



# Healthwatch Wirral Young Carers' Voice Focus Group

19<sup>th</sup> February 2021



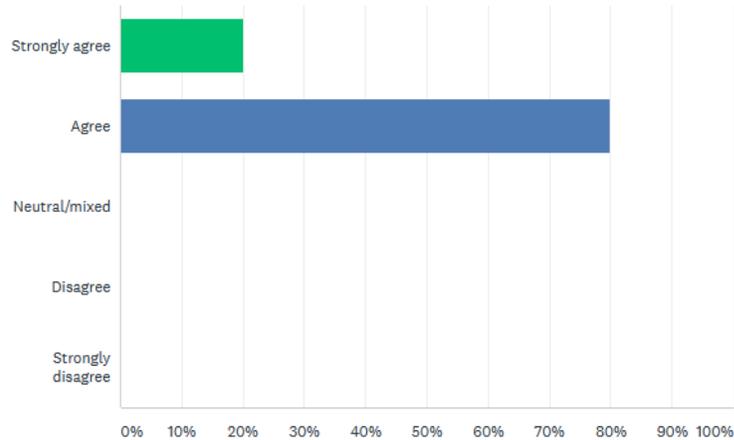
# Background to the group

Healthwatch Wirral listens to people's experiences of health and social care services to help improve these services.

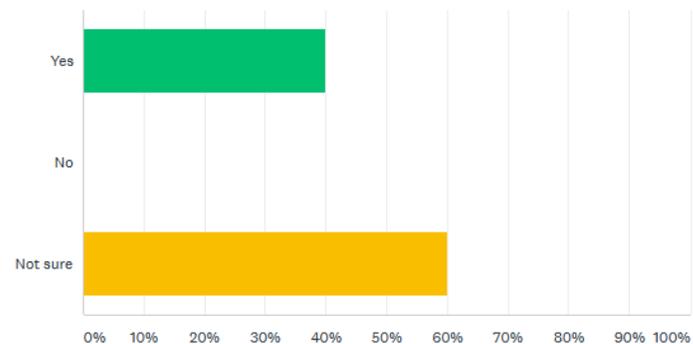
It is really important that we hear from a wide range of people on the Wirral to make sure that services work for everyone and that everyone feels their voice counts.

Young carers have a unique & special viewpoint: they are using services both as young people and as carers. It is important for Healthwatch to understand young carers' experiences, and for young carers to know what Healthwatch is and how we can help.

Do you agree with this statement? "I know where to go to get help and support for me and my family when we need it."



Do you feel like your voice counts when it comes to the services you use?



## Survey results - before the group

We sent out a short survey before the meeting to find out some background information to guide our discussions.

- None of the group had heard of Healthwatch Wirral beforehand
- Everyone felt they knew where to go to get help and support when they need it - but may need more information on wider services
- Some people felt that their voice counts when it comes to the services they use, but others weren't so sure!

# Who attended the group?

Jenny and Micha from Healthwatch Wirral facilitated the session, with support from a member of Barnardo's staff.

The young carers ranged in age from 11-16 and were all caring for at least one family member. Many of the group were helping to care for a parent and some also had caring responsibilities for siblings.



What do you think of when I say 'health and social care'?

Children's homes  
Care homes Hospital  
Looking after people  
Mental health Chemist  
Doctor all caring roles Dentist  
Mantaly and fysical  
Look after people and care for them  
Counsellors  
Caring for what we need

What does health and social care mean to young carers?

We started the session by explaining what

Healthwatch Wirral does - listening to people about health and social care.

The word cloud describes the group members' perceptions of 'health and social care' and what that means to them.



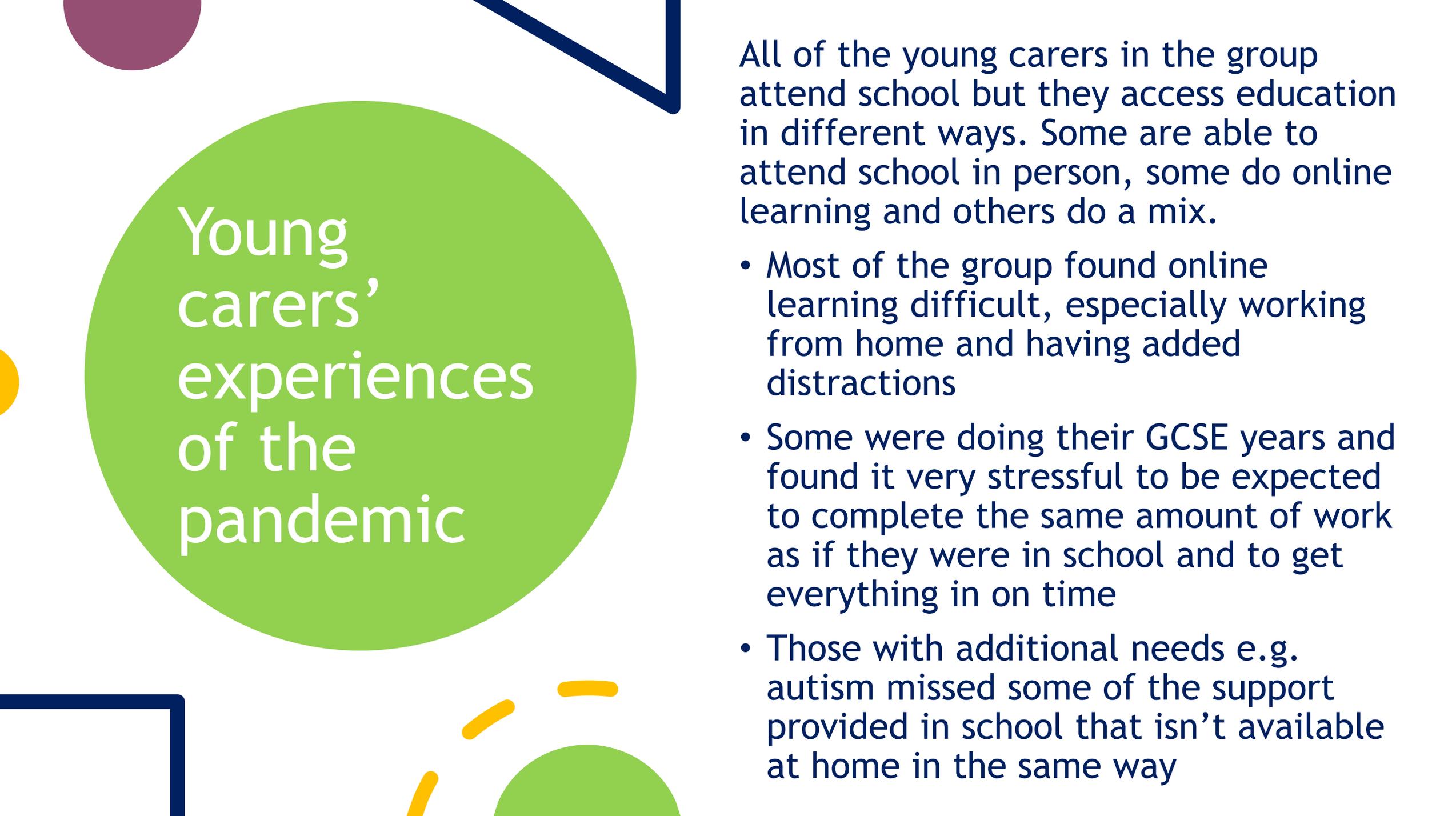
## Why is Healthwatch's job important?

We asked the group why they thought it might be important to listen to people's experiences of health and social care:

*“To know if the doctor is doing a good job or a not so good job!”*

The young carers shared some of their experiences around being listened to and mentioned access to the COVID-19 vaccination for the people they care for as a current issue.

We explained that services have a 'statutory duty' to listen to Healthwatch - it's part of our job to make sure we speak to lots of people so that we can identify issues like access to the vaccination programme.



## Young carers' experiences of the pandemic

All of the young carers in the group attend school but they access education in different ways. Some are able to attend school in person, some do online learning and others do a mix.

- Most of the group found online learning difficult, especially working from home and having added distractions
- Some were doing their GCSE years and found it very stressful to be expected to complete the same amount of work as if they were in school and to get everything in on time
- Those with additional needs e.g. autism missed some of the support provided in school that isn't available at home in the same way

# Positives of lockdown!

Not all of the changes have been negative during the pandemic! The group mentioned some changes that have been positive during lockdown:

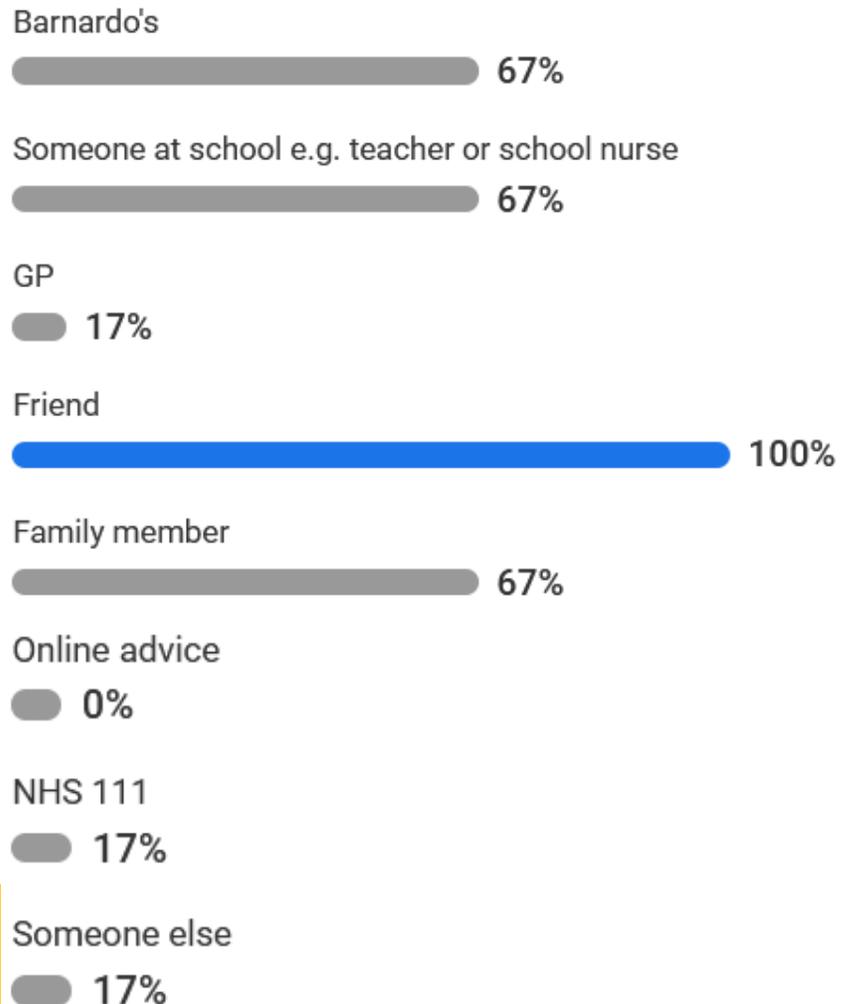
\* Parents who usually work from an office or travel for work may be working from home, so they can take on more of the caring responsibilities during lockdown

“I do enjoy spending a lot more time with my mum, and my dog. and being at home has less of an impact on my anxiety.”

“Feel happier knowing I can Just be around”



Who/where would you go to get support with a health issue?



## Where would you go to get support?

All of the young people said they would speak to a friend to get support with a health issue. We discussed how friends can help:

**\*\* “Cheer you up!”\*\***

**“Friends are the same age so you get on and understand each other”**

Everyone agreed that it has been hard not being able to see friends in school - it's not the same 'seeing' people online as it is in person.

# Mental health

Mental health was a topic that all of the young carers involved in this group expressed they were interested in discussing. We talked about what can be helpful for mental health

- Talking to friends
- Reading
- Sport e.g. football and ice skating
- Drawing/creative activities

Many felt that the change in routine during lockdown, and the lack of variety from not being able to go out, has had a negative effect on their mental health.



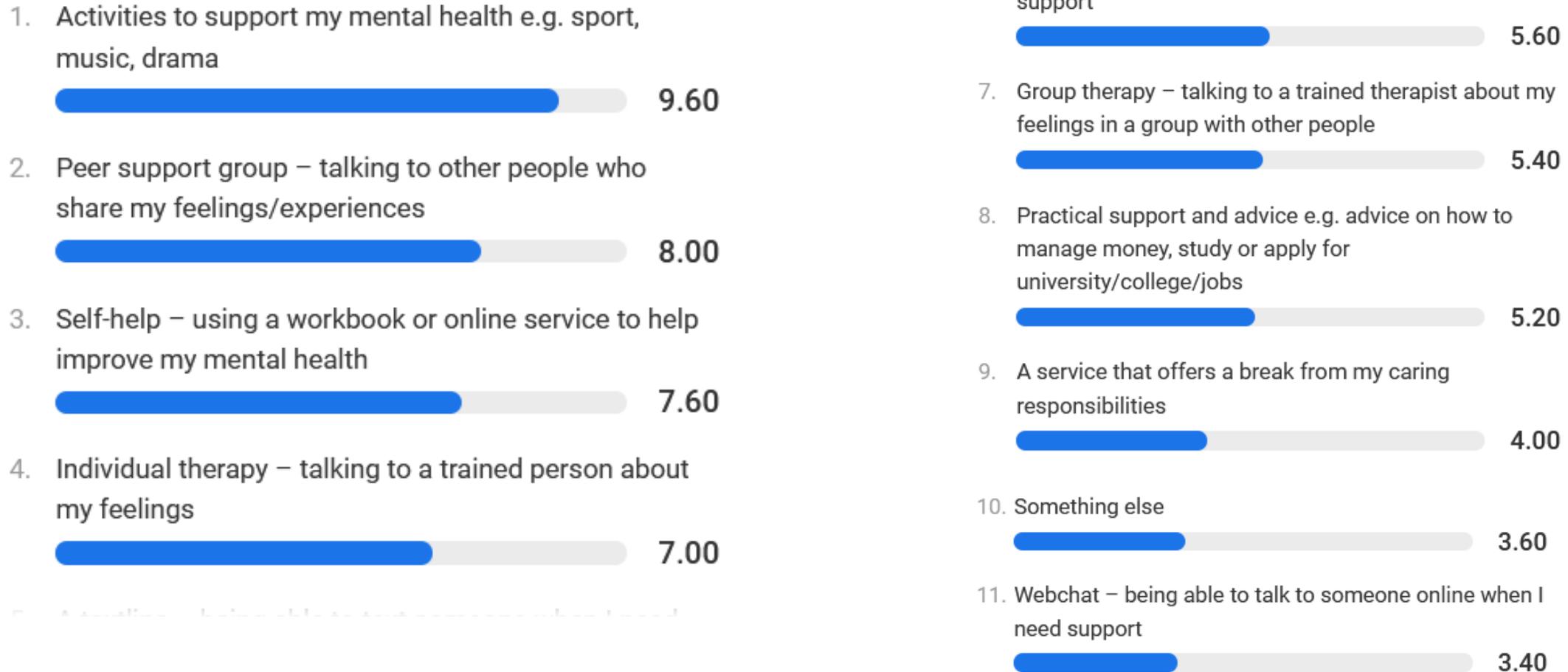


## Mental health support

It is vital for Healthwatch to understand what young people want from mental health services & all services- so that we can represent their views in discussions about mental health and wider provision. We asked the group what they would find **most** useful from a mental health support service and gave them options to rank.

# Mental health support ranking

Which options would you find most useful from a mental health support service?



# Mental health support - discussion

The most popular options were **activities to support mental health** and **peer support groups**. We discussed how these can often be combined, e.g. a peer support group where you do activities together as well as talking about mental health.

The group highlighted how important it is to have different options for mental health support rather than a one size fits all approach:

- One member of the group would prefer group therapy to individual therapy as they feel more comfortable in a group setting
- Another young carer felt the opposite: **“I have really bad social anxiety so I prefer individual”**

# Person-centred care

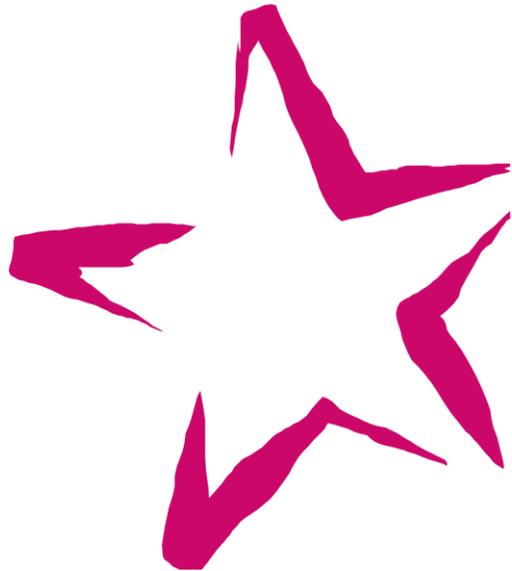
We mentioned the concept of ‘person-centred care’ which is currently being discussed across the Wirral.

None of the young carers had heard of this phrase, even though they care for people who access services which should be using this concept.

We talked about how services should be aware that they are young carers, and should recognize the expertise they have as carers.

\* We have agreed to follow up with more information on person-centred care and planning- and what is happening on Wirral!\*





## What next?

We are extremely grateful to Barnardo's for helping to set up the group and to all of the young carers who gave up their time during half term to share their views and experiences with us.

All the young carers will receive a #Spare5 Ambassador certificate in recognition of their participation to helping to Make a Difference.

At the end of the meeting everyone felt they knew what Healthwatch Wirral does and how we can help.

We are keen to continue working with young carers to improve youth participation in Healthwatch and everyone in the group said they would be interested to meet again!

“thank you! I have really enjoyed this :)”

“I loved doing this it is something fun to do”

Next Steps- will be looking at further engagement  
‘YouthWatch Wirral’ Work.