

How has domestic violence among young people changed as a result of Covid-19?

July 2021



HM Government

ARE YOU EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE & NEED IMMEDIATE HELP? ASK FOR ANI

- STEP 1** If a pharmacy has the **ASK FOR ANI** symbol on display, this means they are ready to help.
- STEP 2** Approach a member of staff and **ASK FOR ANI**.
- STEP 3** They will offer you a private space, provide a phone and ask if you want a 999 police response or to speak to a domestic abuse support helpline.

For further information
VISIT: [GOV.UK/DOMESTIC-ABUSE](https://gov.uk/domestic-abuse)

Action Needed Immediately

#YOUARENOTALONE 

Report by Central Bedfordshire students working with Young Healthwatch

Introduction

We are five students currently studying at Central Bedfordshire College on various courses. Different groups of students from the College have been working with Young Healthwatch for several months on varied research projects. Our research group wanted to make a positive impact and to talk about the current issues around domestic violence among young people, and whether this has changed as a result of Covid-19.

We were particularly interested in this issue as it is something that is very current and an incredibly important issue to talk about. We are hoping that our research can provide genuine information and advice, as well as give recommendations on where to find support, and how to access it.

The Office for National Statistics stated that crime data, reported by the police, shows there has been an increase in domestic abuse-related cases during the Covid-19 pandemic¹. There has also been a gradual increase in domestic abuse related offences over recent years. The national statistics for domestic abuse stated that victims said that perpetrators had used the pandemic as a tool for abuse.

There are many strands within domestic abuse, for example, a parent, carer or step parent can mistreat you or a sister, brother/step sibling/half sibling, or anyone else that you live with - a family member or someone who lives in your house. It could also be abuse from your whole family or the wider community if they think you are bringing shame to them, or you could be coerced to marry someone that you don't know.

Domestic abuse can include all of the following:

- ◇ Coercive control
- ◇ Stalking & harassment
- ◇ Economic abuse
- ◇ Physical abuse
- ◇ Emotional abuse
- ◇ Forced Marriage
- ◇ 'Honour' Based Abuse
- ◇ Sexual abuse

The Public Health Emergency Covid-19 Initiative stated that reports of domestic abuse and of family violence has increased since quarantine and social isolation measures have come into place. Due to the social isolation measures that were implemented across the globe in order to help decrease the spread of Covid-19, people that were living in volatile situations of family violence were restricted to their homes. Social isolation made people more vulnerable as there was limited family support available.

We hope this report will give an insight into how domestic violence among young people has changed, and to talk about what we found out from our research, providing an honest and open look at this issue. As a result, we are hoping to raise more awareness, to get more people thinking about this issue and to do something about it.

If you are a young person who lives in a household where there is domestic abuse, you will be affected by what you are experiencing. If this is happening to you please note the following:

- ◇ **Speak to someone you feel that you can trust.**
- ◇ **Don't be afraid of reaching out for support as this might help everyone in your home.**
- ◇ **If you or anyone in your household is in immediate danger call the police on 999.**



¹ Domestic abuse during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, England and Wales: November 2020. Indicators from a range of data sources to assess the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on domestic abuse in England and Wales. [Domestic abuse during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/domestic-abuse-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-england-and-wales)

What We Did

Due to government restrictions relating to the pandemic, this report was co-ordinated remotely. The group met once a week via MS Teams and worked on our own parts of the project intermittently.

We began by conducting online research in order to discover new and existing information, then we developed an online survey to be widely distributed to our network of young people in Central Bedfordshire. We also directly spoke with the Domestic Abuse Outreach Worker for Central Bedfordshire Council to better understand the different forms of domestic abuse and type of support available.

The purpose of our research was to find out about young people's experiences of domestic abuse during Covid-19 and how it may have affected them. This helped us to decide what questions to include in our survey.

By using our research, analysing the survey results, in addition to talking with the Domestic Abuse Outreach Worker at Central Bedfordshire Council, we were able to gain a better understanding of how Covid-19 has impacted young people's experience of domestic abuse.

A copy of the full survey used can be found at [Appendix A](#).

