

Our Kirklees Futures

Our Approach to Learning

September 2021

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FOREWORD

The future of Kirklees is in the strong and safe hands of our children and young people. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that their aspirations, rights and talents are acknowledged, nurtured and celebrated. They deserve nothing less than the best.

Our Kirklees Futures believes that families and communities provide the first and best start in life for every child and young person. This strategy builds on those foundations and will deliver a strong, equitable and high achieving system that benefits all learners.

This is a call to action.

Our Kirklees Futures grew out of the long term structural changes facing society and encompasses learning from the Covid pandemic. We believe every challenge presents an opportunity. *Our Kirklees Futures* is a moment in time to build a system wide consensus to improve further the lives of all.

It is ambitious in its scope and optimistic in its approach.

In preparing the strategy, we brought together representatives and system leaders from across Kirklees, listened to learners, evaluated data, and engaged with evidence-based research. We are deeply grateful to the generosity of everyone who contributed to its development.

It is now time for us to work collaboratively to deliver the aspirations outlined in this document. We believe we have a clear understanding of the issues we face and a compelling rationale to act.

Together we can make a difference to the lives of children, young people and families of Kirklees.

Chair & Members

Kirklees Futures Commission Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our Kirklees Futures

On Friday 12th March 2021, the Kirklees Children's Ambition Board brought together the *Our Kirklees Futures* Commission, a group of multi-agency senior leaders from across the district, with the aim of creating a long-term strategic plan for education and learning in Kirklees.

The challenges facing education and learning in Kirklees are complex and are rooted in a time of great change. Capturing these challenges and making a realistic and workable proposition was the core task of the commission.

Commission membership:

Paul Brennan: Independent Chair; Leeds Learning Alliance

Hazel Danson: NEU Kirklees District Secretary

Simon Flowers: CEO Leeds Learning Alliance

Mel Meggs: Kirklees Council Director for Children's Services (Chair)

John McNally: CEO SHARE Multi Academy Trust

Prof. Jane Owen Lynch: Pro Vice Chancellor of Huddersfield University

Cllr Carole Pattison : Kirklees, Lead Member for Schools, Aspiration & Communities

Jo-Anne Sanders: Kirklees Council Service Director Learning and Early Support

Sophie Simpson: CEO & Co-founder Conscious Youth

Steve Walker: Chair of Kirklees Children's Ambition Board

Dr. Owen Williams OBE: CEO Calderdale & Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust

The Commission itself was supported by an Expert Strategy Group. From March to July 2021 a series of engagement and co-production took place, augmented by research, consultation with children and young people and data analysis.

This strategy represents the summary of the work, along with next steps.

Three Key Messages

Three key messages emerged from the initial conversations:

1. The experience of learners in Kirklees varies. This is because of deep inequalities in their lives that impact upon their ability to access and succeed within the education system.
2. Kirklees benefits from so many strong leaders, professionals, schools, colleges, and settings where already strong partnerships can be augmented with families and each other to enable them to make a positive difference to the lives of children and young people.
3. Individual learner success is complex, lies beyond narrow formal assessments and includes a wider set of lifelong skills and attitudes.

To address these messages, the commission agreed that the Kirklees system needs to establish an ambitious long-term vision, determine a way of working and align all partners around a common set of public values.

The time is now right to tackle the challenges that we face collectively. The whole community needs to unite so Kirklees can become a shining example of 21st century education.

OUR VISION

We are highly ambitious and aspirational for our children and young people.

Our collective efforts will mean that by 2030, Kirklees is a place where children and young people have the best start in life and are:

Safe: Children and young people in Kirklees are safe and feel safe from harm, benefitting from nationally recognised, exceptional safeguarding practice.

Healthy: Children and young people live healthy lifestyles and maintain these into adulthood.

Achieving: All learners across Kirklees make outstanding progress, access a high performing education system and achieve well in external examinations. They enjoy a curriculum offer that celebrates cultural, creative, sporting and social pursuits that are amongst the best in the country.

Gaps in achievement for those deemed disadvantaged or with additional needs are significantly and consistently reduced, with inequalities addressed.

Happy: Children and young people report being happy and optimistic for their future.

Attending: Attendance across our education system is higher than national average, with all Kirklees learners able to access their local school, setting or college.

And our system is:

Inclusive: There is no need to use permanent exclusion in Kirklees because learners, families and schools are supported in a timely and effective way.

Sustainable: The education and learning infrastructure will work towards being carbon free and actively promotes understanding of the science of climate change.

Our Obsessions

From engagement, three 'obsessions' emerged that would be our areas of relentless focus:

Inclusion: Children, young people and learners of all backgrounds learn and grow side by side, to the benefit of all.

Resilience: The ability and support to overcome adversity.

Equity: Everyone gets the support they need.

OUR ACTIONS

To achieve the vision and ensure that the district focuses upon the three obsessions, ten priority actions of equal bearing for Kirklees emerged:

Listen to learners: to hear their hopes, ambitions, aspirations, and concerns so they shape their future and are engaged every step of the way.

Collaboration: to work with communities and each other to make best use of available resources and ensure a joined-up approach to improving lives.

Schools at the heart of communities: to enable them to support and represent the whole of their community and in return be trusted and supported by that community.

Prioritise our Early Years: to focus resources and support so children and their families have the best start in life.

Safeguard Early Support and Help: to ensure sufficient resources and focus so that home provides the first and best start in life.

Smooth transitions: to ensure children and young people benefit from a clear and appropriate transition at every phase of education, and into adulthood.

Tackle inequalities: to remove barriers, have a clear focus on Special Educational Needs, disability, disadvantage, and vulnerabilities and actively promote anti discriminatory behaviours.

Harness digital technologies: to champion methods of accessing learning that improve life chances and embed skills for future employment.

Value our people: to support and develop all those who work with children and young people.

Promote wellbeing: to champion social, emotional, mental, and physical health.

OUR NEXT STEPS

The *Our Kirklees Futures* Commission has agreed the following next steps to take forward and drive the strategy on behalf of the district.

