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YOUTH SURVEY 2025
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BACKGROUND TO THE SURVEY

The ideas for this youth survey were first discussed at a joint meeting between Youth Options Youth Ambassadors, the Youth Options CEO, and the Chair of Trustees in December 2024.

During January and February 2025, our Youth Ambassadors designed and tested the survey questions to gather the opinions of their peers. These questions focused on five key areas identified as important to their lives, and the lives of their friends, across Youth Options projects in Hampshire: access to youth work, wellbeing, feeling safe, social media, and having their voices heard.

In March, the group worked with our Senior Marketing Officer to design the look of the survey, ensuring it was accessible and developing a strategy to promote it both to young people who already access Youth Options and to those who do not. The survey was created as an online form, supported by a QR code and an immersive reader, and it went live in April 2025 for one month.

This report provides an overview of the results and includes the Youth Ambassadors' recommendations on how the findings should shape the work of Youth Options and wider support for children and young people in Hampshire.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about our survey and the views of children and young people in Hampshire.

Josh, Becca, Holly, Ruby, Jess, Barney, Oscar, Tyler, Adam, Riley (Youth Options Youth Ambassadors 2024-2026)



SUMMARY OF RESULTS

239 RESPONDENTS

Hampshire with a demographic profile that was in line with Southampton's population.



The most important thing to encourage young people to access youth work was having friends already involved, a friendly environment and a warm safe space to socialise.

Young people think that their communities care about them, but they do not think that they are always consulted on things that affect them.

While some young people were not interested in being consulted, more had issues that they did want to have their views considered about.

43.7%

of young people indicated that they wanted to have a say about education

Social media is more complex than national debate often suggests. Young people value it for staying connected and often say it makes them feel happy and inspired. At the same time, they recognise its negative impact on self-esteem, and many have experienced harmful use.

Our Youth Ambassadors felt it's important for young people to be included in open, sensible conversations about social media and actively involved in finding solutions.

23% recorded that they were rarely or never excited about the future

40% were keen for more CCTV & police presence

37% responded negatively about feeling safe in their communities

40% of young people were often or always excited about the future



The things that worried young people on a regular basis were the pressures of **education**, **relationships**, **mental health** and **money worrie**s.

Four areas were identified as a priority by young people responding to the survey as being areas of concern that they actively worry about.

The following themes were priorities coming out of the survey that our Youth Ambassadors felt were important for youth organisations like Youth Options to focus on. But they are equally important areas for all organisations working with children and young people to be:





EDUCATION

Many young people find formal classrooms and schools a difficult and stressful place.

They need support with negotiating the pressures of a school environment, encouragement to engage or re-engage in education and support with alternative provision when that is not possible.



RELATIONSHIPS

Young people often worry about how to build healthy peer relationships, handle conflicts, and express their needs.

At Youth Options, building trusted relationships, developing social and emotional skills, and creating support networks are central to helping children and young people engage positively with those around them and their communities.



MENTAL WELLBEING

Children and young people want support in understanding what contributes to positive mental health and in developing coping strategies and emotional regulation skills.

Youth Options should continue offering opportunities to connect with nature and other resilience-building activities, while also providing safe spaces for reflection and wellbeing.



POVERTY

Youth Options should continue supporting children, young people, and families facing economic hardship.

Inequality and poverty remain daily barriers in Hampshire, limiting opportunities and preventing some from reaching their potential. Youth Options must also keep advocating for those without the same chances as their peers.

SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS



These sessions have given me the opportunity to find new ways to control how I react in situations and how to overcome these, so that I can focus more on my education and stay focused moving forward

- Young Person

WHAT YOUTH ORGANISATIONS SHOULD DO:

Support in Education

- Help young people manage school pressures.
- Encourage re-engagement with learning.
- Provide young people with alternative education opportunities when needed.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

- Help young people learn coping skills and emotional regulation.
- Offer safe spaces and activities (like nature-based programmes) that build resilience.
- Ensure all staff working with young people have the skills, support and confidence to discuss and signpost on issues of mental health and wellbeing.

Social Media

- Talk openly about the risks and benefits of being online.
- Help young people feel safe discussing online experiences without shame.
- Involve young people in shaping solutions to online problems.

Youth Voice

- Create more chances for young people, especially those less often heard, to share their views.
- Support young people to get involved in the issues they care about - locally and nationally.

Healthy Relationships

- Teach skills to manage friendships, resolve conflict, and express feelings.
- Focus on building trust, emotional wellbeing, and social support networks.

Poverty & Inequality

- Continue supporting families facing financial challenges.
- Advocate for equal opportunities and highlight the real impact of poverty on young lives.

Feeling Safe

- Listen to young people about what makes them feel safe or unsafe.
- Explore issues like fear of strangers, unfamiliar places, and risk-taking.
- Ensure youth workers are available in more communities, as they are seen as a trusted source of support.

Access & Visibility

- Increase awareness and availability of youth work.
- Advocate for more funding and support for youth services.
- Continue creating safe, friendly spaces where young people feel welcome and supported.



WHO RESPONDED

46% Don't have experience with Youth Options

30% Currently access Youth Options' services

16% Other/Not Sure

8% Previously worked with Youth Options



234 Young People responded to our survey. Young people were accessed through schools, partner organisations and posters in our venues.

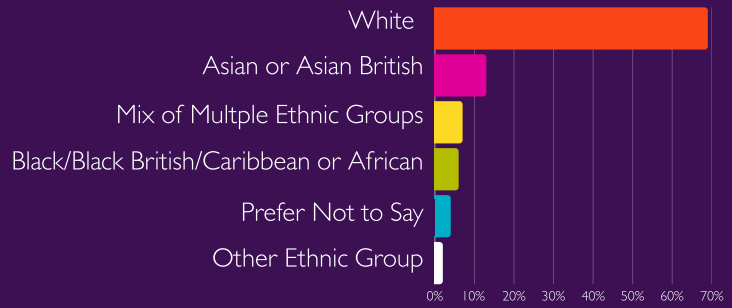
Young people used a QR code to access the online survey, which had a reader to increase its accessibility.