**1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men
will experience domestic
abuse in their lifetimes**

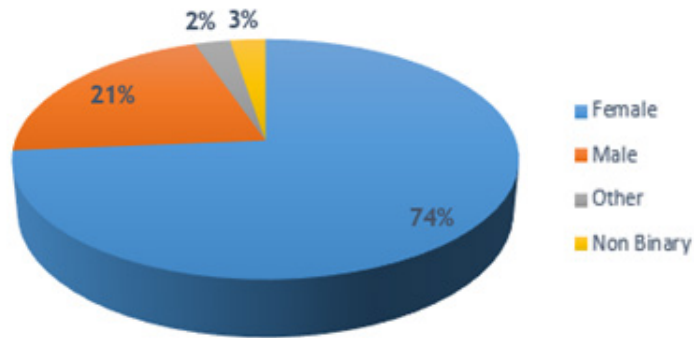


Analysis of Survey Findings

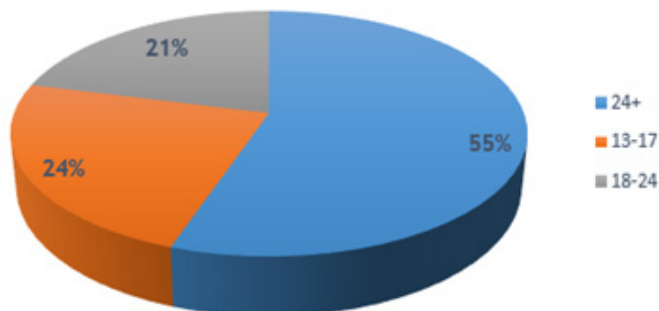
The survey was widely distributed via many social media platforms and sent directly to various contacts by email. In total, 38 participants completed our survey, aged between 13 and 24+ years old.

A full analysis of the survey results is detailed below:

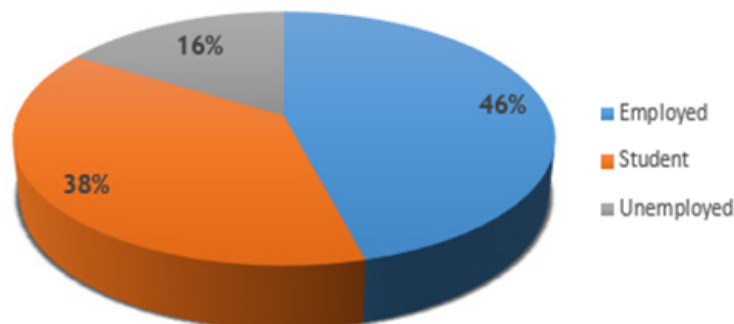
In **Question one**, the majority of the survey responses identified themselves as being female (74%), 21% male, and the remainder 'other' (2%) or non-Binary (3%).



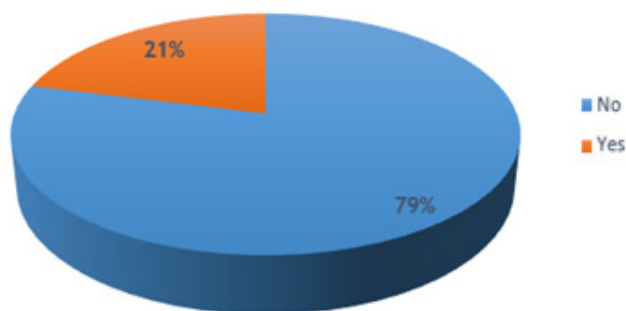
In **Question two**, people were asked which age group applies to them. There was an equal spread of under 24 years old, 21% 18 – 24 years old, and 24% 13 to 17 year olds. The majority were 24 years old and over (55%).



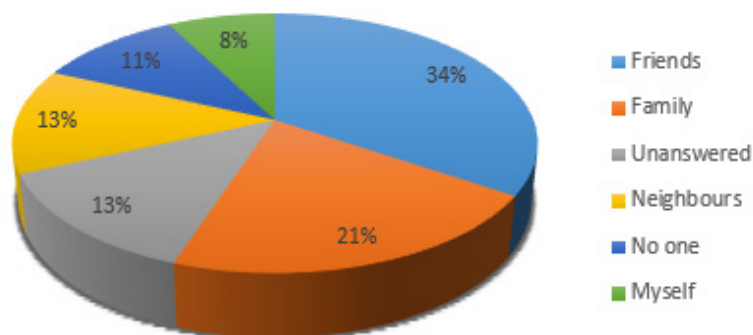
Question three showed the majority of respondents to the survey were employed (46%), with 38% students, and a smaller amount unemployed (16%).



Question four asked if respondents had ever been a victim of domestic abuse. In response to this question, the majority of people said ‘No’ representing 78% or 30 people. A far smaller amount, 21% said ‘yes’, of which 6 were female, 1 male and 1 identified as other.



