

Supporting Teenagers' Wellbeing During Remote Learning in the COVID-19 Pandemic

HOW DO TEENAGERS EXPERIENCE REMOTE LEARNING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

With many teenagers engaging in remote learning due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in the UK, both teenagers and staff are facing new challenges. In The TELL Study, we heard from teenagers aged 16 to 19 years about their wellbeing experiences during the initial COVID-19 lockdown. They told us that remote learning within pandemic restrictions could be difficult and brought many new challenges, not only for their learning but also for their wellbeing.

Teenagers told us that they found it difficult to concentrate and stay focused on their work, and didn't always feel motivated to learn. This could be because they were stressed or anxious about the wider pandemic situation, or because their home environment wasn't well-suited to studying and they faced distractions or practical difficulties. Many also said it was harder without their peers and teachers physically present to help them stay on track and feel engaged. They also told us it could be hard to keep track of the work they needed to complete, and to manage their own schedule. This included finding it hard to "switch off" at the end of the day, especially when they were studying in their bedrooms. Finally, teenagers told us that they missed having social time with their friends and peers throughout the day, both in and out of lesson time.

"I don't want to be learning right now like everything's normal."

"I haven't got a quiet space to work in my house. There's never a free space – that isn't on my bed – to work."

"It is somewhat challenging having the same environment in which to work, relax and sleep as the lines can be blurred and it is difficult to 'switch off'."

"I don't have fellow students around with who I usually can discuss the progress and help each other if we are experiencing similar struggles."



WHAT CAN EDUCATION SETTINGS AND STAFF DO TO SUPPORT TEENAGERS' WELLBEING DURING REMOTE LEARNING?

A patient and flexible approach to expectations will be useful as teenagers navigate remote learning. Students will be facing a range of personal circumstances that may be challenging, such as limited resources or space, difficulty managing their routine, or low mood.



Encourage open exchange between students and staff about the challenges of remote studying and exploration of where adjustments or support can be helpful.



Provide a range of opportunities for students to access support and ensure they know what is available to them. This could include “drop-in” sessions where students can informally ask for support or guidance.

Support students in establishing a routine and figuring out what works for them for keeping motivated and focused where they can, including helping them figure out how to plan time, schedule breaks, and switch off at the end of the day.

Promote a sense of community and togetherness for students. This may include providing opportunities for students to talk and work together, as they are less able to engage in casual social interactions throughout the school day.



Try to offer consistency in approaches and expectations but also consider how “new” things can be introduced. Being restricted to your household can mean days feel boring and repetitive, and it can help to find ways to mix things up and add some novelty to the day.



Provide opportunities to reflect on and discuss self-care and coping strategies. Our TELL lesson plan, in the Supporting Teenagers Toolkit, is designed to support group conversations about this.

See the **TELL Supporting Teenagers Toolkit** (www.seed.manchester.ac.uk/tell-toolkit) for wider resources around supporting students, including on key issues such as self-care strategies, motivation and routine, and relationships and connection.

