



Permanent Secretary

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Tuesday 20th October 2020

Thank you

Dear Dmitrijs

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for participating in the Youth Engagement session we held on Monday 28 September to hear about your experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic.

I am sorry that I was only able to join from the train, and that at times the coverage wasn't very good. I was listening hard, though, and I also had an update from the rest of the team afterwards to make sure I hadn't missed anything. I was really glad to be able to hear from you directly. My colleagues and I found it a hugely valuable session, and we really appreciated the honesty and openness about young people's experiences, and their insights into where government could do better.

It was clear from the discussion that you had a key priority of ensuring young people have access to high quality mental health support and the need for your voices to be heard and reflected in decision-making about things that affect you. I know colleagues from other government departments took away your requests to reflect on and also some practical suggestions, for example, on things like when mental health consultations are offered virtually, face to face should be offered rather than just a phone call.

Along with the challenges you shared, it was great to hear that you have managed to draw some positives from the last 6 months and from accessing education in different ways at home. Although you raised some important issues around accessing education from a distance. I was pleased to hear as a group that you felt supported by your schools and colleges during this unique and challenging time.

Thank you again for your engagement in this session. Your honesty and openness is greatly appreciated and we will continue to take action on the points you have raised to us. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

**SUSAN ACLAND-HOOD
PERMANENT SECRETARY**

