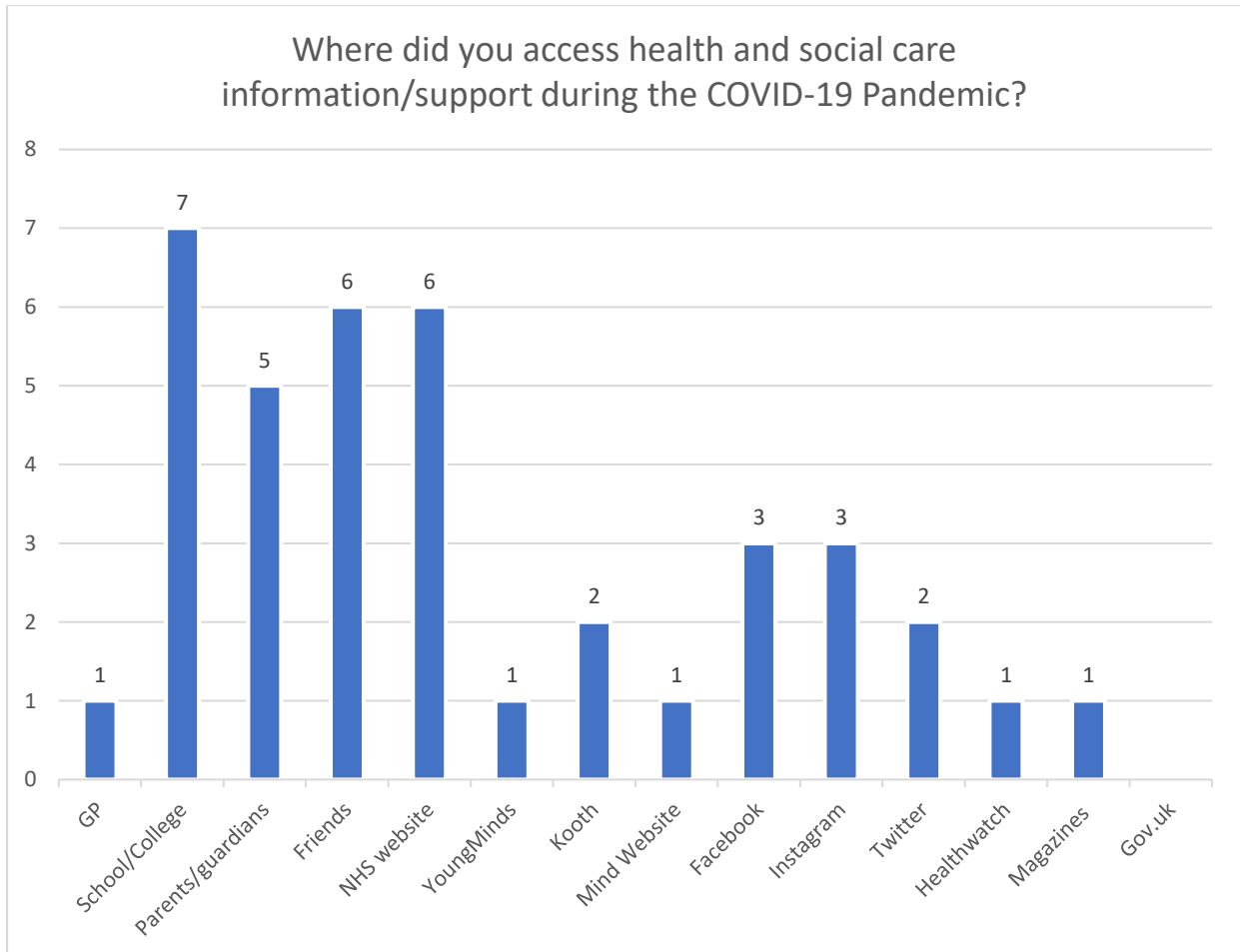
**Q10: Since the pandemic, where do you get information about these topics? (Please select all which apply)**