In **Question five**, people were asked if they knew of someone who has been a victim of domestic abuse. The majority of respondents knew friends (34%), family (21%) or neighbours (13%) who had been a victim of domestic abuse. It is worth noting 8% reported themselves as being victims of domestic abuse.



In **Question six**, people were asked what type of domestic abuse was the person/s a victim of.

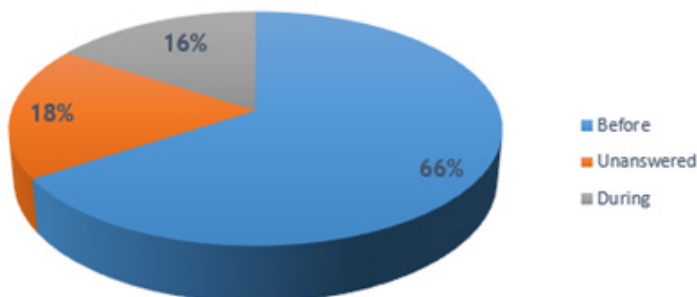
The responses from the survey were categorised into six main types of abuse which were:

- ◇ **Physical**
- ◇ **Sexual**
- ◇ **Psychological**
- ◇ **Emotional/verbal**
- ◇ **Financial**
- ◇ **Controlling abuse**

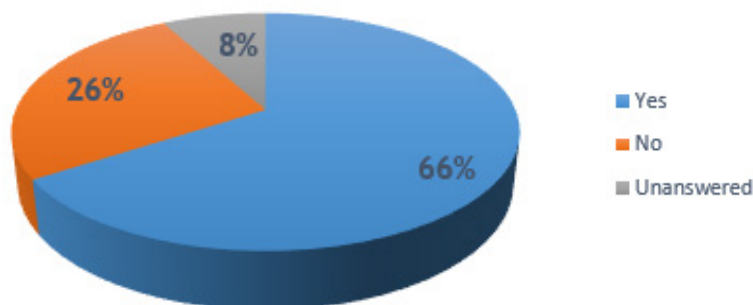
The results of our survey showed the most common type of domestic abuse was emotional/verbal, as the majority of people who answered this question responded that they were a victim, or knew someone who was a victim, and were experiencing emotional/verbal abuse such as threats, shouting and aggression. The second most common type of abuse was physical, as just under half of respondents said that they were, or knew someone who was, a victim of physical abuse, and they were experiencing violence.

In **Question seven**, people were asked whether they, or someone they knew, was a victim of domestic abuse before the Covid-19 pandemic or during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A fairly large majority (66%) or 25 people said that they were a victim or knew someone who was a victim of domestic abuse **before** Covid-19. A smaller percentage (16%) or six people said they were a victim or knew someone who was a victim **during** Covid-19. Seven people (18%) did not respond to the question.



In **Question eight**, people were asked if they felt being at home had impacted on domestic abuse within the relationship. Results of the survey showed that 25 people (66%) thought that being at home **has had** an impact on domestic abuse within their relationship and 26%, (10 people) felt it had not.



According to national statistics, the crime data which was reported by the police stated that there has been an increase in domestic abuse-related cases during the Covid-19 pandemic². The Women’s Aid England³ stated that the coronavirus pandemic has affected victims of domestic abuse in England. Many victims were impacted during the pandemic and felt that the violence or abuse had become much worse.

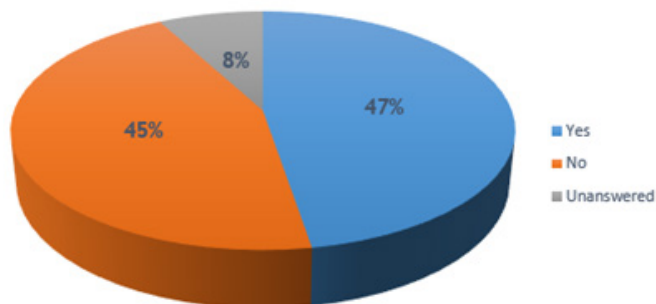
Results of from this question would appear to support recent research that Covid-19 and isolation at home has had a direct impact on the likelihood of domestic abuse.