1. Everyone across Kirklees acknowledges and recognises the importance of an equitable, inclusive, and high-performing education system and will prioritise education recovery within their strategies and plans.
2. A holistic plan to enable engagement and communication will be developed by the end of 2021 to elicit commitment and a shared understanding with our families, learners, schools, settings and partners.
3. Early Support and Help, Early Years and Adult and Community Learning to be appropriately prioritised and supported.
4. The Education and Learning Partnership Board will lead the development of an ambitious sector led approach to address challenges faced by learners and their communities. This will complement and align with the SEND transformation agenda, to ensure inclusion, resilience and equity as key obsessions.
5. Key performance indicators will be developed and agreed that measure progress towards achieving *Our Kirklees Futures* vision. They will clearly set out the work to be undertaken and indicate what difference is being made to changing lives.
6. Inclusive education is a priority for Kirklees as a district. A clear, agreed strategy will be developed that includes high levels of both support and accountability and aligns with the inclusive ambitions of the SEND Transformation Plan.
7. The factors affecting the progress and achievement for learners will be thoroughly evaluated via data and intelligence. Commissioning and leading on research will be a key element to this.
8. The Commission recommends the adoption of Public Value and Adaptive Leadership as principles to drive forward this strategy, underpinned by Restorative practice.
9. *Our Kirklees Futures* will align with the identified 10 priority actions from national and international research into what works across systems. Kirklees is to be recognised as a place locally, regionally, and nationally for its exceptional approach to learning and education.
10. Create the conditions for the best sector led improvement by enabling and championing collaboration across the education system, linked to the findings of soundly reviewed education research nationally and internationally.
11. Develop a Kirklees Behaviour's Charter for adoption by all professionals to hold the system and each other to account. It will place children, young people and their families at its heart with key values of collaboration, respect, and restorative approaches.

OUR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The commission recommend the adoption of a phased plan led by the Education and Learning Partnership Board.

Phase 1: Short term

September 2021 - December 2021

We will develop a detailed and sequenced plan of what we will do. It will be specific and measurable with key milestones and identify the resources we will need.

Because the recommendations require leaders to work beyond their own organisations and allocate both time and resources into achievement across Kirklees this will require a cultural shift. It will be essential to make sure there is:

- a clear, shared understanding of our current position, agreement on the variation of the current system, despite the strengths of individual organisations and people.
- agreement on the need for change.
- a will to make a collective effort to develop a local culture of collaboration.

Phase 2: Medium term

January 2022 - December 2024

This will see detailed plans put into place with an emphasis on driving and developing a culture of collaboration. Towards the end of 2024 a detailed evaluation should be undertaken to inform the refresh for phase 3.

Phase 3: Long term

January 2025 - August 2030

Consideration of this phase is essential in initial thoughts because the recommendations of the commission are about a deep cultural shift and a transformation which will take time.

OUR WORK

Why we need this plan now

There is much strength in Kirklees. So many leaders are inspiring and the people working with them are committed and passionate.

Nevertheless, children from poorer families in Kirklees – in common with those elsewhere – continue to perform less well than those from homes with more obvious advantages.

In 2019, a report from the Education Policy Institute¹ found that, on current trends, it would take 560 years to close the gap between children from poorer homes and their peers. The recent Covid crisis has not only illuminated the width of that gap, but it has also significantly widened it.

The nature and scale of the pandemic will be long lasting and profound in impact.

Everyone has played their part to wrap around our learners and their families during this time. Communities have been supported with intense energy and dedication. Over the past 18 months much focus has rightly been on managing immediate problems and planning for a return to a form of pre-pandemic 'normality'.

Whatever the current demands, thinking about the future must be a priority because waiting for solutions is a luxury our children cannot afford.

That is why the *Our Kirklees Futures* Commission group was convened across our partnership, to co-produce and develop a strategy for our communities across Kirklees.

How we worked

Our Kirklees Futures commissions was led by a multi-agency, cross sector group of leaders that came together to drive the development of a holistic vision for education and learning. Its aim is 'to build back better'².

On Friday 12th March 2021, Kirklees Children's Ambition Board met to develop the brief for the work of the commission and agreed several clear recommendations that were subsequently passed forward to the commission by the Director of Children's Services.

They agreed that *Our Kirklees Futures* is an opportunity to establish an ambitious, inclusive vision to bring together the entire commonwealth of Kirklees.

It is highly unlikely that schools³ will return to the way they were pre-pandemic. Much has been learned⁴. The government has allocated around £1.4 billion to aid education recovery, with the funding split into a range of initiatives including the National Tutoring Programme, a Covid recovery premium and funding for summer schools.

¹ Education Policy Institute (EPI) in partnership with the Fair Education Alliance (FEA), 2019, Education in England: Annual Report 2019, www.epi.org.uk

² World Bank Group, 2020, The Covid-19 Pandemic: Shocks to Education and Policy Responses, www.worldbank.org

³ Schools will be used as shorthand for all places of learning such as: Early Years settings, Colleges, Academies, work place learning settings, the university and informal learning venues.

⁴ LGA: BETTER CONNECTED: HOW LOCAL EDUCATION AND Children's SERVICES IN ENGLAND HAVE RESPONDED TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC. https://www.isospartnership.com/s/LGA_CV19_final-report.pdf

LOCKDOWN LESSONS FROM LOCAL SYSTEMS:

https://parentinfantfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/210121-F1001D_Working_for_Babies_v1.2-FINAL-compressed_2.pdf
UNESCO: Education in a post-COVID world: Nine ideas for public action: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373717/PDF/373717eng.pdf.multi>

National Audit Office: Support for Children's education during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic: <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Support-for-learnerss-education-during-the-early-stages-of-the-Covid-19-pandemic.pdf>

The commission, which is led by two key groups; a multi-agency policy commissioning group and an expert strategy group have now both met three times and considered:

- the challenges and opportunities facing Kirklees learners now
- the key values, priorities, and actions
- the importance of investing in learners in the medium to long term
- Engagement and buy-in with and by key organisations, professionals, and communities

In addition, the Kirklees Education and Learning Partnership Board has also met three times and considered the initial proposals and outcomes from these groups.

Two Interim Reports have been produced.

This document builds upon those reports, summarising the work to date. It is the beginning of a journey – not the final destination.



A MOMENT IN TIME

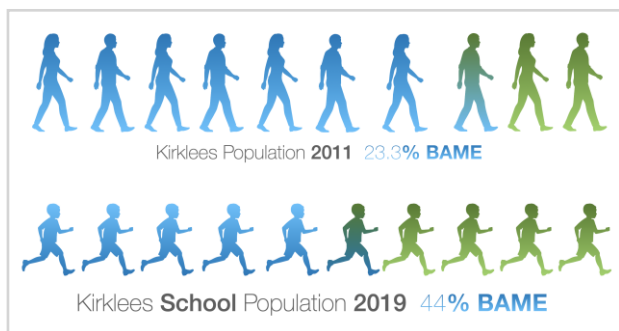
As we now re-open society we are conscious that decisions made today in the context of COVID-19 will have long-term consequences for the future of our learners and their education. Children and young people have told us that they do not like the negativity of the labels attached to them as a lost and missing-out generation.