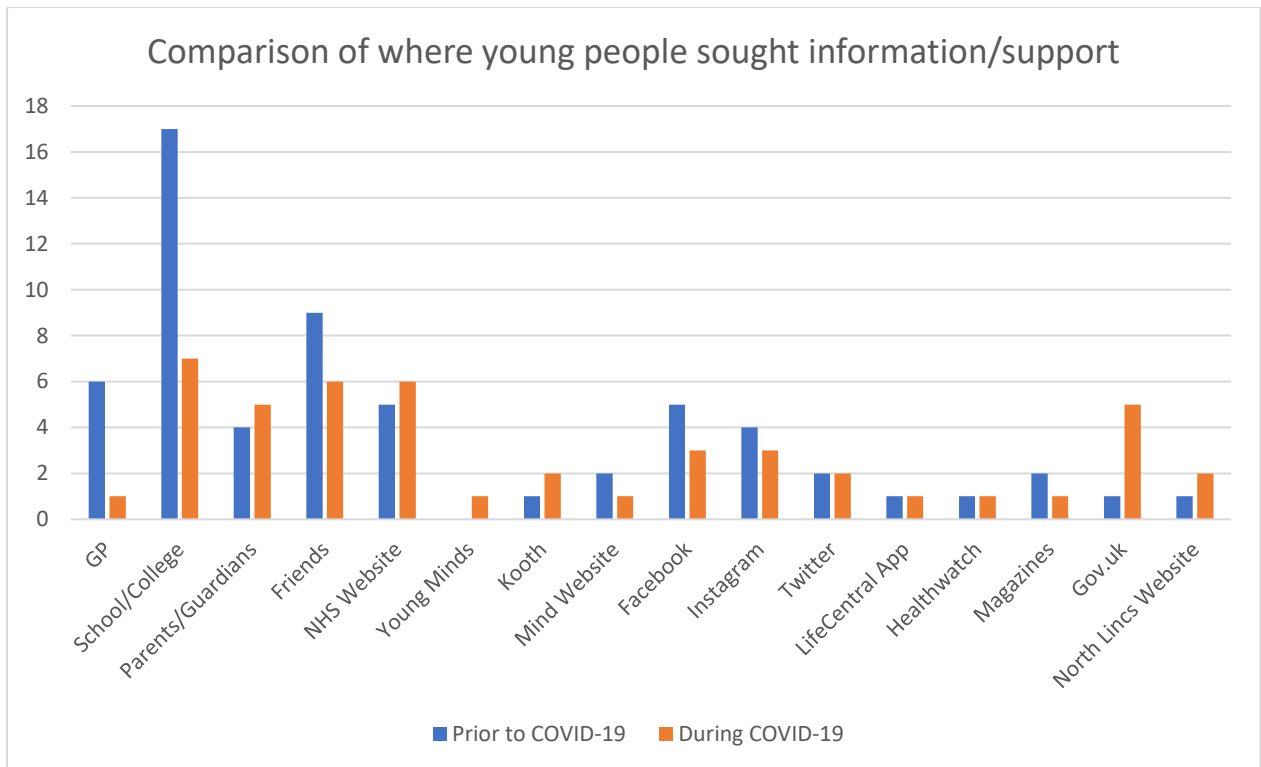
The responses we gathered from this question differed greatly from the previous question, with less than half of the original number of respondents stating that they received information/support from school/college. Whilst this coincides with the national closures of the institutions, it also indicates health and social care classes and resources were less available to students throughout the pandemic.

Instead, there was a slight increase in the number of young people who sought information and support from their parents/guardians, the NHS website and Gov.uk.

As predicted, the number who accessed their GP for information and advice reduced greatly, which correlates with some of the previous statements provided to us by the respondents where they stated that appointments were harder to obtain, and they felt like they did not want to add additional pressure to services.

Interestingly, the number of young people accessing information and support from social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram decreased (twitter remained the same) throughout the pandemic, although we would have expected this to increase due to ease of internet accessibility for most young people.