² Domestic abuse during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, England and Wales: November 2020. Indicators from a range of data sources to assess the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on domestic abuse in England and Wales. [Domestic abuse during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsandstates/articles/domesticabuseduringthecoronaviruscovid-19pandemicenglandandwales)

³ [Impact of Covid-19 - Womens Aid](#)

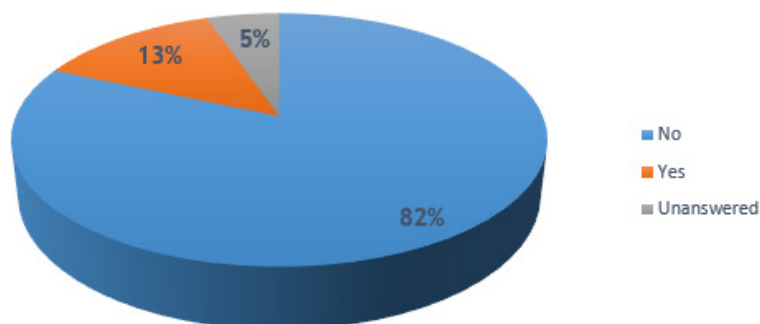
In **Question nine**, people were asked if they thought self-isolation due to Covid-19 restrictions contributed towards a domestic abuse relationship with their family members or their social circle.

The results of the survey show a fairly even split in that 18 people (47%) said that self-isolation due to the Covid-19 pandemic **did** contribute towards a domestic abuse relationship, and 17 people (45%) said that they **did not** think that self-isolation due to Covid-19 contributed towards a domestic abuse relationship with their family members or social circle. 8% of people did not respond to this question.



Question ten asked if people thought that their behaviour projects domestic violence towards someone else.

Interestingly, a very large majority, 31 responders (82%), **do not** believe that their actions or behaviours are considered domestic abuse. Five responders (13%) **do** believe that the actions and behaviours that they commit amongst their social and/or family groups could be considered as domestic abuse.

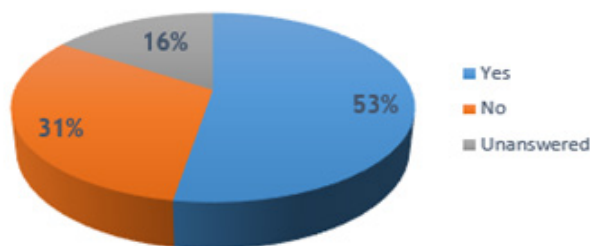


An interesting point of observation in relation to this question is that the majority of those who believed that their actions could be considered domestic abuse were employed professionals above the age of 24. This could suggest that in environments where there is not always direct access to personal support, as can be seen in schools where there will be a welfare team, people may be more likely to be responsible for domestic abuse.

Another interesting observation is that all responders who believed that their behaviour could be considered domestic abuse were female. This could suggest that either females are better equipped to identify behaviours of domestic abuse and self-observe, or it could suggest that males are unaware how their behaviour will be perceived.

It could also imply that the stress and possible lack of social time (free time) that employed adults are subject to, is an influencing factor in the likelihood of domestic abuse.

In **Question eleven**, people were asked if they thought they had received support for domestic abuse during Covid-19. Only 20 people (53%) stated that they felt they **had** received support relating to domestic abuse, and 31%, (12 people) stated they **had not** received support in regard to domestic abuse throughout Covid-19 lockdowns and isolation periods. 16% of people did not answer this question.



In **Question twelve**, people were asked if there was any support that they feel would have been beneficial.

Respondents all felt that further support would be beneficial. This is concerning and highlights the need for further promotion of the support currently available. The most common suggestions were:

- ◇ Easily accessible support services
- ◇ Early education around domestic abuse in schools
- ◇ Counselling

Additional comments received in response to this question were as follows:

‘More education and more accessible help - talk about it in schools - make it easier to raise it.’

‘Advertise support everywhere.’

‘Safer outdoor activities, meeting places, confidential advice line for non-English speaking people on the school curriculum, visible posters in public places, online info of where people can go to get help and support.’

‘Educate young people more, teens and young adults tend to dismiss certain abuse as ‘Banter’ etc.’

‘The Government should do more to spread awareness of the support services available by implementing more visual marketing.’

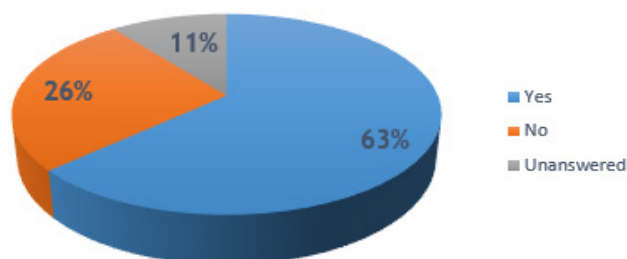
‘Provide more services and advertisement for non-English speaking members of the community.’

‘Ensure better, more frequent collaboration between both voluntary and statutory services.’