HOW RESPONDANTS IDENTIFIED

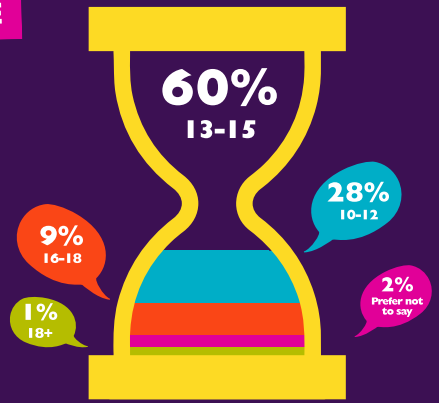
GENDER



ETHNICITY



AGE



VIEWS ABOUT YOUTH WORK

When asked about the top three factors that would encourage them to join a youth club.

The respondents could select 3 of the options.





THE RESULTS

Breaking the results down by gender showed that having friends already involved was equally important across both groups.

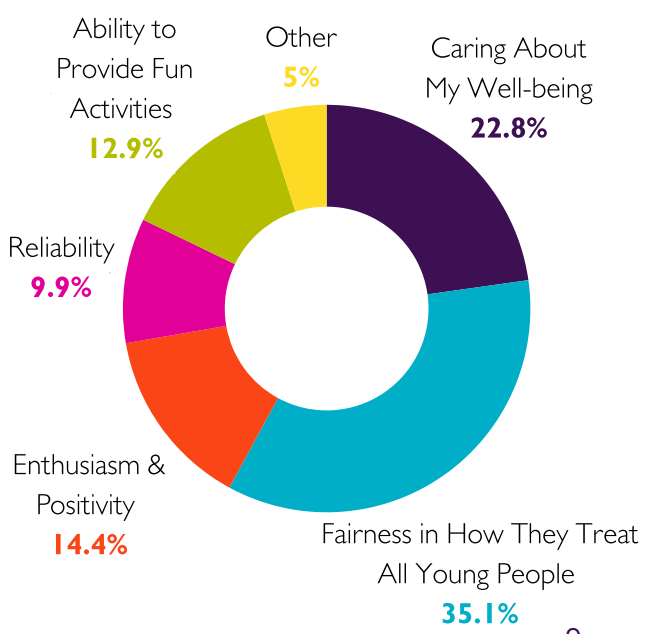
The most notable differences were: the friendliness of staff mattered more to girls (43%) than boys (35%); boys placed greater value on physical activities and sports (35% vs. 16%); girls were more interested in skills-based sessions (24% vs. 19%); food and drink was a higher priority for girls, while boys placed more importance on the quality of facilities.

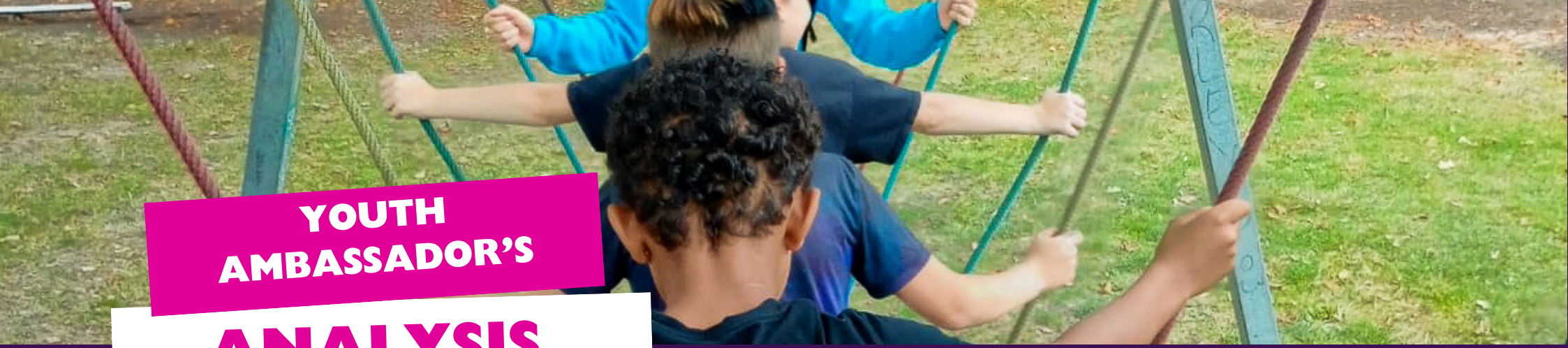
Another question explored the most important qualities of a youth worker. All of the qualities identified by our Youth Ambassadors when designing the survey were recognised as important by respondents.

The top priority, chosen by one-third of respondents, was that youth workers should treat all young people fairly. **The second most valued quality was caring about young people's wellbeing (21%).**

Some respondents in the "other" category noted that all the identified qualities were important and could not be separated, emphasising the need for staff who combine all these elements.

One young person also highlighted the importance of youth workers recognising when young people need space.





YOUTH AMBASSADOR'S ANALYSIS

These findings align with our experience. Most of us first engaged with Youth Options because we were introduced to projects by our friends. It is really important that youth organisations engage personally with young people to encourage groups to get involved, talking to them about what a project is and developing relationships. Young people are nervous to start new things where they don't know the people and what to expect. If someone you know recommends it, you think alright I'll give it a go. Meeting groups of young people and encouraging them to try things out together will make people feel safe about getting involved. Friendliness and having a space that is warm and welcoming are always more important than the quality of the facilities. Food and drink are always an incentive! But most people just want a place to come to that is safe and welcoming and they feel valued.