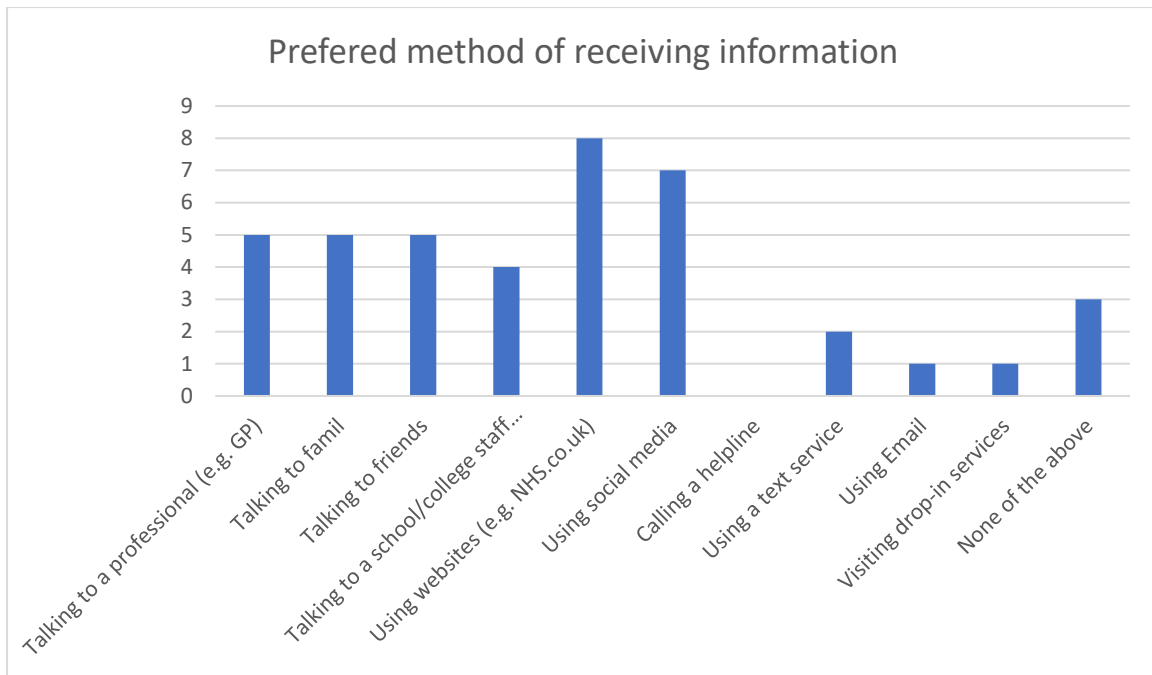


**Q11: Do you have a preferred way of finding out information about health and social care topics? (Please select TWO)**

The answers for this question were relatively spread out with no clear majority. Whilst the most popular option was accessing information through websites such as nhs.co.uk, closely followed by social media, talking to professionals, family and friends were also all rated relatively highly.

None of the respondents who answered selected using a helpline, and only one stated they would use a drop-in service. This confirms to us that needing to physically visit a service provides a barrier for many young people. This could be for a number of reasons, including not having access to transport to reach the service venue.

Although three respondents selected the option ‘None of the above’, they did not provide an alternative when asked.



**Q12: Do you have anything else you'd like to tell us, or do you have any questions about local services and support?**

Only one person answered this question, writing;

*“Online information and services are more helpful for everyday and feel easier to do than having to physically go to talk to someone. More information on online services about how annonymous it is and what will happen with the data would be more reassuring.”*

## Next Steps:

The information gathered from the survey has been useful in helping us to identify areas of greatest concern to young people in North Lincolnshire, and has already been used to inform upcoming work by our Youth Healthwatch Group.

Our small team of members have decided to look at the resources which are available surrounding sexual health and consent, and plan to create a short online survey to find out further information about young people's experiences and opinions. Current questions they have drafted include asking where respondents primarily receive information and advice about sexual health/relationship topics, whether they feel the information they receive is enough, how it could be improved, and what method of communication and support they most prefer.

The survey is due to be published during sexual health week (13<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> September) and will be sent out to schools and colleges across the area.

The young participants have also discussed setting up a social media account to help with the promotion of the survey, in addition to providing a platform to share other useful resources both found and created by the Youth Healthwatch participants.