In **Question thirteen**, people were asked if they knew where they could find support for domestic abuse.

In response to this question 24 people, 63% of responders, stated that they felt confident finding some type of support for domestic abuse. 10 responders (26%) stated they did not feel they had access to some types of support for domestic abuse. The reasons for this could include having access to support networks like friends and family but not professionals. 11% of people did not answer this question.

For example, one responder said: *‘I think people don’t rely on other people for help over phone calls etc. because once the call ends, the victim is again left with no support.’*



Conclusion

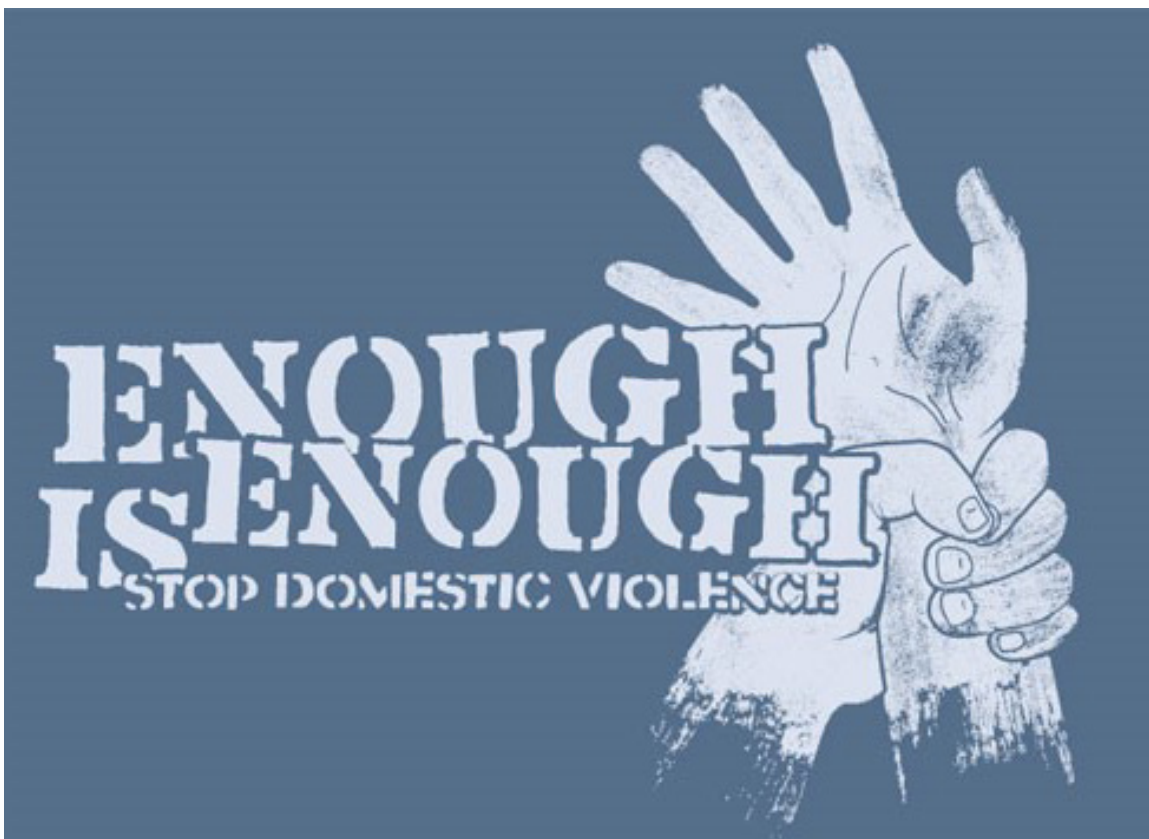
As a group of students from different courses within Central Bedfordshire College, we broke through the challenge of working remotely to come together to research how significant the impact of Covid-19 currently is on domestic abuse among young people.

We believe we achieved our aim in analysing how Covid-19 has had an impact on domestic abuse among young people, and to raise awareness of domestic violence within the local community. Although this is only a snapshot survey, we feel that the survey helped us to achieve our aims and objectives in finding out how large scale the issue was.

Our survey showed that 52% of people felt that they had support and help with regard to domestic abuse during the pandemic however 26% felt they did not. This shows how important it is to spread awareness of the support available for domestic violence, so people are aware of the help they can access. To reinforce this, in our survey, **44% of responders felt that more support would be beneficial.**

The results of our survey also showed how domestic abuse among young people has changed as a result of Covid-19. The survey provided statistical data which showed how many people were suffering from different types of abuse and gave us an insight into the impact of domestic violence among young people. We were not aware of how large scale the issue was and were very surprised how many people suffered from domestic abuse, or knew of someone who had, given the relatively small group of people who responded to the survey, and how Covid-19 has impacted on this.