They have asked that we be much more optimistic in our language and our actions. This is a generation of children with energy, enthusiasm, talent, vitality, creativity, passion, ethics, values, ambitions, and ideals. They require that we celebrate their strengths and their qualities and build upon them.

We believe that we should build on their drive and on existing work by agreeing an ambitious, optimistic vision with shared principles to bring about a desirable future for all our learners.

OUR KIRKLEES:

There are 100,100 children aged 0-19 across Kirklees. They are broadly more diverse than the adult population. They are also more diverse than is the case nationally.



Kirklees Primary school population compared to the overall population

Kirklees children are more likely to suffer higher levels of poverty and disadvantage than is the case nationally. This means that they are more likely to live shorter lives than is the case for their peers across the country as a whole.

| | Males | Females |
|----------|-------|---------|
| England | 79.6 | 83.1 |
| Kirklees | 78.6 | 82.5 |

Life expectancy in Kirklees by gender compared to national

On average many of our children have a life expectancy that will see them living into the next century.

There are 40,100 children attending 142 primary schools and academies in Kirklees.

There are 28,500 learners attending 28 secondary schools and academies in Kirklees.

The social profile of Kirklees children is quite different from the profile of children nationally. Many more children in Kirklees have an ethnic minority background, live in poverty and/or for whom English is a second language. The percentage of children that have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is broadly in-line with the national picture.

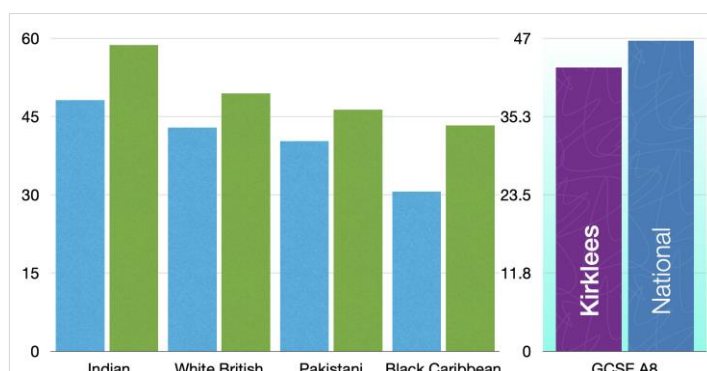
School meals

The number of children living in poverty in Kirklees has deteriorated significantly since the onset of the pandemic. Now⁵ a total of 16,000 learners (an increase of 2,000) in Kirklees have become eligible for free school meals bringing the overall total to 24% (from 22%) of the school population, compared to 17% nationally (2020).

Kirklees is diverse geographically and the lives of learners across the borough can be quite different.

| FSM Eligibility by Locality 2021 | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 31% | Huddersfield South |
| 27% | Huddersfield North |
| 26% | Dewsbury & Mirfield |
| 23% | Spen |
| 23% | Batley Birstall and Birkenshaw |
| 19% | The Valleys |
| 10% | Denby Dale and Kirkburton |

The achievement of children across Kirklees is below that of children nationally from Early Years to Key stage 4. It is recognised that to some extent this reflects the impact of deprivation⁶ across the borough as the following chart illustrates. There is also a gender variation with girls achieving more highly than boys and some significant variations between different ethnic groups.



Kirklees children and their achievement

⁵ March 2021

⁶ Learner poverty and education outcomes by ethnicity. HM Govt: Office National Statistics (ONS)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/uksectoraccounts/compendium/economicreview/february2020/learnerpovertyandeducationoutcomesbyethnicity>

In the [Early Years Foundation Stage](#), (5 years old) in 2019, 69.7% of Kirklees pupils achieved a good level of development overall which is **below** the National figure of 71.8%

[Phonics Check Year 1](#), (6 years old) results showed 79% of pupils passed the check in 2019 which is **below** the National figure of 82%.

At the end of [Key Stage 1](#) (7 years old), in reading, writing and mathematics teacher assessment results Kirklees perform **below** 2019 National standards. Just under two thirds of pupils achieved the expected standard in all three subjects.

At the end of [Key Stage 2](#) (11 years old), results indicate that in Kirklees 62% of learners are working **at or above** the expected standard in reading, writing, and mathematics (combined), compared to the national average of 65% in 2019.

At [Key Stage 4](#) (16 years old) in 2019, there are two key indicators: Progress 8 and Attainment 8. Progress results, as measured by these indicators suggest that Kirklees students made **less** progress than pupils nationally from similar academic attainment starting points. The proportion of pupils achieving the average Attainment 8 score was **below** the rate for all state funded schools in England.

At [Key Stage 5](#) (18 years old), results in 2019 indicate that the Average Point Score (APS) for the Kirklees 'A' level cohort was 35.53 compared to 34.0 nationally. This indicates a number of points of interest: first, A levels are taken by the higher attaining students, and we have already seen (at Key Stage 2) that across Kirklees this group achieve **broadly in-line** with their counterparts nationally, it also indicates that Kirklees benefits from **strong** post 16 provision overall.

RESEARCH

The role of the LA (statutory, moral and discretionary)

Local authorities (LAs) have a legal responsibility to champion the needs of the most vulnerable learners, to promote educational excellence and ensure fair access to school places for all learners.

These duties are clearly set out in the Department for Education's (DfE) statutory guidance on the role of the director of Children's services (DCS).

The DCS acts as a clear and unambiguous line of professional accountability for children's wellbeing in a local area and is tasked with working in partnership with headteachers, governors, academy sponsors and principals to promote educational excellence, take rapid and decisive action in relation to poor performance and promote high standards.

Local Authorities have undergone significant change over the course of the past twenty years (and more) with their remit as an education authority being reduced by successive central governments.

Over this time many LAs have questioned their actual role in this regard, as there has been and there currently exists much confusion. Thus, the roles and remits that LAs have taken on for themselves regarding education and skills varies as widely as LA's populations or geography. Some have retained many of the functions, systems, and structures of a traditional LEA, whilst some have moved to that of a facilitator and commissioner of local partnerships of providers with much outsourced service provision.

Some have stealthily removed most of their education functions as budget challenges have exacerbated successive central government policy drives and local schools 'increased autonomy allowing schools to 'fend for themselves' whilst retaining a small set of core functions relating to admissions, SEND and transport.

Kirklees is one of the LAs that has attempted to maintain many of the functions of an LEA especially in relation to its maintained schools.

Many parents, carers and politicians continue to look towards the LA to address concerns or complaints regarding their learner's education. This is understandable as LAs offer a single point of contact and are democratically accountable to local communities.

Additionally, despite what appears to have been DfE practice, (if not actually published policy) and thus the beliefs of many professionals in the sector, LAs continue to hold specific, statutory duties and powers. These include;

- school sufficiency and planning,
- early years provision,
- home to school transport,
- school standards,
- special educational needs,
- safeguarding, and
- learners in care.

These duties apply to all learners, in all schools yet the freedoms offered under the academies programme present some practical barriers for LAs.

Legal Framework

“The DCS and LMCS are appointed for the purposes of discharging the education and Children's social services functions of the local authority. The functions for which they are responsible are set out in section 18(2) of the Learners Act 2004. This includes (but is not limited to) responsibility for learners receiving education...”⁷”

The functions and roles of the Local Education Authority

Many Chief Executives and Council Leaders have been asking the question about what the specific role of a Local Authority is regarding Education. In some instances, they would like to know the specific duties that they are required to fulfil to ensure full compliance, to minimise duplication within the emergent regional and national frameworks for education (such as RSC's, Ofsted, Diocesan and Multi Academy Trusts) and to meet the budget pressures that they face across the council. The reality is that there is no clearly defined role.

“It is for individual local authorities to determine their own organisational structures in the light of their local circumstances.

The DCS and LMCS should each have an integrated Children's services brief, ensuring that the safety and the educational, social and emotional needs of learners are central to the local vision.”⁸”

The role of the Local Authority in Education has become increasingly ill-defined and with as many interpretations abounding as there are local authorities.

Local Authorities as an education authority were brought about by parliament which may refashion or disband them over time. The functions of the LA are all the duties and powers of a local council and the sum of all the activities that parliament has entrusted to it. It is worth noting that the functions of an L(E)A “include” its powers and duties, they do not “comprise” of its powers and duties. This

distinction is important because many of the LA's duties are discretionary and potentially greater than purely the sum of its powers and duties.

Ultra Vires

Acts of Parliament can also determine what an LA should not do, this has become important in terms of the LA responsibilities linked to the governance and leadership of Academy schools. This was tested most recently in December 2020 where some LAs proposed closing schools against the DfE's policy.

However, the LA can not only carry out its explicit functions, but it can also do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of those functions. This is important because the LA can only do what is expressly or impliedly authorised by statute. If it acts outside these powers, it would be deemed to be ultra vires, its acts are unlawful and may be challenged in the courts as was the case in December 2020. In short, sometimes individuals expect the LA to act, but such action may be unlawful.

Powers

LAs do have a number of ‘powers’ relating to education. These ‘powers’ are the discretion given to any public body to do something or not to do something. In legislation they are often identified using the verb ‘may’. However, it should be noted that it is highly unlikely that the LA has unfettered choice over whether to use its powers, its decision making will often be determined by the conditions and qualifications applying. The LA may be challenged if it has not used those powers that it has and be deemed to have acted unreasonably.

Duties

Duties are mandatory requirements placed on LAs. Legislation often signals a duty using the verbs ‘shall’ or ‘must’. The LA must fulfil these duties even if it claims to have insufficient resources to do so.

⁷ Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services. DfE. April 2013

⁸ Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services. DfE. April 2013

Discretionary powers

Somewhere between powers and duties lie discretionary powers. These are duties that the LA may or may not choose to use but as with powers, its decision making in terms of discretionary powers must be demonstrated to be reasonable in the conditions of the case in which the discretionary power was applied or used.

Roles

The roles of the LA are principally the way that it conducts its business. Often the roles of the LA are determined at a local level by the LA itself but in some circumstances, they are prescribed by an act of Parliament or by statutory guidance. The statute book is not sufficient in helping an LA draw-up a full and workable job description for itself in its own context. It is recommended that there are broad approaches that should be considered when an individual LA seeks to define its role.

Legal: as stated above. This is essential as a first step because the LA has some very clearly defined duties and many, less clearly defined, powers.

Ethical and moral: It is important to restate that the local authority operates within clear moral and ethical parameters.

Visionary: every local authority has a clear vision for future improvements to life, work, and leisure in its district. Any consideration of this is likely to inform its role as an education authority because: so many of its citizens have close engagements with educational institutions daily (for example as students, as members of a workforce, as parents and carers, as local members of the community the institution serves, as neighbours, as traders with the institution etc). This links directly to the supply of good schools for house builders and developers, to the provision of good schools for inward investors and their employees through to the development of a workforce that is employable and supports economic development.

Pragmatic: no matter how visionary the LA might be, pragmatism will always kick-in with a rationale of 'the possible'.

Budgetary: economic factors and the availability of funding both capital and revenue will greatly inform the role of the LA.

Political and policy: clearly the political philosophy underpinning the council from its elected members.

Theory of change leadership

In the process of consulting against emerging priorities it became clear that there are some significant tensions within the system. Largely these relate to issues subsumed within ensuring inclusion and equity and in particular relate to the tensions created by issues such as the perception of a high-stake accountability culture, the so called "standards agenda" or a perceived dichotomy between "zero tolerance" behaviour strategies and restorative practices.

Exclusionary practices have emerged as one such contentious area of concern. The commission note the pressures placed upon schools and wider children's services some of which are challenging to reconcile.

Public Value

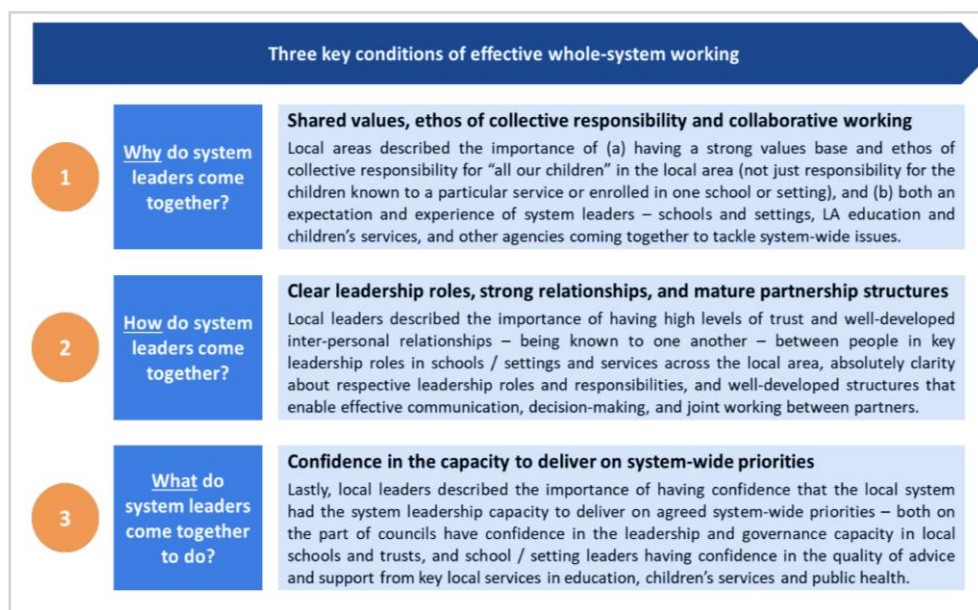
Requires leaders to address and to align three key questions:

- What precisely is the value that we plan to add to the public realm in this situation, and how will we recognise those public value outcomes?
- How do we generate the necessary authorisation and negotiate a coalition of sufficient support among both internal and external stakeholders, to achieve these public value outcomes?
- What operational capability (e.g., finance, technology, people, skills) is necessary to achieve these public value outcomes, and where, how, and when does it need to be deployed?

Adaptive Leadership

Once public value has been identified there are seven principles for adaptive leadership which create a clear route-way to tackle even intractable problems. These are:

- Identify the adaptive challenge – the changes in thinking and behaviour (including one's own) required to grapple with difficult issues.
- Give the work back to the people faced by the problem – avoid the temptation to solve people's problems for them and instead engage them in the adaptive work and in taking responsibility for the change process.
- Monitor & regulate the distress and conflict inherent in adaptive work.
- Create a 'safe environments' in which the more painful adaptive work can be done effectively; this can be a physical and/or a psychological space, providing both safety and also stretch and challenge.
- Maintain disciplined attention – recognise the seductions of work avoidance and other displacement activity (e.g., dependency, projection, fight/flight), and relentlessly bring the focus back on to the primary task.
- Protect the voices from below or outside – ensure that all perspectives and interests are considered that minority viewpoints are considered, and that dominant views are questioned and challenged.
- Move continuously between the "balcony" and the "dance floor" – combine a helicopter overview of the whole situation



and strategy, with an understanding of the changing situation at the front-line.

Models in other LAs and systems

Across England a wide range of systems are emerging for realising improved educational outcomes. A recent report commissioned by the Local Government Association (LGA) entitled: "Better connected: How local education and Children's services in England have responded to the coronavirus pandemic⁹", identified several key factors that underpinned local areas successful response to the pandemic. What they describe built on the research that they had undertaken for the DfE in 2012.

Local Authority areas in England are vastly divergent in their: scale, processes, and underpinning policies. Nevertheless, the authors looked at several LAs, many of which were notable for at least some areas of success. These included: the London Borough of Camden, Essex County Council, Hampshire, Sheffield, Liverpool, Hertfordshire, Trafford, Wigan, Leeds, City of York and Glasgow. In addition to other Local Authority areas, LA officers developing *Our Kirklees Futures* also looked at the government's Opportunity Area framework to analyse effective practice that might inform the *Our Kirklees Futures* programme.

⁹ LGA Report commissioned from ISOS Partnership: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ce55a5ad4c5c>

500016855ee/t/605b8c7c001c534b1a223885/1616612479198/LGA_CV19_final+report.pdf

Summary of LGA ISOS Report

In short, whilst many LA systems look very different reflecting local politics, geography, demography, economy, and society there were a small number of key traits that are common across all successful systems. Three key conditions of effective whole system working were identified:

- Shared values and an ethos of collective responsibility and collaborative working
- Clear leadership roles, strong relationships, and mature partnerships
- Confidence in the capacity to deliver on system wide priorities

Kirklees undoubtedly enjoys some of the key conditions for effective whole system working. *Our Kirklees Futures* should prioritise strengthening those that exist and build the rest.

The London and other City Challenges

In constructing the *Our Kirklees Futures* report, officers also looked at the London Challenge and the work of the other two subsequent city challenges (Greater Manchester Challenge and Black Country Challenge). The London Challenge (2003 - 2011) is often used as an example of: get the right strategy and poverty-related underachievement can be removed. It is worth looking in some detail at London Boroughs to see what can be learned for Kirklees because whilst there are many factors not present in Kirklees there are some examples of superb collaborative activity across large numbers of schools that have and are making significant impacts.

Attainment outcomes for the London region are now higher than the rest of England and certainly the North - a major turn-around. Key factors identified by research, though with different weightings, are:

- **Funding:** London received very high levels of enhanced capital and revenue funding on top of already higher budgets. At its height an additional £40 million a year was invested into inner London schools to support improvement. London benefited from the first phase of Building Schools for the Future (BSF), resulting

in a rebuild and restructure of the capital's school system. In addition, and still in place today, the mean funding level for pupils in Inner London boroughs is almost 50% per pupil higher than in areas such as Kirklees.

- **Strengthened Leadership:** Secondly the London Challenge brought with it a set of processes that enabled the education leaders both in HM Government and across the boroughs of the capital to strengthen; leadership development, deployment of headteachers, accountability mechanisms, challenge and intervention, school governance and control, recruitment, retention, and remuneration of teachers. In short, the system leaders report being able to "hire the best and fire the worst". However, the leadership from Tim Brighouse and his team was built on respect and encouragement, rather than blame.
- **Population change:** The third was the demographic shift within the capital. Previously deprived Inner London boroughs have subsequently become gentrified and even those London boroughs with high poverty levels are, it is argued, populated by recent migrant workers who, whilst on temporarily low incomes, often have higher levels of education from their home countries.
- **Long-term Improvement:** Some research such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation identified the impact of national strategies such as the National Literacy Strategy, but critics of this argument ask why this national strategy did not have the same impact in other parts of the country. It remains the case, however, that improvement in London secondary schools during the London Challenge years appears less sudden when we take into account the foundation of earlier improvements in primary and secondary schools due to Excellence in Cities and similar projects.

Governments subsequently embarked upon two further city challenges, Greater Manchester and the Black Country. Despite learning from the London Challenge, their impact has been far less convincing (see for example the data for Greater Manchester boroughs such as Oldham, Bolton, Salford or indeed Manchester). Furthermore, several other LAs have initiated "Challenges" and

these have not realised the same impacts as seen in London.