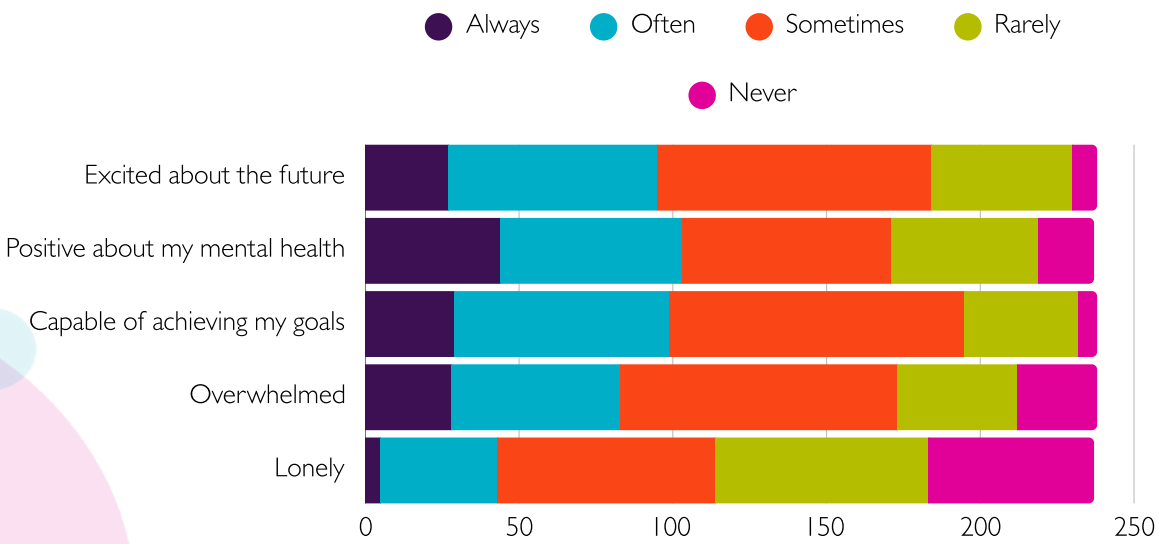
We all felt strongly that only 12% of young people say they are not interested in being involved in youth work activities, but we do not think that most young people are involved or have access to the support they need. While we realise that some of the young people responding to the survey may be doing things with other organisations only 30 % of people who replied to our survey were using Youth Options at the moment. More people should have the opportunity for support.

We did not feel too strongly about the gender differences in what people wanted from youth club sessions, because we feel that this is about personal preference for what different young people would like to do at youth clubs. However, we do think that there is a gender split in accessing sports and physical exercise through youth groups. Our experience and the previous research of #BeeWell (who we have worked with) suggests that girls are under a lot more pressure around body image which causes anxiety about getting involved in physical activity and how it will be viewed by others. We think the preference for physical activities for boys might be more around making it accessible and safe for girls to participate without judgement.



LOOKING AT WELLBEING

We're seeing more young people exploring themes of wellbeing. We asked the respondents to rank how often they have felt different emotions over the 2 weeks before filling in the survey in. These were the results that we received.



Overall, young people's responses showed a relatively even spread across the scale from "never" to "always" for all five emotions.

The findings highlight a significant minority who face challenges with their mental health. For example, 40% of young people said they often or always felt excited about the future, while 23% said they rarely or never did.

Similarly, 41.5% often or always felt capable of achieving their goals, but 18% reported rarely or never feeling this way.

In terms of general wellbeing, 43.8% said they often or always felt positive about their mental health, compared with 27.4% who rarely or never felt positive. In reverse, 34.6% said they often or always felt overwhelmed, and 17.6% often or always felt lonely, although more than half (52.3%) reported rarely or never feeling lonely.

When asked which 3 things most worried them regularly the respondents had a range of issues that were of concern.

1	Doing well in school, college, training and getting a job	156
2	Friendships and getting on with other young people	89
3	My Mental health	62
4	Having enough money for the things I need	48
	Nothing, I am not that worried	40
	My Physical health	36
	Family and home issues	35
	Staying safe in my neighborhood (knife crime & violence)	28
	Other	26
	Global warming	25
	International politics	24
	Things I see on social media	16
	Vaping/smoking	9

THE RESULTS

Concerns about education were at a similar level across groups, though slightly lower among those accessing our services. However, a larger proportion of young people currently engaged with Youth Options reported worries about friendships and mental health compared to the overall respondent group.

The clearest difference was in relation to safety: **27% of young people working with Youth Options identified staying safe in their neighbourhoods as a priority**, highlighting that this is a more significant concern in the areas where Youth Options delivers its services.





TOP 4 ISSUES

from young people that were currently accessing our services.

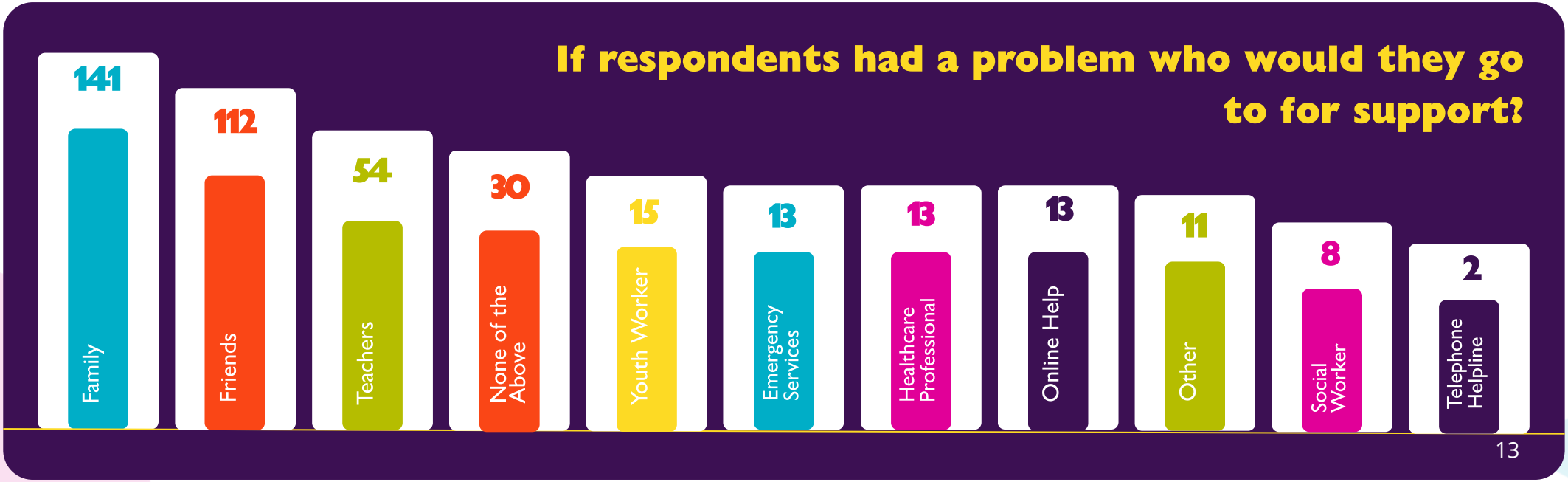


The majority of young people said they would turn to their family (60%) or friends (47%) for support with problems, with teachers mentioned by 23.5%. Only 6.4% of the overall respondents said they would turn to a youth worker.

