



# Rowlands Young peoples views on the lockdown and the future

Rowlands Selkirk, 24-26 Westport, Selkirk TD7 4DG  
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Scottish Charitable incorporated organisation SC025811



## About Rowlands

Rowlands is a youth project providing youth work opportunities to young people aged 11 to 18 years old in Selkirk. We are open 5 days a week, providing drop ins where young people can meet friends in a safe space. We operate from our own building within three designated youth work spaces; and in addition we have staff based in the local high school, and a dedicated project worker for our Stepping Stones partnership project. During these times we deliver one to one sessions, small group work on specialist topics and information. We have a summer program as well as a transition program for primary 7's pupils as they move into S1. We work closely with our local primary and high schools as well as other partners to give and receive opportunities for our young people. Our 4-person staff team are supported by a proactive board as well as a team of 12 volunteers who also share their time and experience through the drop in and group work sessions.

## Setting the Scene – perspective of our Youth Work

We have all found ourselves both personally and professionally in a very different position than what we were a month ago due to the global coronavirus pandemic. Across our community and country people are finding themselves working and schooling from home, spending more time on line accessing everything from entertainment to shopping to help and advice, and we have found ourselves at home for probably the longest periods we can ever remember without seeing friends and family.

Rowlands closed its doors on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020. The same decision made by many youth work partners in the Borders, a decision not taken lightly and with a heavy heart, made to protect our staff, volunteers and young people. We took what we thought we would need for a short time, books, pens, envelopes, issued staff with mobile phones and switched off the heating. Thinking initially, like many, we would only be gone a couple of weeks.

Though the staff team embracing the situation as an opportunity, we were able to move the majority of our group work and other services online quite quickly. We found it easier to keep each staff member responsible for the day they would be the lead worker if we were actually in our building. We opened some new groups such as photography and book group as well as others for the community to be part of which has been our successful bingo and quiz nights. Rowlands has always had an active facebook page so we were able to quickly build on this as well as using what's app, youtube, instagram and twitter.

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It is through these contacts and conversations we have been able to help and discuss some of the worries which young people have right now in relation to the Covid-19 epidemic and also their hopes and fears for the future. From this we decided to conduct an anonymous questionnaire which we hoped would give us more information on how young people were feeling at this moment in time and to guide us as an organisation about how we respond to young people's needs now and in the future.

Susan Law, May 2020.



## Our Approach

Using an online survey platform we devised a set of questions which we would invite young people to complete. The survey was available to access via our facebook page. We sent requests directly to our facebook 'friends' and followers to ask for them to complete the survey. Sixty-three young people from Selkirk completed the survey. We have analysed the responses and have prepared this report to disseminate the findings.

The survey was structured in to four themes:

- school and home work
- physical and mental health
- access to support
- the future

## Who responded?

The breakdown of responses showed that these came from 24 males and 38 females with one person preferring not to say. The majority of respondents (47), were from school and the rest were at college, working or unemployed. It was within the 13 and 14 age group we received the majority of our replies which is reflective of our membership at this time, which also is mainly within this age group.

## What did we find?

### Theme 1: school and home work

#### Findings

In response to the question "How are you feeling about school and college being closed?" – 81% of young people who were at school or college felt that they had concerns or slight concerns about school and college closure.

			Total
1	This Question does not apply to me		10
2	Concerned		16
3	Slightly Concerned		27
4	Not Concerned		8
5	Not bothered at all		2



The qualitative insights we received from young people help us to understand these concerns:

“I havent been given any extra work, I am worried about falling behind at university and might lose my part time job in edinburgh because I am back in Selkirk”

“I am a bit worried as I am new to my school and had low self confidence but I am worried about how I am going to get on in the future, is it a concern this could happen in the future”

“I am scared to go back to school incase it hasnt been cleaned properly and I catch it”

“It could potentially ruin most peoples future with exams neign [being] cancelled what we gonna do”

We asked young people to tell us about their experiences of school work at home – this was a qualitative question and we have grouped together the response in to themes. Not all young people filled in this question as it did not apply to them and so the responses do not match the final total.

Too much homework and its making me stressed. (17 responses)

“i get a lot and struggle with most”.

“I think there is alot and the school are putting pressure on us”

“There is tons and it is making me feel sad”

Homework is stopping me from being bored. (7 responses)

“I am bored so doing it. I didnt realise I am quite good at school work so might stop mucking about in class as much”

“I enjoy it as it’s a distraction”

I’m not doing it. (3 responses)

“Im not doing it and there is nothing that the school can do to get me in trouble”

Its fine. (14 responses)

“good because we can still keep on track with what we are doing”

“There is alot but my mum says that this is new so the school wouldnt know how much to give

“I dont think it is alot, no more than being in school”



## Discussion and Commentary – School and Home Work

These findings show us that young people are concerned and slightly concerned as to how they are or may be coping with studying and schooling at home. Many are worried about how they may be comparing with others and a few are not concerned either because they believe that nothing can happen to them if they do not engage in work being sent home or some may be at the end of their school career and see little point in engaging.