A key factor which the various evaluations of London Challenge did not seriously consider is that this took place in the context of a vibrant local economy, where young people could easily be persuaded of the opportunities which educational success could bring. The opposite dynamic occurs in northern locations where young people at school know of older siblings and friends who have gained qualifications but failed to obtain the employment they hoped for.

Notwithstanding these problems in evaluation, it is clear from the research that a change of attitude was fundamental, such that teachers could no longer write-off disadvantaged students as lacking ability and potential. The London Challenge was coordinated across all partners, it was ambitious, long term and it built upon preceding projects. It was effective in motivating and mobilising higher expectations and a more optimistic mindset.

Other Local Initiatives

Alongside improvements in local education systems, several local communities, towns or boroughs have come together to improve their local communities in other ways and lessons can also be learnt from some of these models. Preston¹⁰ in Lancashire is one such model itself based upon the Mondragón model in Spain which places co-operative principles at the heart of its decision making.

Other Systems Research

The expert group were presented with a summary of research into area systems that have been impactful during the recent pandemic.

University College London

Christine Gilbert, the ex-Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) identified the following five factors:

1. *Root schools at the heart of their communities*

Schools become anchors for their local communities and families.

Schools at the forefront of local initiatives to build community self-help and both cultural and social capital. Young people developing agency through school support and the community then enabled to support the school.

2. *Tackle growing inequalities*

Targeting resources at the poorest learners.

3. *Harness the power of technology*

A digital world but a widening digital divide. Schools have changed the way they work, so have parents, increased skills and confidence should be built on to prepare learners for a future of universal digital access.

How do we build on the last year in developing children's independent learning skills, critical thinking and metacognition, whilst being clear that teachers and the quality of teaching remain as important as ever.

4. *Prepare learners better for life and learning*

"We have an all-consuming focus on external exams. Exams are neither the core purpose of schools nor the chief reason for success in later life"

Create a consensus for what a good education looks like. What knowledge skills and understanding are essential?

How do we re-imagine a system where learners thrive, achieve, love school and leave better prepared for life and future learning?

5. *Strengthen capacity through collaboration*

Importance of connecting within and across schools and the wider community.

Value teachers.

Collaborative professional learning for teachers.

Involve young people in leading change.

¹⁰ Brown M & Jones R E: Paint your town Red How Preston took back control and your council can too. Pepeater Books 2021

UNESCO¹¹ 9 Ideas

Unesco has identified 9 ideas that should be considered by education systems as they respond to the aftermath of the global pandemic. Whilst some of the ideas are clearly aimed at very large systems and in a global context there is much that aligns with UK based thinking.

The report was created by the International Commission on the Futures of Education—established by UNESCO in 2019 and composed of thought leaders from the worlds of academia, science, government, business, and education—presented nine ideas for concrete actions today that will advance education tomorrow.

1. Commit to strengthen education as a common good. Education is a bulwark against inequalities. **In education as in health, we are safe when everybody is safe; we flourish when everybody flourishes.**
2. Expand the definition of the right to education so that it addresses the importance of connectivity and access to knowledge and information. The Commission calls for a global public discussion—that includes, among others, learners of all ages—on ways the right to education needs to be expanded.
3. Value the teaching profession and teacher collaboration. There has been remarkable innovation in the responses of educators to the COVID-19 crisis, with those systems most engaged with families and communities showing the most resilience. We must encourage conditions that give frontline educators autonomy and flexibility to act collaboratively.
4. Promote student, youth and children's participation and rights. Intergenerational justice and democratic principles should compel us to prioritise the participation of students broadly in the co-construction of desirable change.
5. Protect the social spaces provided by schools as we transform education. The school as a physical space is indispensable. Traditional classroom organisation must give way to a variety of ways of 'doing school' but the school as a separate space-time of collective living, specific and different from other spaces of learning must be preserved.
6. Make free and open-source technologies available to teachers and students. Open educational resources and open access digital tools must be supported. Education cannot thrive with ready-made content built outside of the pedagogical space and outside of human relationships between teachers and students. Nor can education be dependent on digital platforms controlled by private companies.
7. Ensure scientific literacy within the curriculum. This is the right time for deep reflection on curriculum, particularly as we struggle against the denial of scientific knowledge and actively fight misinformation.
8. Protect domestic and international financing of public education. The pandemic has the power to undermine several decades of advances. National governments, international organisations, and all education and development partners must recognise the need to strengthen public health and social services but simultaneously mobilise around the protection of public education and its financing.
9. Advance global solidarity to end current levels of inequality. COVID-19 has shown us the extent to which our societies exploit power imbalances and our global system exploits inequalities. The Commission calls for renewed commitments to international cooperation and multilateralism, together with a revitalised global solidarity that has empathy and an appreciation of our common humanity at its core. UNESCO suggests that COVID-19 presents us with a real challenge and a real responsibility. These ideas invite debate, engagement and action organisations, civil society, educational professionals, as well as learners and stakeholders at all levels.

¹¹ International Commission on the Futures of Education. 2020. Education in a post-COVID world: Nine ideas for public action. Paris, UNESCO

Systems Research Common Threads

Looking across the work from the LGA, University College London, UNESCO or indeed the work of the earlier city challenges several common threads have emerged. These include:

1. **Collaboration:** to strengthen capacity and make best use of limited resources
2. **Schools at the heart of communities:** to enable them to support the whole of their community and in return be trusted and supported by that community
3. **Shared Vision & agreed plan:** Agree a long term, optimistic but realistic shared & prioritised strategy
4. **Tackle growing inequalities:** by focusing particularly on Special Educational Needs, disability, disadvantaged & vulnerable learners and actively promoting anti discriminatory practice in terms of; race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation etc
5. **Harness digital technologies:** for methods of accessing learning and to support the local economy, improve life chances and improve employability
6. **Value our people (teachers and professionals):** supporting and developing teaching and other professionals
7. **Listen to learners:** to their concerns and engage them in decision making & their learning
8. **Prioritise Early Years Education:** focusing resources to support children and their families access the best start in life
9. **Safeguard early help:** ensure sufficient resources and focus
10. **Promote well-being:** Promote social, emotional, mental and physical health

Research into school improvement

The expert group and the commission were very keen that some of the best research into what works within schools should inform the work of *Our Kirklees Futures*.

“Time, Tutoring and Teaching”

Prior to resigning following the publication of £1.4Billion to tackle education recovery, the DfE’s Education Recovery Commissioner, Sir Kevan Collins had identified several ways that he felt schools should respond to the growing need and growing inequality faced by some students. In the first instance he was clear that the recovery should be multi agency and that accords with all the other evidence, but he then went on to look specifically at what schools and colleges should do.

He identified: “three Ts – time, tutoring and teaching” These “three pillars” will involve extending “the school experience”, driving forward tutoring for struggling pupils and raising teacher quality through continuing professional development.

While Sir Kevan’s review was likely to recommend that school sites should remain open for longer during the day, much of the focus was to be on providing pupils with more opportunities for extracurricular activities and play.

“It’s not about ‘make them work even harder’, it’s actually let them play even longer;”

Community groups were to be invited into schools to help support this provision, so the responsibility will not fall squarely on the shoulders of school staff.

In addition to the work of Sir Kevan Collins the following key documents were specifically referenced:

Cambridge Primary Review: Learners, their World, their Education¹²

Central to the proposals of the Cambridge Primary Review is a set of twelve aims for primary education. The aims were grounded in extensive evidence from parents, teachers, learners, community leaders, international research, and a wide range of official, professional, and voluntary stakeholders. The aims were intended to shape curriculum, pedagogy, and school life.

The aims are in three groups that echo the title of the Cambridge Primary Review final report – Learners, their World, their Education. The first group identifies those individual qualities and capacities which schools should foster and build upon in every learner, in whatever they do, and the personal needs to which schools should attend. The second group includes four critically important orientations to people and the wider world, reflecting discussion of the opportunities and challenges of life in the 21st century. The third group focuses on the content, processes, and outcomes of learning itself.

Group 1: The individual

Well-being. To attend to children's capabilities, needs, hopes and anxieties here and now, and promote their mental, emotional, and physical well-being and welfare. Happiness, a strong sense of self and a positive outlook on life are not only desirable in themselves: they are also conducive to engagement and learning. But well-being goes much further than this, and 'happiness' on its own looks merely self-indulgent. Caring for children's well-being is about attending to their physical and emotional welfare. It is about inducting them into a life where they will be wholeheartedly engaged in all kinds of worthwhile activities and relationships, defined generously rather than narrowly.

It is about maximising children's learning potential through good teaching and the proper application of evidence about how learners develop and learn and how teachers most effectively teach. Fostering children's well-being requires us to attend to their future fulfilment as well as their present needs and capabilities. Well-being thus defined is both a precondition and an outcome of successful primary education.

Engagement. To secure children's active, willing, and enthusiastic engagement in their learning. This too is a precondition for learning. It is also a manifestation of successful teaching.

Empowerment. To excite, promote and sustain children's agency, empowering them through knowledge, understanding, skill and personal qualities to profit from their present and later learning, to discover and lead rewarding lives, and to manage life and find new meaning in a changing world.

Autonomy. To foster children's autonomy and sense of self through a growing understanding of the world present and past, and through productive relationships with others. Autonomy enables individuals to establish who they are and to what they might aspire; it enables the learner to translate knowledge into meaning; it encourages that critical independence of thought which is essential both to the growth of knowledge and to citizenship; it enables learners to discriminate in their choice of activities and relationships; and it helps them to see beyond the surface appeal of appearance, fashion, and celebrity to what is of abiding value.

Group 2: Self, others, and the wider world

Encouraging respect and reciprocity. To promote respect for self, for peers and adults, for other generations, for diversity and difference, for language, culture and custom, for ideas and values, and for those habits of willing courtesy between persons on which civilised relations depend. To ensure that respect is mutual: between adult and learner as well as between learner and adult. To understand the essential reciprocity of learning and human relations.

¹² Alexander, R.J. (ed) (2010) Learners, their World, their Education: final report and recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review

Promoting interdependence and sustainability. To develop children's understanding of humanity's dependence for well-being and survival on equitable relationships between individuals, groups, communities, and nations, and on a sustainable relationship with the natural world, and help learners to move from understanding to positive action in order that they can make a difference and know that they have the power to do so.

Empowering local, national, and global citizenship. To help learners to become active citizens by encouraging their full participation in decision-making within the classroom and school, especially where their own learning is concerned, and to advance their understanding of human rights, democratic engagement, diversity, conflict resolution and social justice. To develop a sense that human interdependence and the fragility of the world order require a concept of citizenship which is global as well as local and national.

Celebrating culture and community. To establish the school as a cultural site, a focal point of community life and thought. To enact within the school the behaviours and relationships on which community most directly depends, and in so doing to counter the loss of community outside the school. To appreciate that 'education is an embodiment of a culture's way of life, not just as a preparation for it.' Establishing itself as a thriving cultural and communal site should be a principal aim of every school.

Group 3: Learning, knowing, and doing

Exploring, knowing, understanding, and making sense. To enable learners to encounter and begin to explore the wealth of human experience through induction into, and active engagement in, the different ways through which humans make sense of their world and act upon it: intellectual, moral, spiritual, aesthetic, social, emotional, and physical; through language, mathematics, science, the humanities, the arts, religion and other ways of knowing and understanding.

Induction acknowledges and respects our membership of a culture with its own deeply embedded ways of thinking and acting which can make sense of complexity and through which human understanding constantly changes and advances.

Education is necessarily a process of acculturation. Exploration is grounded in that distinctive mixture of amazement, perplexity and curiosity which constitutes childhood wonder; a commitment to discovery, invention, experiment, speculation, fantasy, play and growing linguistic agility which are the essence of childhood.

Fostering skill. To foster children's skills in those domains on which learning, employment and a rewarding life most critically depend: in oracy and literacy, in mathematics, science, information technology, the creative and performing arts, the humanities and financial management; but also, and no less in practical activities, communication, creativity, invention, problem-solving, critical practice and human relations. To ally skills to knowledge and a sense of purpose in order that they do not become empty formulae devoid of significance.

Exciting the imagination. To excite children's imagination in order that they can advance beyond present understanding, extend the boundaries of their lives, contemplate worlds possible as well as actual, understand cause and consequence, develop the capacity for empathy, and reflect on and regulate their behaviour; to explore and test language, ideas and arguments in every activity and form of thought. There is a need to emphasise the intrinsic value of exciting children's imagination. To experience the delights – and pains – of imagining, and of entering the imaginative worlds of others, is to become a more rounded and capable person.

Enacting dialogue. To help learners grasp that learning is an interactive process and that understanding builds through joint activity between teacher and pupil and among pupils in collaboration, and thereby to develop pupils' increasing sense of responsibility for what and how they learn. To help learners recognise that knowledge is not only transmitted but also negotiated and re-created; and that each of us in the end makes our own sense out of the meeting of knowledge both personal and collective. To advance a pedagogy in which dialogue is central: between self and others, between personal and collective knowledge, between present and past, between different ways of making sense.