However, among young people currently engaged with Youth Options services, 25% said they would turn to a youth worker - higher than the proportion who would approach a teacher. This suggests that when young people have access to youth work support, youth workers can become a trusted adult in their lives, sometimes more so than other professional groups.

In this same group, the percentage who would turn to teachers dropped from 23.5% to 13.5%, and those who would turn to family decreased from 60% to 52.5%.

Since Youth Options specifically works with young people at risk of school exclusion and adverse childhood experiences, these findings highlight the vital role of youth workers in supporting young people who may not find it easy to seek help from other adults.





YOUTH AMBASSADOR'S ANALYSIS

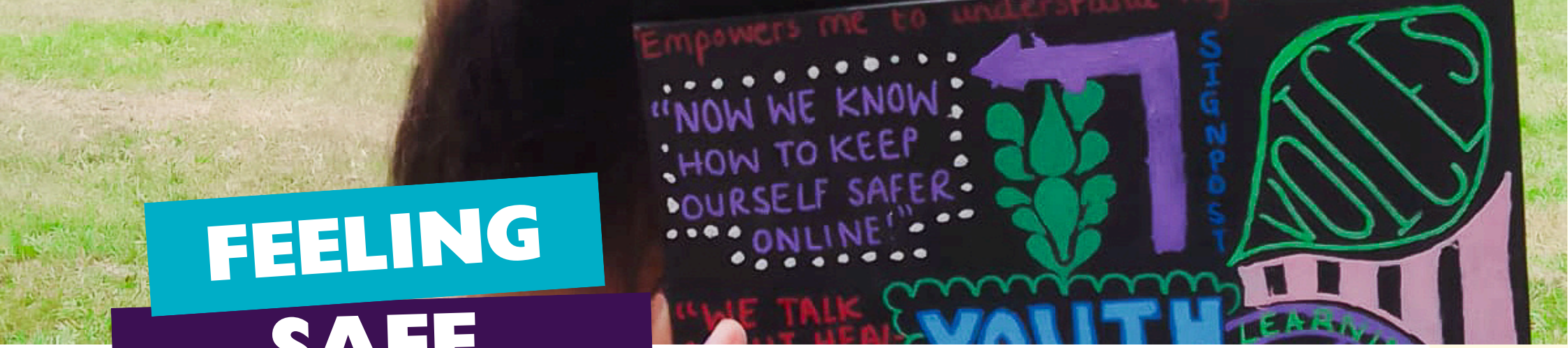
These findings make us think it's really important that Youth Options continues to support young people in these areas:

- *Helping those who find the education system difficult or struggle in school*
- *Supporting relationship building and communication skills*
- *Offering mental health support*
- *Recognising that poverty is a real issue for young people worried about providing for themselves and their families*

It's clear to us that school puts a lot of pressure on young people. We did this survey during the run-up to exams, but most of our respondents were aged 13–15 and not even taking GCSEs yet. At that age, life shouldn't be dominated by stress about school and tests. Many young people feel schools don't care about developing us as people beyond exams. Some don't feel like they fit in, and schools often don't prepare us for life. This can be even harder for young people who are neurodivergent, and staff don't always step in to challenge unkindness from others.

We also feel the number of young people who would talk to a professional about their problems is low because staff aren't always trained to engage with us properly or support the range of issues we face. It's important that all staff working with young people are approachable, supportive, and able to signpost us to the right services. Every young person should have access to adults they can trust, because sometimes you feel more comfortable talking to different people about different issues.

What matters most is having at least one adult you can trust with your worries, and making sure staff have the skills to be that person when needed.



FEELING SAFE

Overall, **37% of respondents said they do not feel safe in their local community**, while **20% said they do feel safe**. A further **42% reported feeling neither safe nor unsafe**. This resulted in a net promoter score of –18.

The average safety rating across all respondents was 6.9, with little difference between genders (**6.8 for females and 7.0 for males**).

Male respondents, however, showed a wider spread of responses: **1% reported not feeling safe at all** (no females selected 0), while **twice as many males (12%) as females said they felt safe all the time**.

Perceptions of safety were broadly consistent across ethnic groups, with an average score of 6.9, and the most common response across all groups was 7.

This question asked respondents how safe they felt in their local community on a scale of 1-10, 1 being 'unsafe/always afraid' and 10 being 'very safe'.

On a scale of 1 to 10, how safe do you feel in your local community?

Promoters	48
Passives	99
Detractors	89









What things make a community feel safe?

The respondents could select 3 of the options.





THE RESULTS

There were no clear differences in answers based on gender or ethnicity. However, we also looked at the figures broken down into those currently accessing Youth Options services and those not using our services.

For the respondents currently accessing our services **38.6% said that youth clubs and community projects made a community feel safe** and **15.9% sited seeing youth-workers out in the streets.**

What would make me afraid of another group of people?

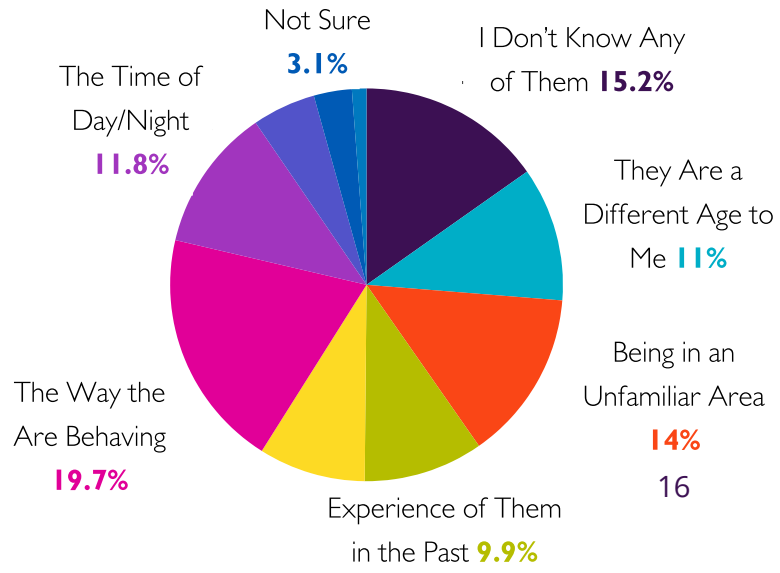
This question was asked to the respondents, with options such as 'not knowing any of them' and 'being in an unfamiliar area'. The respondents could tick as many as were applicable.

The 4 most common answers to this question were:

1. The way they are behaving (55.3%)
2. I don't know any of them (42.6%)
3. Being in an unfamiliar area (38.7%)
4. The time of day/night (32.8%)

The least common answers were:

1. Generally, I am not afraid of other groups of people (14%)
2. Not sure (8.5%)
3. Other (3.4%)





YOUTH AMBASSADOR'S ANALYSIS

We would really like to further investigate this area of our survey because it has left us with more questions than answers!

Generally speaking, people rated their safety in the middle range, so people do feel relatively safe in their own communities. However, this is not always our experience and only 20% gave a score in the positive range. We would really like to have conversations with other young people about how they define safe and unsafe and what it means to be safe. We would be interested to break the answers down by geography, to understand if there are different areas in Hampshire where young people feel less safe. We could also explore which public spaces feel safe and unsafe and this might help with identifying where young people would like to see cameras, police patrols and lighting. We had a big discussion about whether more police would be helpful and what role we would want them to play in our communities and how they should interact with young people to increase safety.

Similarly, we would really like to explore what makes public transport feel safe because this is one of the top 4 things identified as important. Some of us have experienced problems with transport and at bus stops being cat called and feeling unsafe but without further questions we are not sure if these are shared experiences.

Finally, we would like to explore what sort of behaviours makes people afraid of another group. We think there is some work to be done around judgements made about other groups of people. This survey suggests that young people are more concerned about people they do not know and being in in areas that are unfamiliar. We are worried about the judgements people make about people they do not know.



SOCIAL MEDIA USE

We asked respondents about what they used social media for. The possible answers included keeping in contact with people and for information.

The most common use of social media was for entertainment purposes (**79.6%**), which was closely followed by staying in contact with friends/family (**77.4%**). Additionally, (**57.9%**) of respondents said that they used social media for playing games, (**32.3%**) for getting information, (**8.5%**) for personal safety, and **2.2%** said that they used social media for other purposes. **4.7%** of respondents said that they did not use social media at all.



The next question asked respondents if they thought that social media affected their self-esteem. This was on a scale of 0-10, with 0 being that social media makes it worse, and 10 being that social media increases your self-esteem.

Do you think social media affects your self-esteem?

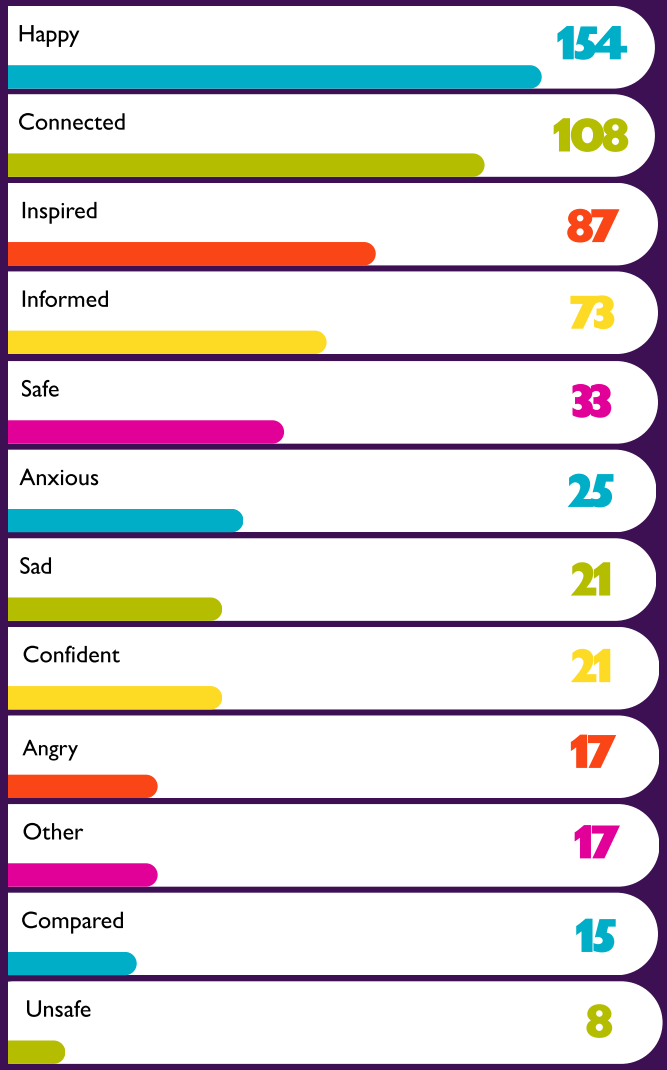
Promoters 17
Passives 53
Detractors 160



The results showed that the majority of respondents (70%) believe social media negatively affects self-esteem, while only 7.5% felt it has a positive impact. On the surface, this suggests an overwhelmingly negative attitude toward social media. However, responses to further questions appear to contradict this finding.

The next question asked respondents about how social media made them feel. The possible answers included ‘happy’, ‘anxious’ or ‘inspired’.

The respondents could pick up to three options. These were the results of the question:

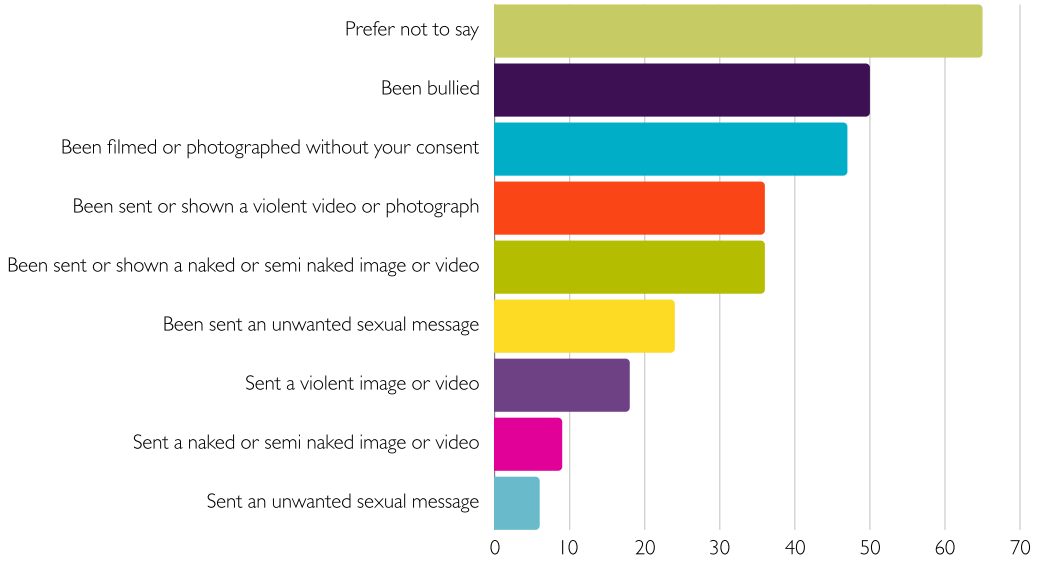


THE RESULTS

The most common feeling respondents associated with social media was “happy” **(65.5%)**, followed by “connected” **(46%)**, “inspired” **(37%)**, “informed” **(31.1%)**, and “safe” **(14%)**.

On the negative side, **10.6%** said social media made them feel anxious, **8.9%** said it made them feel sad, and just **3.4%** said it made them feel unsafe.

To mirror the NSPCC survey on social media, we asked our respondents in Hampshire whether they had experienced any negative consequences from using social media or mobile phones. The question listed a range of possible experiences, and respondents could tick all that applied. We also included a “prefer not to say” option, recognising that some young people might feel uncomfortable sharing these experiences and should have the choice to withhold their response. These were the results of the question:





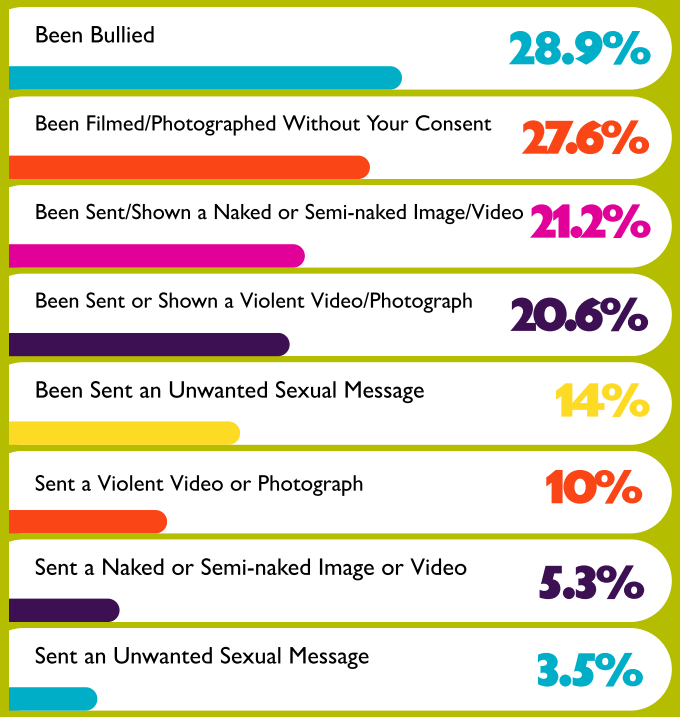
Our survey explored young people's experiences of negative or harmful behaviour on social media, recreating a question from the NSPCC's research. Respondents were asked about a list of behaviours they might have encountered or been involved in. Overall, 35% reported experiencing at least one form of negative behaviour online. The most common were being bullied (20.9%) and being filmed or photographed without consent (20%).

Other experiences included being sent or shown a naked or semi-naked image or video (15.3%), being sent or shown a violent video or photograph (14.9%), receiving an unwanted sexual message (10.2%), and sending a violent image or video themselves (7.2%). The least common experiences were sending a naked or semi-naked image or video (3.8%) and sending an unwanted sexual message (2.6%).

Unlike the NSPCC study, our Youth Ambassadors chose to include an additional "prefer not to say" option. They felt this was important given the personal and sensitive nature of the question, allowing young people to opt out if they felt uncomfortable. This approach also provides a clearer picture of the issue by showing how many respondents were unwilling to disclose experiences, even in an anonymous survey. In fact, "prefer not to say" was the most common response, chosen by 26.8%.

We have not made assumptions about why respondents selected this option, but it suggests that the true number of negative experiences is likely higher than reported. If we exclude those who answered "prefer not to say," the proportion of young people reporting at least one negative experience rises to 48.3%, with 28.9% saying they had been bullied.

The percentage of Young People who were prepared to answer who have experienced the following on social media





YOUTH AMBASSADOR'S ANALYSIS

We would like to do more research into this area and talk to more young people.

We think that these results illustrate that this is a really complicated issue and the way it is portrayed in the media is often to say things are really bad or really good. They are not really engaging with the fact that we have to and enjoy using social media. We get a lot of benefits from doing so but are also really aware of some of the dangers that we face online. It is not ok that young people are having to deal with receiving messages that are violent or sexual or make them feel bullied.

We think that there is also a big issue around the number of people who are not happy about sharing their experiences around social media. To us, this suggests that what they have experienced is something they are really unhappy about. Young people are nervous about discussing some of these things because of shame, fear of getting in trouble and how if makes them feel thinking about their experience. We need to have safe and honest conversations that are about finding a solution and not about proving a point.

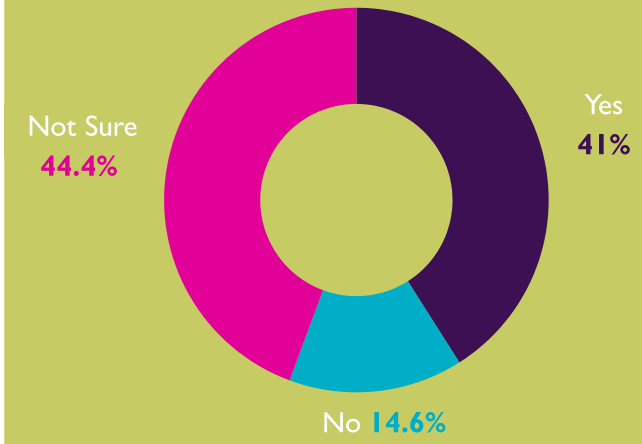
We are aware that if we are always comparing ourselves with other people this can affect our self-esteem. On the other hand, we also take a lot of support from social media, being inspired to do new things and connecting with other people. What we want is support in how to use it. We also think young people's views on the subject are interesting and we should be involved in designing the solution to problems with adults. We know how we are using social media and why we use it and should be talked with and listened to more.

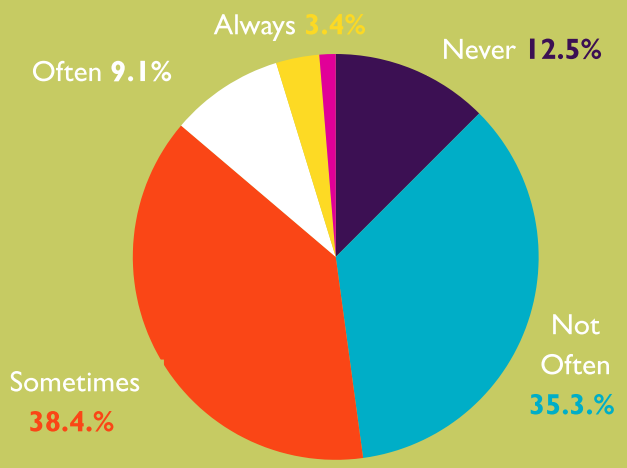


YOUTH VOICE

The respondents to our survey were generally positive about the extent to which they felt that their communities were supportive of young people with only **14 % saying they didn't think their community was supportive**, the biggest group were unsure but **41% did feel they had support**. However, the results for whether respondents thought their views were consulted were less positive with only **14% saying they were always or often consulted**.

Do you feel your community is supportive of young people?





Do you feel young people views are considered in local decision making?

When asked what they would most like to have their say about respondents showed a clear interest in a wide range of issues, both locally and nationally.

There was a significant minority who were not interested in being involved in conversations at a local and national level (22.8% and 22.4%), however at both a local and national level this was outstripped by the number who did want to have there voices heard.



WHAT ISSUES WOULD RESPONDENTS LIKE TO HAVE A SAY IN LOCALLY?

