

What is **DisCOVeRy** ?

Longitudinal mixed methods (survey & interview) study

Funded by the Applied Research Collaboration Kent Surrey & Sussex

Working in collaboration with

- University of Sussex
- Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- Norfolk & Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

What are the mental health and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic for vulnerable young people?

How do social factors relate to young people's mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic?

How do we support young people and communities throughout and beyond the pandemic?

Applied focus: well positioned to feedback findings to services/across networks and to use research to support recovery planning, both on an individual and community level

The Research Team

Professor
David Fowler
University of Sussex

Professor
Robin Banerjee
University of Sussex

Professor
Kathy Greenwood
University of Sussex

Dr Daniel Michelson
University of Sussex

Dr Helen Drew
University of Sussex

Jen Keane
University of East Anglia

Lucie Crowter
University of Sussex

Dr Jo Hodgekins
Norwich Medical School

Dr Clio Berry
Brighton & Sussex Medical School

Becca
Randell
ARC KSS

Dr Mary John
University of Surrey

Dr Leanne
Bogen-Johnston
ARC KSS

Claire Vella
University of
Sussex

Background



Young people with pre-existing mental health difficulties predicted to be disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic

(Gayer-Anderson et al., 2020; Usher, Bhullar & Jackson, 2020)



Social isolation associated with negative physical and mental health outcomes

➔ social impacts during COVID-19 pandemic is a key research priority

(Banerjee & Rai, 2020; Holmes et al., 2020; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015)



Emerging evidence... Greatest impact on well-being during COVID-19 pandemic is associated with the enforced social distancing measures (Etheridge & Spantig, 2020)



What are vulnerable young people's experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic?



Is social group membership, social connectedness and hope associated with mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Sample



T1 survey & interview data collected January – July 2021



Young people accessing mental health, well-being, social care & voluntary sector services

93.3 %

Pre-existing mental health difficulties

Mean:
24
years old

71.4%
Female

86.7%
White
British

33.3%
Student

25.7%
Employed

35.2%
NEET

Is social group membership, social connectedness and hope associated with mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Significant correlations:

Cross-sectional survey data

Prior multiple group memberships

Group membership continuity

Group membership continuity

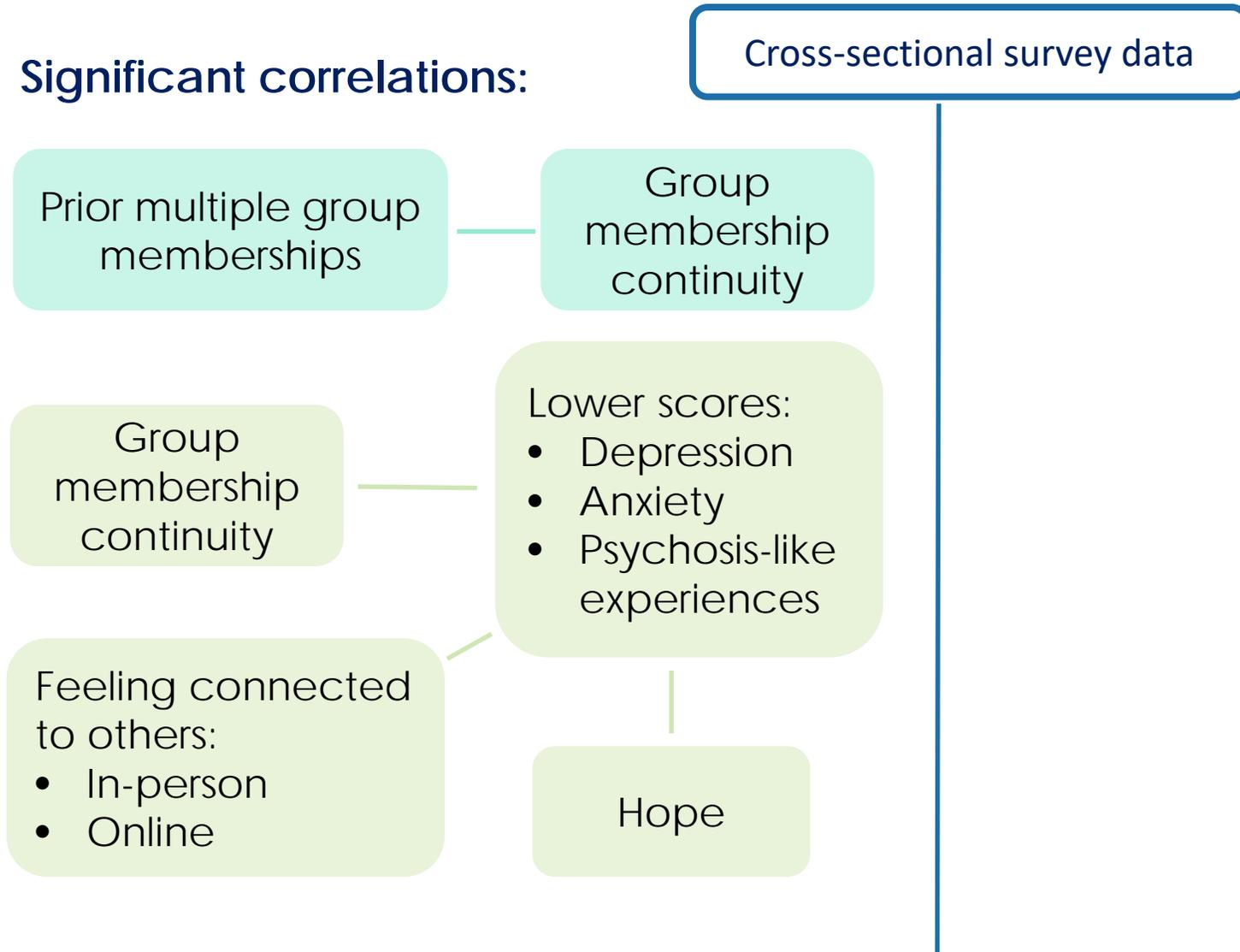
Lower scores:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Psychosis-like experiences