Our final report will be shared with colleagues and students at the College, which we hope will help to increase discussion and awareness of domestic abuse. We will also be creating a poster to display within the College to support this aim.



List of recommendations for support

Report it!

There is help and support available if you are being abused, are concerned about family, friends or neighbours. If you are worried and need support, please seek help, either from the police or from support organisations.

Did you know there is a gesture you can use to signal for help?

It has been well documented that the Covid-19 pandemic has led to increased violence at home.

The Signal for Help is a one-handed sign a person can use on a video call to silently show they need help and want someone to check in with them in a safe way. Holding your hand up to the camera with your thumb tucked into your palm, and then folding your fingers down and trapping your thumb in your finger.

This hand signal can be used anywhere, and others who see this sign could call the police right away or do something to help you.



People who are experiencing domestic abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic can walk into any Boots branch in the UK from May 1st and ask the pharmacist if they can use the consultation room. Once inside the room, all the specialist domestic abuse support information will be available and if the person needs to contact a domestic abuse support service, they can 'make that call safely'.

Other places where you can get help are:

Talk to your school's student services, teacher or anyone you trust.

You can find more information and what help is available from the organisations below:

- ◇ Sorted Counselling Services Bedfordshire (sortedbedfordshire.org.uk)
- ◇ BEDFORDSHIRE DOMESTIC ABUSE PARTNERSHIP <https://bedsdv.org.uk/>
- ◇ Youth Services across Central Bedfordshire Youth services | Central Bedfordshire Council
- ◇ National Domestic Abuse Helpline www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk Tel : 0808 2000 247
- ◇ Women's Aid <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/>
- ◇ Men's Advice Line <https://mensadviceline.org.uk/>
- ◇ Victim Support www.victimsupport.org.uk Tel: 0808 1689 111

YOUNG healthwatch Central Bedfordshire

Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire exists to make health and social care services work for the people that use them, especially young people.

Our role is to ensure that local decision makers and health and care services put the experiences of young people at the heart of their work.

We believe no one should be afraid to speak up because our opinion is as good as anyone else's.

Our volunteers have received appropriate 'Enter & View' training and are keen to put their learning into practice by visiting health and social care services such as hospital wards, surgeries and care homes. The young people will then be able to report their findings from their unique perspective. If you would like a group of young Healthwatch volunteers to visit your service please contact Eleanor.Ryles@healthwatchcentralbedfordshire.org.uk.

There is a lot more information on the Young Healthwatch website, <https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/young-healthwatch>, including the great achievement of one of our volunteers who has secured a fantastic apprenticeship with Cancer Research UK.

If you are under 25, why not consider becoming a member of Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire? Get in touch for more information, email Eleanor.Ryles@healthwatchcentralbedfordshire.org.uk or call 0300 303 8554.



Appendix A - Survey Questions

Question 1: What is your gender?

- ◆ Female
- ◆ Male
- ◆ Other
- ◆ Non-binary

Question 2: Which age group applies to you?

- ◆ 13-17
- ◆ 18-24
- ◆ 24+

Questions 3: Please select the below that applies to you:

- ◆ Employed
- ◆ Unemployed
- ◆ Student

Question 4: Have you ever been a victim of domestic abuse?

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ No

Question 5: Do you know someone who has been a victim of domestic abuse?

- ◆ Friends
- ◆ Family
- ◆ Neighbours
- ◆ No one
- ◆ Myself

Question 6: What type of domestic abuse was the person/s a victim of?

Question 7: Were you or someone you know a victim of domestic abuse before Covid-19 pandemic or during Covid-19 pandemic?

- ◆ Before
- ◆ During

Question 8: Do you think that being at home has impacted on domestic abuse within the relationship?

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ No

Question 9: Do you think self isolation due to Covid-19 contributes towards a domestic abuse relationship with your family members or your social circle?

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ No

Question 10: Do you think your behaviour projects domestic violence towards someone else?

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ No

Question 11: Do you think you have support for domestic abuse during Covid-19?

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ No

Question 12: Is there any support that you feel would be beneficial?

Question 13: Do you know where you can find support for domestic abuse?

- ◆ Yes
- ◆ No

The team who carried out the project and wrote the report meeting every week on MS Teams:



