



Talent Match Plus
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TALENT MATCH LIVERPOOL

Social Return on Investment Covid Case Study Report 3

July 2020

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This is the third report produced by ARK Consultancy (ARK), which has captured and calculated the social return on investment (SROI) relating to individual case studies, representative of those young people engaged with Talent Match.
- 1.2 This report is focusing on the Covid-19 pandemic and the multi-agency continued support provided for young people during the Covid lockdown March 2020 to July 2020. We have undertaken national research considering the future likely economic and worklessness/skills impact on young people nationally and in Liverpool.

2 COVID-19 PANDEMIC

2.1 NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

- 2.1.1 Numerous reports have highlighted the impact that Covid-19 has had, and will continue to have, on young people. The lockdown has had a negative impact on young people's mental health and wellbeing for numerous reasons. Some have lacked safe spaces after being forced to stay at home, others have experienced significant loneliness and isolation, through not having the finances, ICT equipment or skills to keep in contact with significant others.
- 2.1.2 The financial impact has resulted in some young people being unable to access basic amenities such as food or pay household bills. These same reports also suggest a reduction in service provision for young people, impacting on their ability to access someone to talk to, in addition to the provision of mental health and financial support services.
- 2.1.3 The ability to access these services is recognised as being imperative to prevent them slipping into poverty and declining mental health. In the longer term, there are significant concerns around the future for young people with Covid-19 having a disproportionate impact on employment opportunities. Some of these concerns have recently been addressed by the Chancellor, who has unveiled several packages aimed at employment and training for young people.
- 2.1.4 **Appendix 1** summarises the research conducted, and views expressed by several organisations relating to the impact of Covid-19 on young people and the youth sector, mental health, employment, including Youth UK, NSPCC and the World Economic Forum.

2.2 LIVERPOOL TALENT MATCH

- 2.2.1 A recent survey completed by the team at Liverpool Talent Match, considered the impact of lockdown has echoed the national findings. The team reported an increase or exacerbation of mental illness, and a loss of coping mechanisms and motivation.
- 2.2.2 Mentors reported an increase in isolation and loneliness with some participants lacking safe space due to challenging relationships at home and financial hardship.

2.2.3 During this period, Liverpool Talent Match have adapted their services to ensure they could continue to provide a consistent person for young people to talk to, and help in accessing much needed support and services during lockdown. The team have found creative ways to stay connected and engage their clients, they have identified several positive outcomes that have come from their new ways of working.

2.2.4 **Appendix 2** provides the results of the Talent Match survey.

3 COVID-19 SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

3.1 The SROI framework captures the outcomes and applicable social value for individuals, communities and stakeholders, which is based on the Housing Association Charitable Trust (HACT) methodology, DWP Data, The New Economics Foundation and the Centre for Crime and Justice. This includes wellbeing valuations which reflect health and wellbeing factors. The framework is detailed in previous reports.

3.2 MYA and LCR Talent Match Plus evaluation framework focuses on a range of training and employment definitions aligned to the HACT wellbeing outcomes. Also incorporated are individual, health, crime and housing public sector related saving definitions.

3.3 CASE STUDY ASSESSMENT

3.3.1 Mentors have provided information relating to 9 individuals receiving ongoing support through Covid-19. We have considered the support pre-Covid any changes identified and recorded impacting on the person during the March to July 2020 lockdown.

3.3.2 A summary of each participants journey is detailed below, the individual social return on investment value has been assessed and recorded against each case study. We have detailed any feedback directly attributable to Covid-19 lockdown, where available.

Covi Case Studies	SROI Value £££
<p>Case Study 23 – female aged 29, joined the programme in February 2020, lives with her partner and 3 young boys. GP has supported her in engaging with mental health services. Since engaging with TM she has commenced an NHS pre-employment training course, and supported her partner into employment. The family have engaged with Elevate and Addvanced Solutions, her confidence has improved, and she is feeling more in control of her life.</p> <p>Covid has had a huge impact on the family, they have struggled for money and during a call with TM, it was apparent that the family had no food. TM arranged for a food parcel to be delivered. Wellbeing packages including sweets and play materials for the children have been provided.</p>	<p>£40,287</p>

Covi Case Studies	SROI Value £££
<p>Mum states “I am contacting you just to say that G has worked closely with me before and during the pandemic, I cannot fault her. She has gone out of her way to ensure that I am okay mentally and physically, helping me with food banks and ensuring we have food for me, my partner and children, amongst many kind gestures. I can’t think of a way I can repay her kindness with my limited finances. She is a credit to your company, she inspires me for the faith she has in me, which I cannot tell you how much this means. My future aspirations are to have a full-time job teaching, childminding or helping children with mental health issues.”</p>	
<p>Case Study 24 – young female aged 22, joined TM in March 2020, just before lockdown. Presented with learning difficulties, suffered from anxiety and depression and low confidence levels. Awaiting a diagnosis for ADHD. Since engaging with TM she has attended regular personal and social development sessions, and is studying for her Maths and English qualifications. She has engaged with Elevate and Advanced Solutions, her confidence and overall health has improved, and she is feeling more in control of her life.</p> <p>She needed help to socialise through raising her confidence and started some art classes and is receiving coaching from Advanced solutions.</p> <p>Covid lockdown happened and TM moved PSD on line including artwork classes, she engaged well and commenced her Maths and English qualifications. She has made excellent progress and is looking to engage with the employability team to explore apprenticeships. She has weekly phone appointments to ensure that effective communication continues, and TM are helping her to manage her daily life with ADHD and wrap around support.</p> <p>Covid has created challenges for young people moving from face to face appointments to phone or Zoom catch ups, and online training. TM have run online quizzes and drop in chats online for people who have felt isolated or down. If TM had disengaged, she may have struggled to continue to achieve her goals.</p>	£33,846
<p>Case Study 25 – young male aged 17, joined TM in 2019, a hidden NEET. He presented with anxiety and depression and low confidence levels having lost his father. Since engaging he volunteers regularly at Rugby club, he has engaged with Elevate and YPAS/MYA, he is doing a lot of sport which has helped to improve his confidence and general health. He has gained a Level 3 Paediatric First Aid qualification, Level 2 Food Hygiene and a qualification in Customer Services. He is currently attending the NHS Employability course. He is feeling more in control of his life.</p>	£54,793

Covi Case Studies	SROI Value £££
<p>Since Covid, this impacted on his level of interest and he was sleeping a lot. TM helped him to keep a routine, he joined in quizzes and has weekly calls with his mentor. He is applying for funding to help him with career aspirations and he is feeling motivated.</p>	
<p>Case Study 26 – young female aged 19, joined TM in January 2020, she had been asked to leave home by her mother and was technically homeless. She presented with anxiety and low confidence levels, she had got into debt as a result of her partners drug habit, which had resulted in her losing a job.</p> <p>Since engaging with TM she is attending voluntary groups regularly, completed employability training with Elevate and engaged with YPAS/MYA, she went on walking groups, attended zoom sessions, and through her engagement with Elevate she secured full time employment as a care worker.</p> <p>Her confidence has improved and anxiety reduced, she is happy to be employed.</p>	<p>£73,063</p>
<p>Case Study 27- young male aged 23, joined TM in February 2019, he was previously isolated, spending 24 hours in his bedroom, suffered with anxiety and depression, low confidence levels. He experienced bullying at school, left with very few qualifications. LGBT, he enjoys drag and since joining TM has received support with beauty, introduced to a drag artist who has helped him build confidence and be himself.</p> <p>TM have funded an Instagram makeup course, helped to secure work experience and achieve beauty qualifications, he has engaged with Elevate, YPAS and his confidence and overall health has improved. He has a better relationship with his mother, and now travels into Liverpool and Manchester; a real achievement.</p> <p>Prior to Covid he only engaged via WhatsApp, he now engages over the telephone, and is using zoom. Improving his communication skills and confidence levels.</p>	<p>£66,549</p>
<p>Case Study 28 – young male aged 21, joined TM in January 2020. He lost his mum and was made homeless, seeking support from the YMCA who referred him to TM.</p> <p>He presented as an ex-offender, on medication for anxiety, experienced low confidence, a lack of family support and he felt he had no control over his life. Since joining TM, he has received grief counselling for bereavement and financial support to buy clothing for a job interview. His confidence has improved, he now has a flat, stopped smoking. He feels more in control of his life.</p>	<p>£126,099</p>

Covi Case Studies	SROI Value £££
<p>He completed a Level 3 Paediatric qualification and has secured full time employment. He values the support received from TM staff, they were only a phone call away when needed, enabled him to meet new people and helped him to secure work.</p> <p>During Covid TM sent out rescue packs, they had regular catch up over the telephone, secured accommodation during this period, and a full-time job.</p>	
<p>Case Study 29 – male aged 31, joined TM in 2017, he experienced abuse from a young age to late teens, this defined his adult life. He went through a long court case to convict the person and this impacted badly on family relationships. Experienced benefit issues and addicted to drugs (marijuana) which impacted on his mental health. Attempted suicide. Received a diagnosis of PTSD and is now receiving trauma medication and support from YPAS. Has low confidence levels and a lack of control over his life, he owed rent arrears and other debts which impacted on his ability to be rehoused.</p> <p>Since joining TM his confidence and overall health has improved, his drug dependency has reduced, and housing and financial situation improved. He is feeling more in control of his life.</p> <p>During Covid his anxiety levels increased, experiencing financial issues, TM provided food parcels and support with gas and electric costs. They were in touch daily via zoom to enable them to see him and keep in touch. His therapy was continued over the telephone. He is now talking about the possibility of going to University which is a massive step as previously he found it hard to look one day ahead.</p>	£71,970
<p>Case Study 30 – young male aged 19, joined TM in January 2020, diagnosed with autism, he struggled in social situations. Suffered with anxiety particularly when meeting new people, he had previously attended courses that were not really for him because he is quiet and doesn't like to say no. He was referred to Talent Match by JCP.</p> <p>Since engaging with TM he has been referred for counselling and road map sessions, attended AS courses, he now regularly takes exercise, running and walking, his confidence and overall health have improved.</p> <p>He gained a qualification Level 1 in Budgeting and was working hard to meet new people, attending the gym helped. His future aspirations are to secure full time work, he has been referred to Elevate now that his confidence is improving.</p>	£83,880

Covi Case Studies	SROI Value £££
<p>Covid impacted negatively on his anxiety levels and he received a one-off counselling session to help him during this period. PSD sessions were adapted and delivered through zoom including yoga and general fitness sessions. He really enjoyed these once engaged.</p>	
<p>Case Study 31 – female aged 21, joined TM in September 2019. Presented with Tourette’s. She had not left the house for 2 years the tics developed in college and impacted badly on her mental health, eating disorders, self-harm and attempted suicide. She was also bullied.</p> <p>TM helped to secure PIP, she accessed massages, one to one therapeutic session, which helped the tics. She began to work with YPAS which have really helped with confidence levels. She has started to take public transport and meet with friends for a meal or walk. She is on NHS Traineeship course. Her confidence has improved, and anxiety reduced, she is feeling more in control of her life.</p> <p>During Covid lockdown her mentor spoke to her every other day, extra support was provided by YPAS, she attended Zoom courses and completed the NHS traineeship programme, her aspirations are to move into volunteering.</p>	<p>£68,314</p>

- 3.3.3 The Talent Match survey feedback, detailed in **Appendix 2** and the comments incorporated within the case studies provides evidence that TM and partners were able to adapt quickly to continue and deliver services remotely. Utilising social media platforms and new technologies, for example Zoom meetings, enabled them to stay in regular contact with people, supporting them with increased anxiety levels.
- 3.3.4 There are examples where those young people who struggle to communicate and socially interact benefited from the lockdown and virtual contact, they completed qualifications and training courses.
- 3.3.5 Continued support with job search helped people to secure employment, and ongoing financial help aided with food parcels and bill payment, where those individuals or families were struggling financially.
- 3.3.6 Consideration will be given to future operating methods and practices providing a flexible approach to interaction and support services.

3.4 SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT CASE STUDY VALUE

- 3.4.1 The total SROI value in relation to these 9 Covid-19 case studies is £618,801, an average of £68,755, this is a higher value than the first and second tranche which averaged £48,843. Anecdotally this could be impacted positively by people's confidence, overall health and wellbeing improving, coupled with the completion of qualifications during lockdown. However, further research would be required to drill down to this level of detail.
- 3.4.2 The combined case study social value reflecting the 31 case studies assessed to date equals £1,693,364, providing an average individual value of £54,624.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 In conclusion, the challenges facing TM and delivery partners going forward and reflected in **Appendix 1**, will be the economic environment and employment landscape, increased redundancies, reduction in jobs and apprenticeships. Youth UK highlighted that 88% of organisations who support young people indicated that they are likely, or very likely, to reduce service provision and 86% indicated that they were engaging young people virtually.
- 4.2 The Resolution Foundation found that one third of 18-24-year olds having lost their jobs or been furloughed in comparison with 1 in 6 prime age adults.
- 4.3 The ability to respond quickly to the new packages aimed to support young people into training and employment, including increased Traineeships and the Kickstart scheme, will be important factors for consideration. It is also highly probable that TM will see an increase in referrals from those young people displaced and struggling to cope with job loss, relationship breakdown and increased anxiety and mental health issues.

ARK Consultancy Limited
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APPENDIX 1 – IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON YOUNG PEOPLE

YOUTH UK published ‘The impact of Covid-19 on young people and the youth sector’ (YOUTH, 2020) in April 2020. The report highlighted the predicted impact on young people which included:

- Increased mental health or wellbeing concerns
- Increase loneliness and isolation
- Lack of safe space – including not being able to access services and safe space at home
- Challenging family relationships
- Lack of trusted relationship or someone to talk to
- Increased social media or online pressure
- Higher risk of engaging in gangs, substance misuse, carrying weapons or other harmful practices
- Higher risk for sexual exploitation or grooming.

They also highlighted that 88% of organisations that supported young people indicated they are likely, or very likely, to reduce service provision and 86% indicated that they were engaging young people virtually.

More recently, the Office for National Statistics in May (Statistics, 2020) published “Coronavirus and the social impacts on young people in Great Britain” and young people’s (age 16-29) main concerns were the effect on:

- School or university (24%)
- Their wellbeing (22%)
- Work (16%)
- Household finances (16%)

In terms of wellbeing, young people were much more likely than those aged 30-59, and those aged over 60, to report being bored (76%) and lonely (51%), they were also much more likely to say lockdown was making their mental health worse (42%). Young people were generally more optimistic than older age groups about how long they expect the effect of the pandemic to last, and over half of them (55%) reported they expect their lives to return to normal within 6 months.

The NSPCC (NSPCC, 2020) reported in May that they had delivered almost 7,000 counselling sessions about coronavirus with children and young people and found the difficult circumstances that young people are already facing such as abuse, domestic violence and difficult family relationships, have been exacerbated during lockdown, leaving them feeling alone and trapped.

Similarly the World Economic Forum (Daniels, 2020) in June suggested that it is vulnerable young people, particularly those most at risk from what the National Youth Agency labels the “toxic trio” of addiction, mental health issues and domestic abuse, who will require the most substantial and pressing support during the pandemic. “In an emergency situation this support will need to be accessible in minutes, not weeks (or worse).”

They also suggest quick access to support young people facing economic insecurity is also vital, citing that 26% of 15-24-year olds regularly slip into poverty after paying household

costs and this is compounded by the fact that young people are disproportionately impacted by joblessness due to Covid-19.

COVID-19 AND MENTAL HEALTH

Young Minds have conducted 2 surveys with young people investigating the impact Covid-19 has had on mental health. In their most recent report “Coronavirus: impacts on young people with mental health needs” from July 2020 (Minds, 2020), they found young people are under increasing pressure and struggling to get the right support. They conducted a survey with 2,036 young people with a history of mental health needs, between June and July, and they found 80% of respondents agreed that coronavirus had made their mental health worse and this was related to increased feelings of anxiety, isolation, a loss of coping mechanisms or loss of motivation. 87% had felt lonely or isolated and 31% who were accessing mental health support were no longer able to access support, but still needed it.

In response to Covid-19, the Government announced £5m of additional support at the end of March for mental health charities in England, in addition Every Mind Matters platform was updated with Covid-19 guidance and PHE published guidance on supporting children’s and young people’s mental health during the pandemic.