Feeling connected to others:

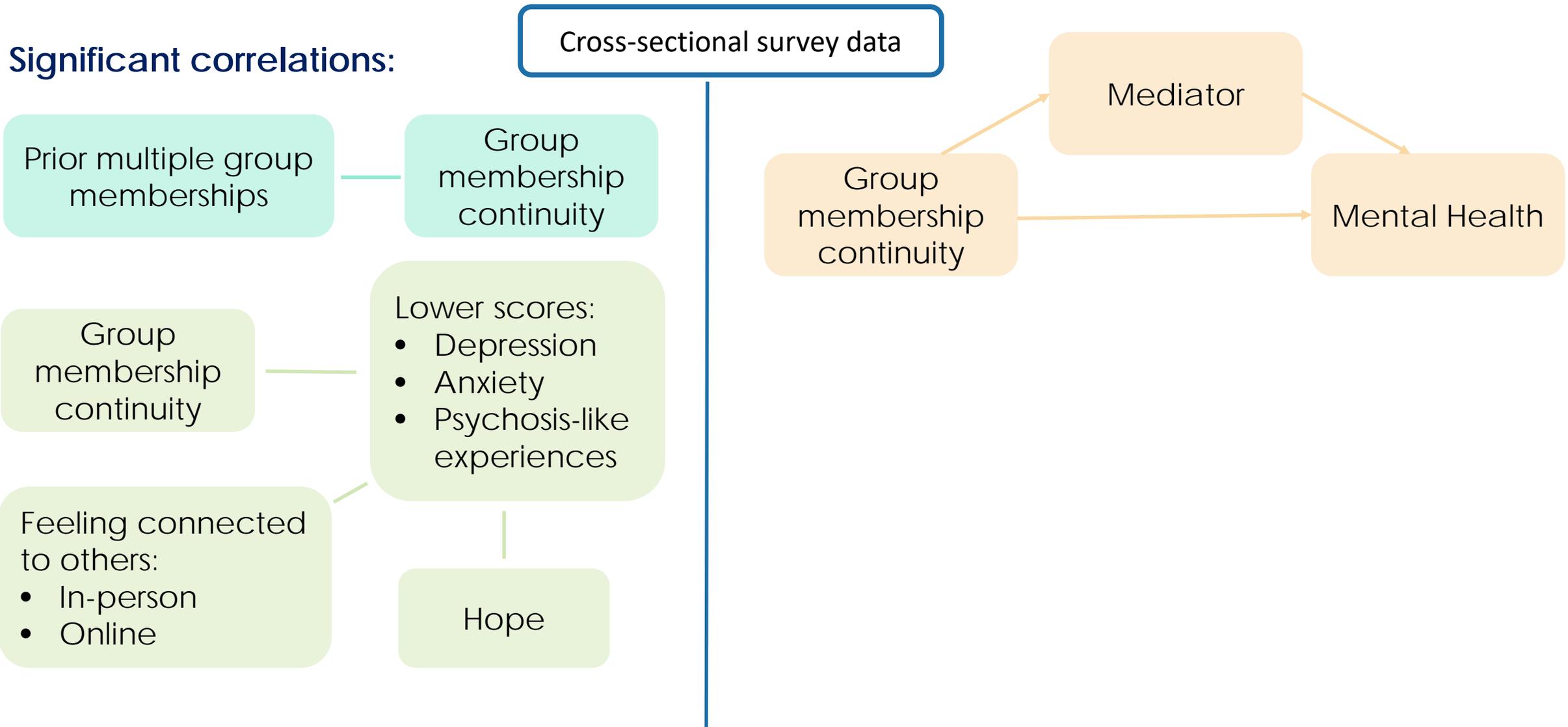
- In-person
- Online

Hope



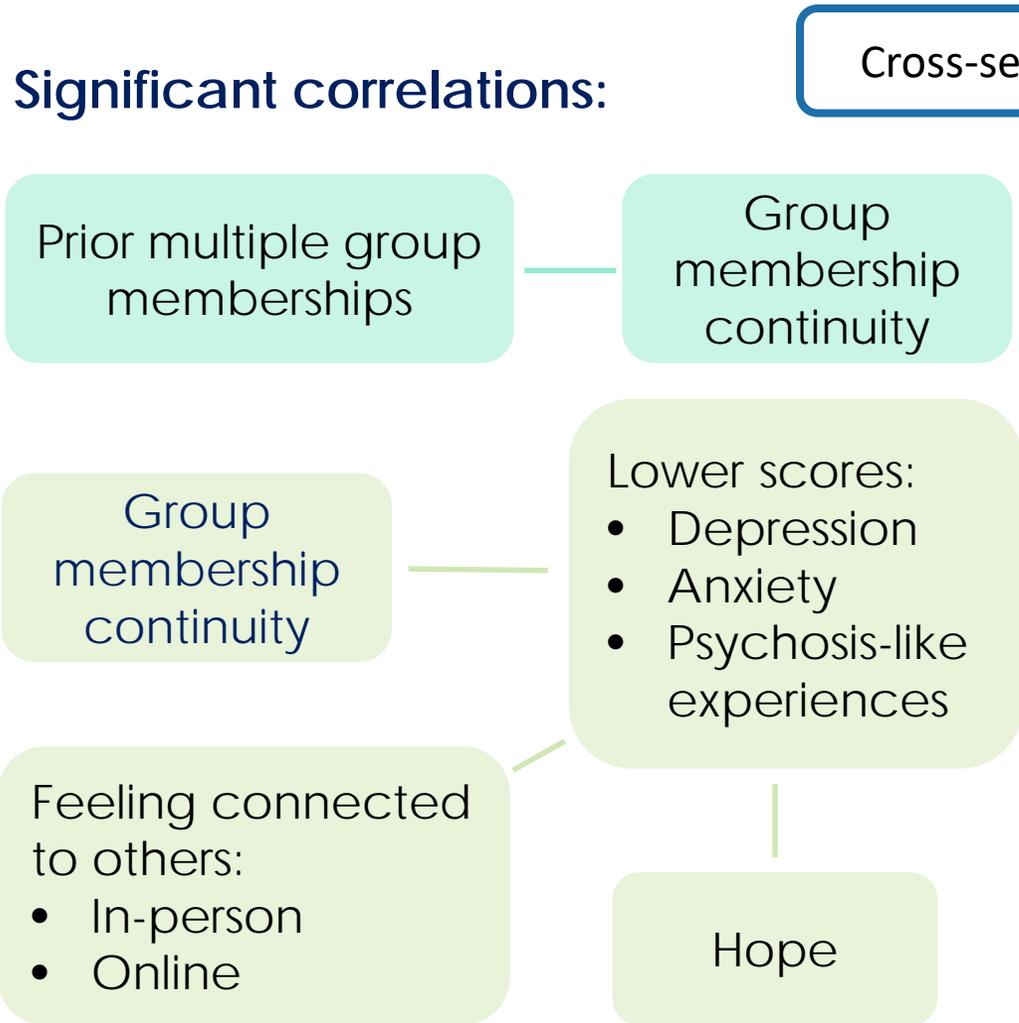
Is social group membership, social connectedness and hope associated with mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Significant correlations:

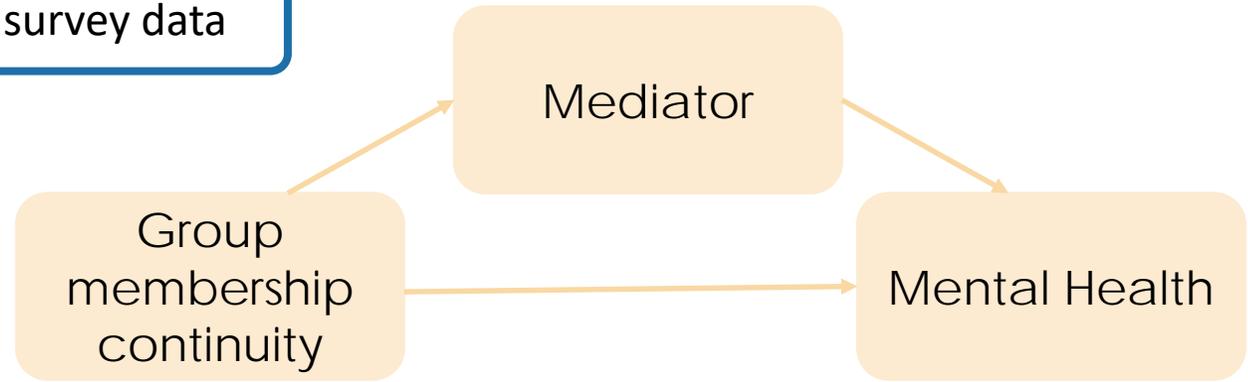


Is social group membership, social connectedness and hope associated with mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Significant correlations:



Cross-sectional survey data



Hope & in-person social connectedness were significant mediators for depression, anxiety & psychosis-like experiences



Online social connectedness was a significant mediator for depression & anxiety – but not psychosis-like experiences

NEET young people's experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic...



Interviews explored social and psychological experiences during lockdown



25 young people with pre-existing mental health difficulties were interviewed

- Sub-group of NEET young people - emerging experiences include:

Lockdown as a continuation of normal life

"the lockdowns felt fairly similar to the past ten years or so for me. That's how I've, that's how I've been living for a long time at this point"

Removal of the pressures of social convention

"...in the pandemic there isn't that constant pressure. Trying to find work and stuff like that, isn't it? Yeah, not being expected, that sort of mental pressure"

Someone regular to talk to

"I suppose just like someone to talk to on a regular basis would be nice"

 6 month follow up interviews and surveys

 Follow up interviews:

- Social and psychological experiences in this new phase of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Experiences and support needs to improve social connectedness
- Attitudes towards different support strategies

 **How do we support young people and communities throughout and beyond the pandemic?**

References

- Banerjee, D., & Rai, M. (2020). Social isolation in Covid-19: The impact of loneliness. *The International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 20764020922269. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020764020922269>
- Etheridge, B., & Spantig, L. (2020). The gender gap in mental well-being during the Covid-19 outbreak: Evidence from the UK (No. 2020-08). ISER Working Paper Series.
- Gayer-Anderson, C., Latham, R., El Zerbi, C., Strang, L., Moxham Hall, V., Knowles, G., ... Wilkinson, B. (2020) Impacts of social isolation among disadvantaged and vulnerable groups during public health crises. Available from: <https://esrc.ukri.org/files/news-events-and-publications/evidence-briefings/summary-impacts-of-social-isolation-among-disadvantaged-and-vulnerable-groups-during-public-health-crises/>
- Holmes, E. A., O'connor, R. C., Perry, H., Tracey, I., Wessely, S., Arseneault, L., ... Bullmore, E. (2020). Position Paper Multidisciplinary research priorities for the COVID-19 pandemic: a call for action for mental health science, 547. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(20\)30168-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(20)30168-1)
- Holt-Lunstad, J., Smith, T. B., Baker, M., Harris, T., & Stephenson, D. (2015). Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for mortality: a meta-analytic review. *Perspectives on Psychological Science : A Journal of the Association for Psychological Science*, 10(2), 227–237.
- Usher, K., Bhullar, N., & Jackson, D. (2020). Life in the pandemic: Social isolation and mental health. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, jocn.15290. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.15290>