We have been able to engage young people, in different levels through practical online tasks and activities and we have been able to successfully link these to SCQF Level 3 Dynamic Youth Awards to be able to recognise and celebrate young people's achievements through non-academic activities during the lock down.

We have been able to communicate with senior school staff, pastoral learning support and pass on information on behalf of young people who have said that they are finding the work difficult. Being able to pass on these messages has been beneficial to school staff and in turn to young people. Feedback to us from school staff team has been that they appreciate that we may have more contact with young people during this time and that at this time there has not been a pressure on completing work.

## Theme 2: Physical and Mental Health

### Findings





The tables below give an indication of how young people are feeling about their own physical and mental health, as well as that of others close to them.

			Response Total
1	Not at all concerned		25
2	Slightly concerned		23
3	Quite concerned		10
4	Extremely concerned		6

When young people were asked how they feel about their own physical health the majority are not or only slightly concerned, but when we asked about their



own mental health there was a slightly shifting picture with a greater number of young people expressing some level of concern.

			Response Total
1	Not concerned		15
2	Slightly concerned		28
3	Quite concerned		15
4	Extremely concerned		6

These two comments show the frustration felt by some about the situation.

“people our age will die and there are people still at school going out which is annoying”

“I am sick of hearing about it and missing out on football and keeping fit. I am eating loads and it is starting to get me down”

## Discussion and Commentary – Physical and Mental Health

As we can see from the responses the majority of young people are concerned or slightly concerned about their own physical or mental health four weeks into the Covid-19 lockdown. This is perhaps a reflection of the conversations that our staff team were having with the young people at that time.

In a recent survey conducted by Young Scot, YouthLink Scotland and SYP their findings also showed that 77% of young people were concerned about their wellbeing so our findings are reflective of the national picture. Our own approach at Rowlands has been to give information and offer direct support where possible. We have had additional referrals to our Stepping Stones program and we have increased our information and postings around mental health and wellbeing with links to the supports we can provide during this time as well as links to other partners or local projects. Some of the general supports are through our Facebook pages and we have daily drop in on messenger which is manned by a member of staff Monday to Friday.

Our staff have also had to experience the changes that the lockdown has made in their lives, whilst providing a continued service. They have also

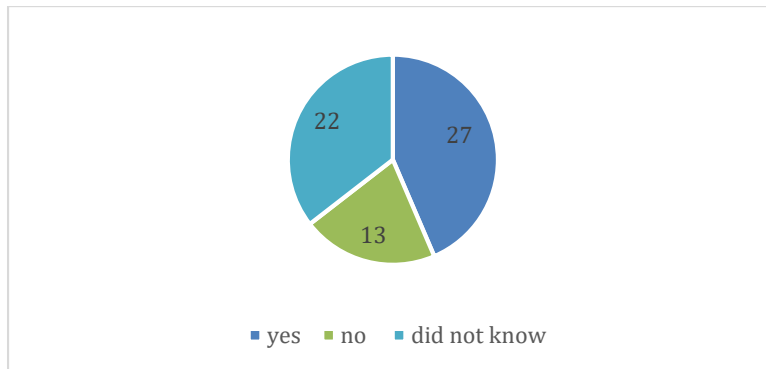


used the lockdown time to take part in new training and upskilling to provide additional supports to pass on to our young people .

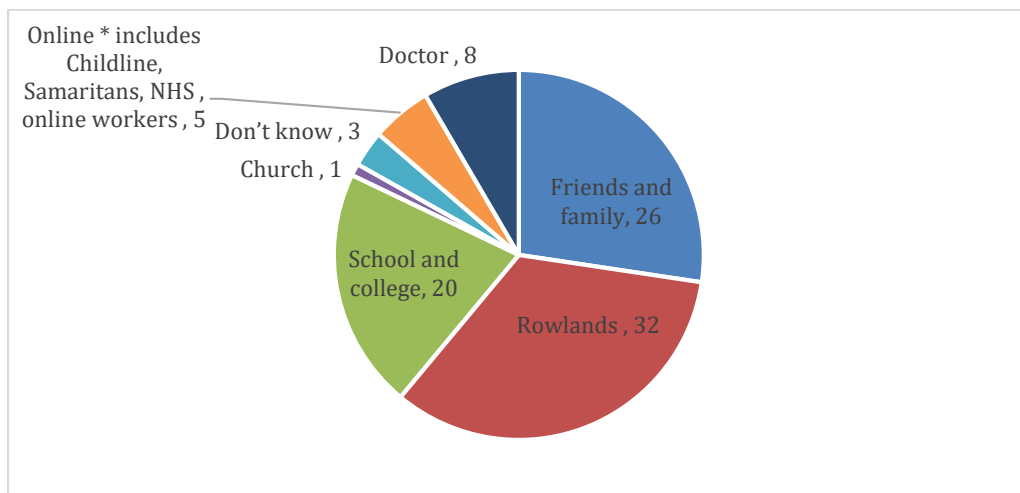
### Theme 3: Access to Support

#### Findings

Young people we asked did they feel they had enough support at the moment. From the result we could see that 27 respondents said yes, 13 said no and 22 did not know.



The following question checked in to see if those who replied knew where to get support and again this information was counted and collated into the following groupings and shows the number of times each support was mentioned







However it feels that young people still have worries about if it would be ok to contact

“I feel that Rowlands have offered support but I sometimes wish that we knew about how our teachers are doing.”

This is again reflected in this additional response

“My parents but I dont want to go to them as they are working and worried about my grandparents. I have school and haven’t been to rowlands in ages but know i could message them.”,

This shows us showing that although time has passed the young people know that support would still be given if asked for.

## Discussion and Commentary – Access to Support

Direct comments and the responses show that the young people know where to go for support, but our responses to how we framed the questions don’t tell us if they are they accessing such supports and services.

From our recorded membership at Rowlands the staff team are contacting these young people as part of a rota system. Many young people will go towards the youth worker who they trust the most, or have an existing relationship with, to ask questions or to check in with.

This echoes the recent Trusted Adult research report published by YouthBorders, the report highlights the long term and protective impact and importance of a trusted adult in a young person’s life. This support is often given in a face to face context and this is not an option for some at the moment.

Although this survey was completed online we know that all of these young people had internet access. What we don’t know is how many young people were unable to as to how many families may be finding the additional online need an added expense to the family budget. Rowlands has been able to offer additional phone support to parents, many of whom we have had little contact with prior to the lockdown, many of whom are just seeking conversation and confirmation that they are in the same position as many other parents at this time. We have been able to directly support families through food bags, mobile phone top ups and fuel vouchers through support



from a variety of funders which although may feel like only a small contribution will have made a huge difference

## **Theme 4: The future**

### Findings

Many were worried about employment and the likelihood of them being able to get a job as well as the worries of parents losing their jobs and what this would mean for their family overall. Relationships were mentioned often which showed us that many are starting to feel the strain on relationships both in the house and with others.

“Me and my brother are fighting all the time and I dont think we will like each other again as we are sick of each other”

“ am scared that my girlfriend will go off me as we aren’t seeing each other and we have been fighting a lot”

“my family are really grumpy at the moment as we like to keep fit and go camping. we arent used to being cooped indoors so everyone is snapping. I worry about my family”

Young people were able to tell us about their feelings toward easing of lockdown restrictions and how their community and life might be in the future:

“I do fear the future when covid-19 calms down. I could see people being afraid to socialise with others in public gatherings. Using physical cash could be deemed against and for people who might just have a cough, people might end up feeling resent towards that person”.

“I feel sick as it is around us all the time, my hands are bleeding as I wash them all of the time i m paranoid and I think i will be anxious when I have to go back to school about touching things and people”

### Discussion and Commentary – The Future

The responses for this final question were quite startling and showed us that they young people in general are really quite worried about the future and what this means for both them and their family.



From conversations we have found that because young people are not seeing each other in person they are able to include and exclude others from online groups, which is much easier to do when the person is not there and cannot communicate and sort out any situations. Friendships are also taking a toll as this could be an outlet for the frustrations at home or for the future, and if some relationships are already strained and this could be an outlet. The team at Rowlands have already seen and heard how friendships groups have fallen out and how they are also doing this publicly on open chats rather than between themselves.

For a minority, the experience of lockdown has been positive. One young person who had been able to see this experience as positive enabling them to spend more time together with family:

“I like being at home on my xbox it means i get to spend more time with my dad and we have talked loads which is good”

We feel that there are other young people in the same or similar situation who may not feel at the moment that this time was when they had their parents undivided attention and may not realise or think about the memories of this until later. We have tried to encourage young people to write their thoughts down as part of Instagram project so that a year from now we can look back and see that there were some really great moments peppered in with the other worries of feeling sad or out of control

## Reflections

It would appear that from the responses received from this questionnaire we have been allowed to see a snapshot of the lives of Selkirk's young people and their thoughts on the present situation for both themselves, their family and the future.

Rowlands will tackle one of these questions each week and provide direction into support and guidance on suitable local and online organisations who can provide support and advice as well the opportunity to contact staff within Rowlands through some of the social media outlets we have at present.



The questionnaire was anonymous which may have meant that some of the answers are truthful and at times sad that we may have got through giving names and face to face, but has also meant that we cannot give direct support to the individuals behind these replies and instead we are giving generic advice and support through our facebook page each week

We anticipate that we will conduct a follow up to this survey in the future, this will enable us to see if the thoughts and opinions have changed, again using our social media to give information and show responses.

## Contact Us

If you wish to find out more about the work which Rowlands does in the community please feel free to have a look at our facebook page which give an up to date information on what is happening as well as our other social media platforms

**Facebook** – @RowlandsSelkirk

**Twitter** @rowlandsdrybar

**youtube.** – Rowlands Selkirk

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