COVID-19 AND EMPLOYMENT

The Health Foundation (Foundation, 2020), in their paper “Covid-19 could have worrying ramifications for young people’s longer term health outcomes”, cite Martina Kane, Policy Lead for Health Foundation “it is concerning that the current crisis is disproportionately affecting employment opportunities for young people. This could have worrying ramifications for young people’s longer-term health outcomes. There is strong evidence that unemployment and poor-quality work can have a negative impact on young people’s mental health. Financial insecurity can result in poor health both now and later in life.” Protecting jobs for young people in the future is therefore imperative.

The Resolution Foundation (Foundation R. , 2020) have found younger and older workers have experienced the brunt of the hit to jobs, with one third of 18-24 year olds having lost their jobs or been furloughed, compared to 1 in 6 prime age adults. The crisis has also affected pay of the youngest and oldest workers the most, with 18-24-year olds being most susceptible to pay swings and over one third having pay reduced compared to 23% of prime age adults.

The findings are echoed by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (AI, 2020), who more recently have looked at the career prospects of young people and found there is growing evidence that economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic are particularly negative for young people due to a number of reasons. These include young people starting out in the labour market have increasingly been working in occupations that are relatively low paid and it is these that have been hardest hit by the pandemic. They say “sharp contractions in shut down sectors will make it harder for young people to take their first step onto the career ladder, while reduced job opportunities will make it harder for them to move into higher paying occupations.”

In response to this the Chancellor has announced several packages aimed to support young people into training and employment, including the Kickstart scheme for 16-24 year olds,

which covers the cost of 25 hours of work a week at national minimum wage which will “allow young people the opportunity to build their skills in the workplace and to gain experience that will improve their chances of going on to find long term sustainable work.” They have also pledged to provide 30,000 new traineeships for young people, giving firms £1,000 for each new work experience placement that they offer.

APPENDIX 2 – TALENT MATCH COVID-19 LOCKDOWN QUESTIONNAIRE

The Talent Match team were asked 8 questions around the impact of lockdown on young people, 16 responses were received from mentors and counsellors. Responses are detailed below, including themes identified, specific quotes and comments:

Q1. What were some of the challenges you faced in your role as a mentor during lockdown?

Remote Engagement with Clients

One of the biggest challenges reported by the team was working remotely with their participants *“the main challenge was not meeting participants face to face”* and *“it was a different experience working without physical interaction”*. Mentors were unable to work with participants face to face, which is important to building trust, particularly when working with new participants *“although contact was maintained over the phone, being in front of someone and being able to see expressions, read body language can tell you a great deal more”* it is *“much harder building initial rapport with the young person”*. One mentor also reported that this has also impacted on new referrals *“I have found a really big challenge is the inability to work face to face, I am unable to recruit, especially with job centres and all companies being closed, and this has been very difficult as I would now have normally recruited a lot more participants and would be achieving all targets and outcomes”*.

However, mentors have been creative in how they have engaged with participants (recognising that maintaining communication and support has been vital over lockdown) in ways that met their participants individual needs such as online, telephone, email and social media platforms. Similarly, the counselling team quickly adapted to delivering one to one appointments and group sessions over the phone, or online, which despite some logistical challenges, once the new way of working was up and running *“I was pleasantly surprised how well it worked”*. The team report that delivering services in this way had meant they could complete more appointments to meet demand and had less non-attendance.

Participant Engagement

Engagement and maintaining engagement have been a challenge as some participants have children (home schooling) and caring responsibilities. Participants *“have no time to be on calls or zoom even for something positive for themselves as they are too busy with children off school”*. Some participants with anxiety have also struggled to engage via phonecalls, others were nervous with zoom sessions, using the camera, some participants lacked IT skills and access to equipment.

Reduction in Opportunities/Services for Young People

There has been a reduction in accessibility to partner services such as employers/training/work opportunities and some services been closed. Being able to support access to crucial services such as benefits has been more challenging, for example, supporting completion of forms etc. over the phone or online and/or being unable to attend appointments with participants.

Mental Health

Most of the mentors reported an impact on mental health *“mental health struggles, some related directly to the pandemic, however, other issues arose indirectly, for example, not being able to access other services, changing nature of the job centre and their processes, routine, sleeping patterns, more use of recreational drugs, lack of physical activity, spending so much time within the home and tensions that inevitably arise with family/friends/partners, not getting out of the house enough, or friction with parents when wanting to see friends too much and risking spread of the virus”*.

Q2. Can you describe some of the ways that you overcome these challenges – including creative ways you engaged with and supported young people during this time?

Use of Technology to Communicate

Mentors used email, telephone, text, WhatsApp, social media etc. to engage with and deliver services to participants. *“I continued to interact with the participants regularly via phone, email and managed to keep most of the people in my caseload”* and *“I created a WhatsApp group which helped to develop positive relationships and friendships”*.

Online Services

Mentors ran social events, weekly challenges, courses, employment support, and personal and social development courses online. This included travel training, pub quiz, mindfulness, yoga, job clubs, traineeship with NHS etc., some of which young people then led and managed themselves *“running online fitness sessions every Friday for an hour, which I have done through lockdown, the young people have really enjoyed”*. They have also offered accessible short online courses, some of which were pre-recorded so *“even the busiest of participants can take one hour a week for themselves”*. The team have been creative in how they have developed these courses. *“Sessions were dynamic and adaptive to meet participants needs”* and have been offered outside of ‘normal’ working hours which has had a positive impact on engagement. Similarly, the counselling team have adapted group sessions to work online and they have also started to develop podcasts.

Increase Signposting to Information

Mentors reported participants becoming anxious watching the news and increased signposting to information *“offered online links to support services, wellbeing, Covid advice, funding, mental health, foodbank services, online learning, job opportunities, qualifications and events etc.”*.

Used Incentives to Engage

Some mentors have used incentives to engage participants, for example, freebies to do an online tutorial or activities that engage the wider family, to enable children to take part with parents.

Closer Working Relationships with Partners

Mentors reported working more closely with internal partners such as ADDvanced solutions and YPAS and external agencies such as food banks to deliver food, resolve housing and financial issues.

Regular Communication and Creating a Routine

Recognising the importance of keeping participants engaged, mentors have ensured regular communication *“my job is to create routines, independence and build confidence in Young People. Lockdown destroyed all routines. This created a lack of motivation and the drive to move forward due to the inability to do anything”*, therefore mentors have been creative in creating routine *“I decided to complete a text message challenge – every morning I would text all my Young People saying morning, describing the weather and asking each one of them to complete a positive act for the day. This was then followed up by a call and a text. All young people engaged, and all enjoyed it”*.

Q3. What, if any, positives do you feel lockdown has brought for how you work with young people? – Will you continue to do anything differently?

Better Understanding of Participants

One mentor said that lockdown *“has definitely given me a deeper insight to how clients feel when they are anxious to go out, similar to how we feel in case we got Covid, it has made me more empathetic and given me a better understanding of how the clients feel and their needs and also how to help them overcome these feelings”*. Another mentor said, *“more awareness of how clients may get used to isolating themselves and long-term unemployment effects to their health and mind set”*.

Keep Some of Services/Offers Online

The technology has always been available, and lockdown provided an ideal time to utilise it and mentors reported that this will continue to complement face to face meetings where appropriate. Some of the online services, including the traineeship, has helped people who are far from being able to engage face to face in groups, it has built young people’s confidence without them having to meet people face to face.

It has also helped mentors consider alternatives to how they signpost and deliver services, such as online training and courses for their participants, which they may find more accessible. *“I think for people who suffer badly from anxiety and to get out of the house, a way of initially working with them could be online, build confidence and then work face to face, rather than having to consider home visits”*. Another mentor reported that they *“managed to break down barriers for young people who are not confident leaving their home by being able to work with them in the comfort of their own home”*. Similarly, the counselling team who hadn’t previously provided therapy online or over the phone prior to lockdown, have found benefits for those clients who struggle to leave their home due to anxiety and so are looking to offer a blended service in the future.

Future Ways of Working

Technology will feature more in how mentors and participants engage in the future, where appropriate. *“The whole experience has made me, and a lot of people, think differently in how we all work, how unnecessarily we travel to meetings, work from different premises”*. The team have been able to continue service delivery albeit in a different way and this has also impacted positively on mentors wellbeing and the amount of quality time they can give to participants.

“I have found I have been in contact with participants even more than usual due to less commuting...I have been in touch with some every day and I have found several have opened up about their mental health and the support I have linked them up to has started

to have a positive effect”. The opportunity to engage more regularly with participants has also been beneficial “speaking with them weekly to see how they have been I feel that as they know you are ringing them weekly it gives them something to look forward to”.

Teamworking

Mentors reported working more closely with internal partners and team members. *“In terms of my colleagues I feel closer in a way, we have checked in with each other and ensured we are doing ok, talked about worries or concerns and there has been regular contact via team meetings... even more of a feeling of being part of a team, of a great programme”.*

Q4. What were some of the general challenges young people faced during lockdown?

Trapped in Unstable Environments

Some young people have had to spend longer periods of time with family who may have addictions or are abusive *“stuck in a toxic home environment”, “where they would usually escape home life situations by visiting friends to escape situations, they cannot cope with ...some broke lockdown to escape this unfortunately”.*

Children Being Off School

Keeping children occupied and homeschooling has been reported by mentors as a challenge.

Fake News and Social Media

Anxiety and fear due to the news and society *“media and news increased anxiety”.*

Lack of Access or Skills Use to Technology

Some participants have been unable to access equipment to enable them to access courses and services *“no IT device or internet access for clients to access our services”.* Some mentors also reported some clients felt uncomfortable and lacked IT skills in using platforms such as zoom (an extension of their fear of speaking on the phone).

Boredom and Isolation

“Boredom was the main challenge and frustration” and “forced isolation instead of having a choice, challenging relationships and lack of access to services in general due to lack of access to IT”.

Anxiety and Mental Health

Anxiety around catching the virus, families catching the virus, using technology etc. have contributed to the impact on participants mental health. *“Some clients coping mechanisms were taken away overnight, such as socialising and going to the gym, some clients re-triggered and felt they had gone backward and struggled with the idea of going back to the world again”.*

Q5. Can you describe some of the ways that supported your mentees to overcome these challenges?

Pay for Services/ICT

This included internet access, IT equipment such as dongles, gym classes on zoom, support packages for food, access to gas and electric.

Accessibility and Tailored Services to Client

Access to a mentor when participants needed it and someone who kept in regular contact. *“Been more accessible and engaged with individuals on the basis of their needs”, “keep clients motivated and share positive things to do while most things are on hold and focus on self and preparing for end of lockdown” . “Offer support and guidance in different ways, encourage people to express how they are feeling, it's ok to cry and be worried, providing reassurance that the way they are feeling is normal and giving perspective that the situation wasn't forever”*. Being able to signpost to much needed services such as counselling quickly has been important and has helped clients gain access to other services such as food banks *“some may have gone hungry and felt completely lost”*.

New Offers

The team created new courses that are fun and engaging online. They offered health and wellbeing advice and activities, sent out weekly activities and exercises, talked about ways to alleviate boredom such as exercise and taking up hobbies such as cooking etc. They also increased personal and social development online courses.

Frequent and Regular Communication and Listening

Crucially mentors provided an opportunity for participants to be heard. *“Listened to frustrations/issues and talked them through”, “some adapted/coped better than others and it was essential that each individual had their needs listened to and where possible, provided the support and resources they needed”*. The counselling team focused on helping clients create new coping strategies to use in lockdown and develop routines.

Q6. Where there any positives that lockdown brought for your mentees?

New Ways of Working

The use of technology opened opportunities for young people, for example access to the NHS Traineeship, for those who may have been apprehensive to engage in face to face groups.

Slower Pace and Time for Self-Growth and Development

Mentors reported for some parents, having the opportunity to spend more time with their children has been beneficial. *“They have learnt so much about themselves and their children”*. For others the slower pace has been beneficial. *“For some with anxiety and autism it calmed them as they preferred a slower pace”*. *“Not having to meet people on a daily basis, time to do things they enjoy and spending time at home”*. For others it has provided an opportunity to think about life and futures. *“For some it provided an opportunity to evaluate their lives and what needs to change”*.

Some participants have come up with new goals i.e. self-employment. Some have found the strength to advocate on behalf of themselves and develop their independence. Others are more motivated to secure work or educational opportunities and one mentor reported their client had more time to dedicate to writing her book *“it will be an exciting time for many as we start to get back to some sense of normality and support them into positive outcomes”*.

Mentors have also encouraged clients to try new things which has brought numerous benefits *“doing things for themselves which they would have never done due to having*

time to do things, what they have wanted to do for themselves such as reading a book, writing, drawing etc.”. Mentors also reported reduced pressure from other services such as DWP and JCP to complete journals, look for work etc. has enabled more time to dedicate to personal development and learning new skills.

Q7. What, if any, do you envisage to be the longer-term impact of lockdown on young people and how can TM/you support them?

Emotional Wellbeing

“I feel there could be a long term affect that people have gotten used to not going out now and it may be difficult to bring them out of homes”. Anxiety to return to the “new normal” was reported by several mentors as participants have got used to reduced social interaction and “some of the participants didn’t find lockdown any different unfortunately to how they usually live and liked the experience of not having the pressure to interact with the outside world”. Mentors also reported a reluctance from people who fear catching the virus or who are shielding. TM can continue to offer their services remotely until people are ready and assess any new issues Covid-19 has presented and support them through these.

Mental Health

Consistently mentors suggest the biggest impact would be on mental health *“emotional wellbeing impacted, mental health made worse, alcohol and drug dependency and an increase in self harm”, “if some are struggling with their mental health anyway during lockdown, that has worsened” and “some have started to struggle since lockdown and its associated challenges”*. Participants have been able to continue to access counselling support or start to access support for the first time and *“for some, this has been a vital lifeline”*.

Mentors can continue to work with participants with empathy and provide a supportive ear, be a constant figure in their lives and help motivate them to think differently, make changes and can continue to swiftly refer and access in-house counselling services. The counselling team reported *“I think, sadly, the mental health effects of lockdown will be felt for quite a while to come. Some who had made a lot of progress before lockdown will regress and some who never had any issues may now have mental health issues. I am aware some participants have lost family to Covid-19. Counsellors, in general, have been advised to brush up on loss and grief theories and brace ourselves for more referrals in the coming months. I also expect the job situation worsening will also impact on mental health. I feel TM is well placed to help in the next year and as a therapist I feel I can help with the mental health needs”*.

Employment and Finances

Mentors consistently reported a lack of job opportunities will have major impacts *“they will be further away from the ever-changing job market”*. However, mentors can capitalise on the new government initiatives, such as traineeships and kickstart scheme.

However, the team are confident that they can meet these challenges, *“Talent Match offer a wraparound support, we are flexible, and we are constantly adapting to support our Young People. I am confident that we can support our young people through our facilities and our passion and ability to work with Young People”, “I feel that we have been*

ready to adapt to different ways of doing things in the future especially if the pandemic is to be a reoccurring theme in our lives. We and our partner agencies will be flexible and innovative to support young people and colleagues in an ever-changing world”.

Q8. What do you feel could/would have happened to your mentees if TM/you hadn't been accessible during the lockdown period?

Mental Health

Mentors consistently reported that there would have been a negative impact on mental health without access to mentors and counselling service *“greater mental health, depression, stress, isolation, relationship problems with no-one to talk to about problems”* and *“frustration may have led to negative or harmful behaviours”*. Some mentors reported clients experiencing suicidal thoughts. *“The number of referrals I have made for mental health related support has shown that many have struggled. For a couple of participants, I am not sure they would have made it through lockdown without the one to one support available to them on Talent Match”*. Access to the Counselling services have been invaluable.

Loneliness and Isolation

For some participants they would have been completely alone. *“Without the regular communication clients may have become more withdrawn from society than they already were and would be more anxious, self-isolated, lonely and depressed”*.

Lack of Access to Much Needed Services/Resources

Mentors report that lack of advice and support to access wider services would have had an impact on participants *“they would have lacked that resource that mentors can provide in challenging situations”* and *“there would have been more issues for them to face and for us and other agencies to try and support with after lockdown eases rather than addressing them now head on with the way are supporting them”*. This may have led to some regressing in progress, becoming further away from the jobs market etc. Access to food may have also led to food shortages.

CONTACTS

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