Education Endowment Foundation (EEF):

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is an independent charity established in 2011 to improve the educational attainment of the poorest pupils in English schools.

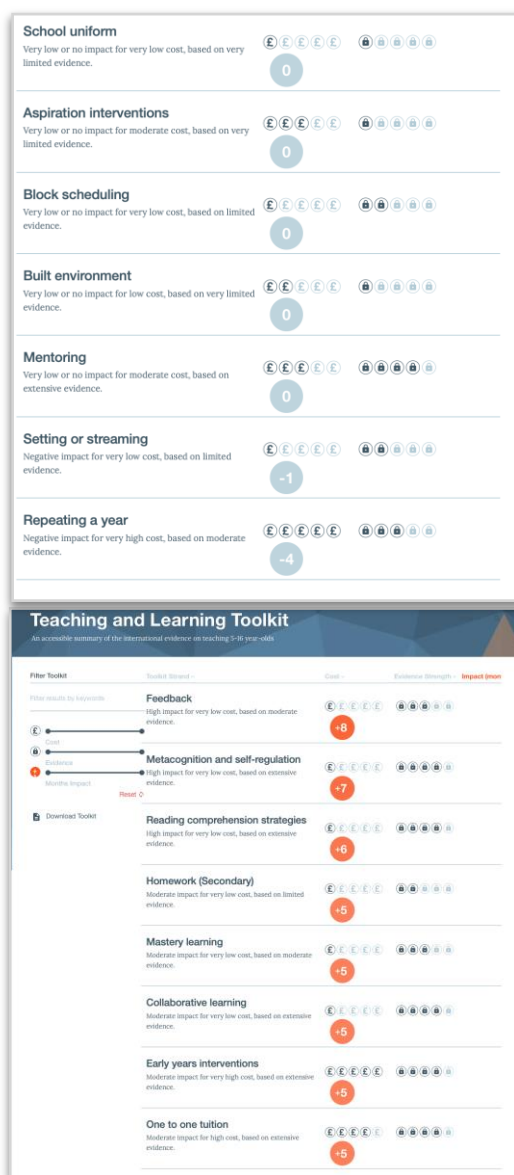
The EEF aims to support teachers and senior leaders by providing evidence-based resources designed to improve practice and boost learning. On its creation, the EEF became the biggest funder of school research in England.

Teaching and Learning Toolkit

The Sutton Trust-EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit was developed from the 'Pupil Premium Toolkit' commissioned by the Sutton Trust and produced by Durham University in May 2011. The Toolkit summarises the findings of more than 13,000 trials from around the world and is similar in concept to the work of Prof. John Hattie whose work analyses the findings of thousands of educational research projects.

Many contributors to *Our Kirklees Futures* are extremely concerned that policy and strategy is evidence based. The Toolkit supports schools in developing those initiatives that have the greatest impact at least cost.

The toolkit also identifies those initiatives that are least effective and most expensive.



Views of learners, young people and communities

In the past year several pieces of work have been undertaken to illicit the views of learners. The outcomes from this survey can be seen below:

Another piece of work with young people looked at how their lives changed because of Covid and lockdown:

There are clear alignments between what children and young people say they feel are important with the ambitions that senior leaders across Kirklees feel are important.

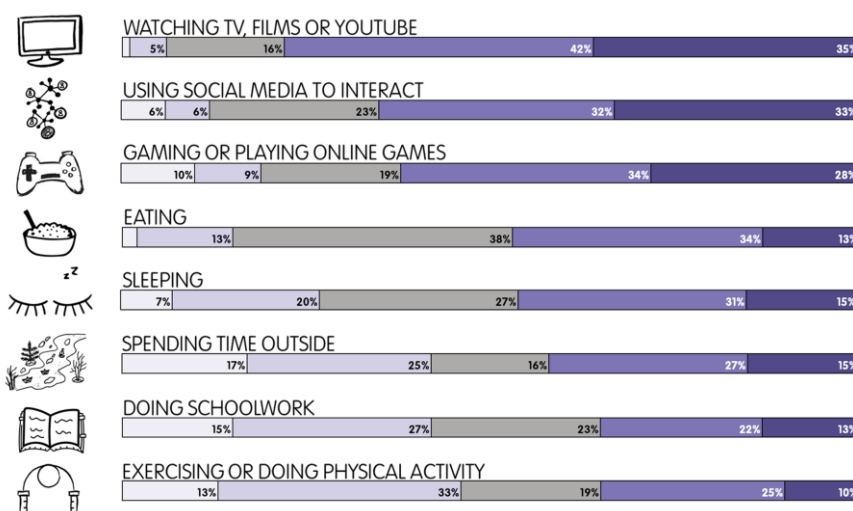
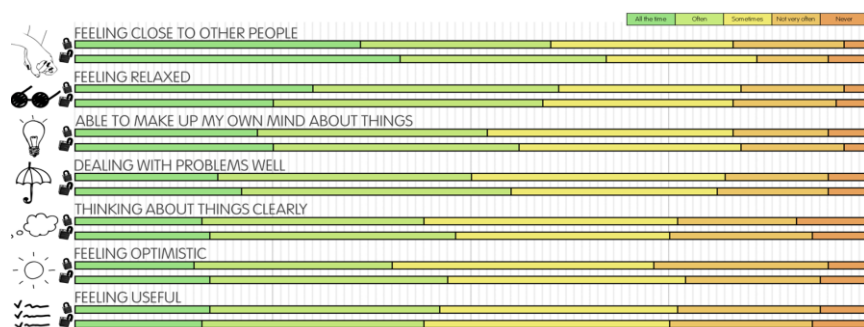
Optimism

Children and young people were particularly concerned about the negative way in which they were referred to because of the Covid Pandemic. Phrases such as “lost generation”, “missing-out” and even “catch-up” all have negative connotations.

Children and young people wanted us to be optimistic and upbeat about the future and about the actions we will take to support them working from a situation whereby they have supported their community through a very challenging time, they have continued to grow and learn and develop but perhaps in ways that previous generations were not able to.

Global warming and Climate Change

Children and young people are understandably very concerned about the future of the planet and the implications of addressing the issues of detrimental environmental change caused by human activity. They feel that we should move to ensure that our strategy addresses this issue in two ways. First, that we make our work carbon neutral as quickly as possible and secondly that we educate people about the science that underpins global warming and the direct causal link between human activity and environmental damage.



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