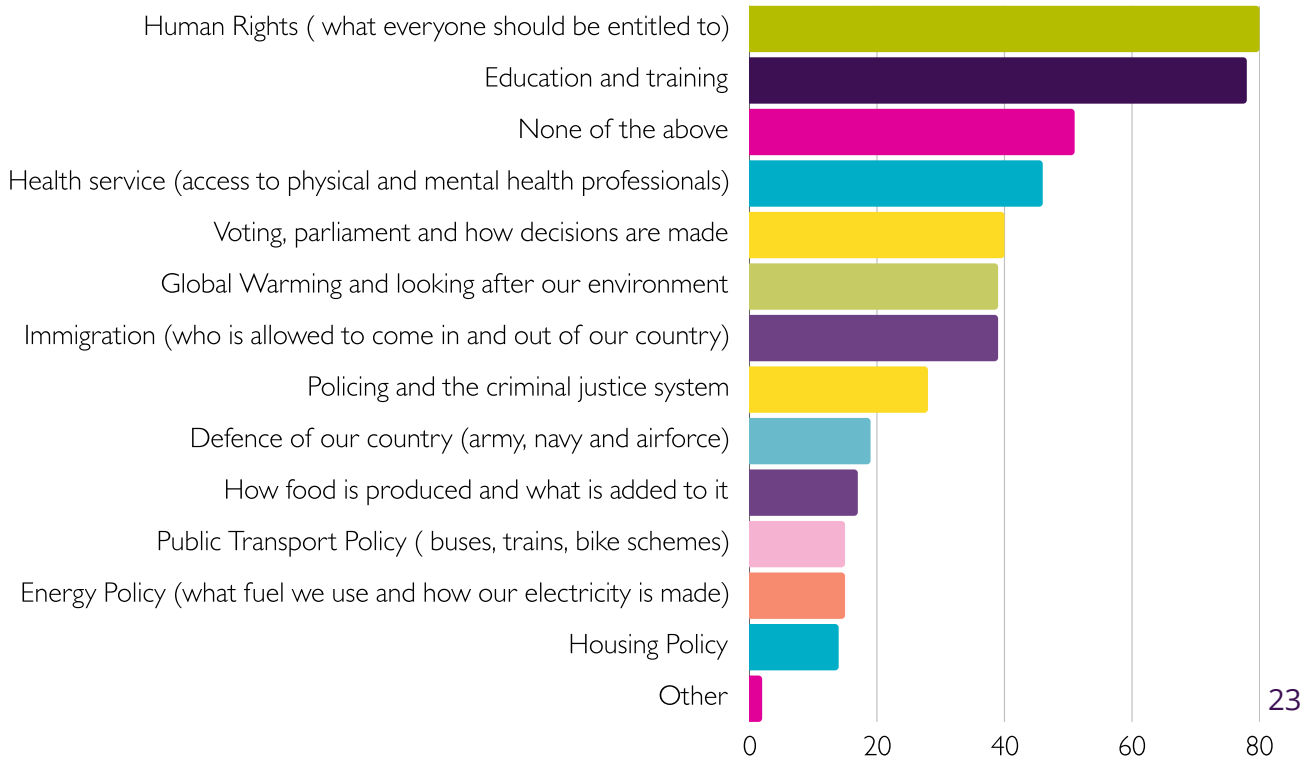


21.4%
of respondents wanted to have a say about transport

18.6%
of respondents wanted to have a say about how local decisions are made

27.4%
of respondents wanted to have a say about public facilities

What issues would you most like to have a say on nationally? (tick up to 3)





YOUTH AMBASSADOR'S ANALYSIS

We think that young people are interested in a whole range of issues.

While some young people are not interested, neither are some adults. If only 20% of adults didn't vote, there would be a very different political environment. Young people have ideas to contribute to the way that things are run locally and nationally. We care about how our services are run and how decisions are made.

We would like to explore these questions more in conversation with other young people, particularly around how Young People could get more involved. We would also like to ask the 15% who did not feel their community was supportive of young people, why they thought this.

We are excited by the idea that 16-year-olds are now going to be given the opportunity to vote but we also think that this means that more attention needs to be given to how we are educated about politics, what different parties think, the political system and how to understand information. This is something both for schools and in supporting us to navigate information given to us online.



FURTHER COMMENTS

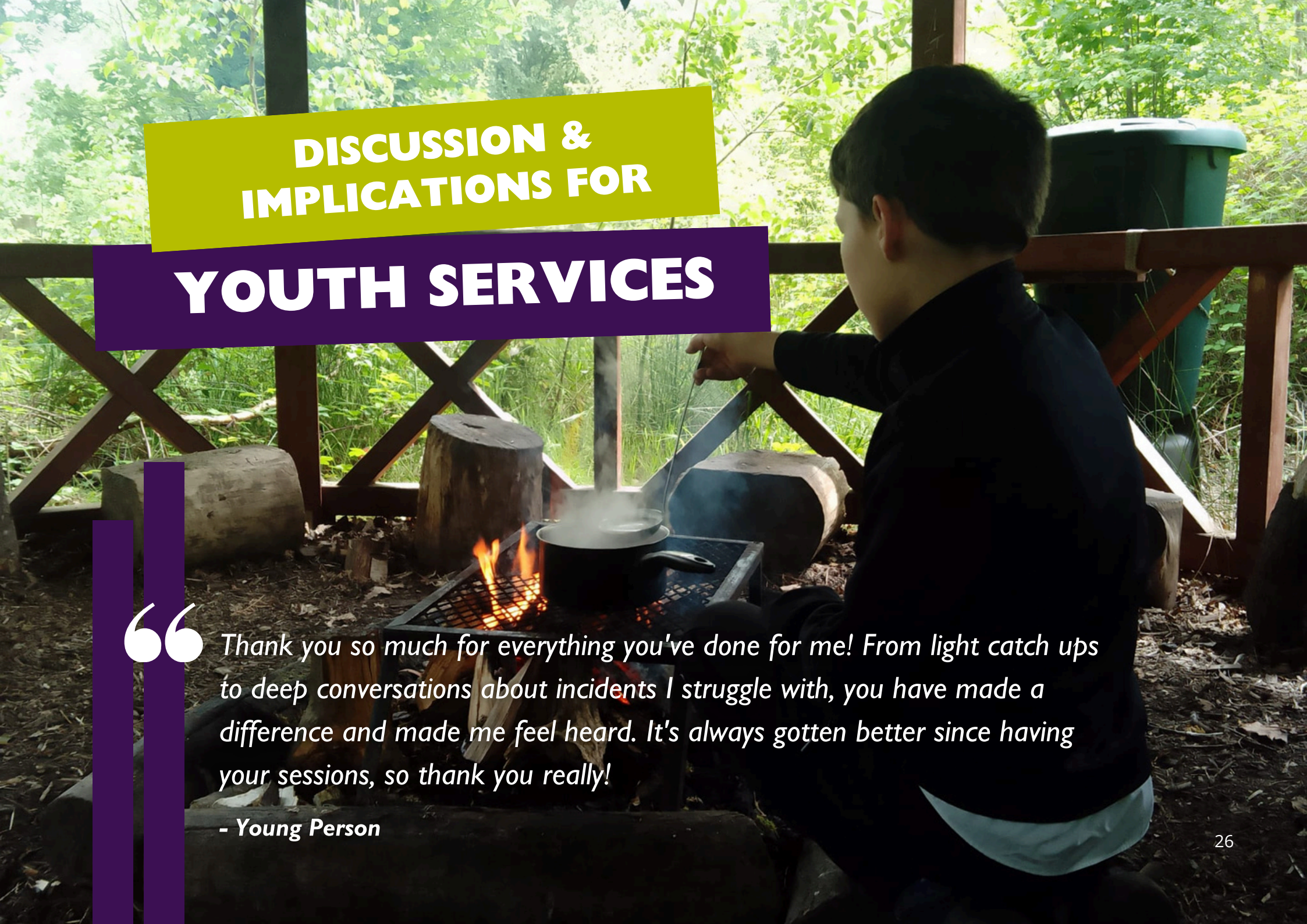
The final section of the survey asked respondents for any further comments or suggestions they would like Youth Options to consider. We had 79 responses though most of these were that there were no further things that they wanted to be considered.

There were several comments about making sure that education was relevant and schools cared more about their pupils, about being kept safe online, and about giving people support with friends and relationships.

In addition, there was a comment about the importance of education about immigration to counteract the 'closed minded views of adults' and a comment about being taken seriously when young people had concerns about anti-social behaviour in housing areas to prevent people from feeling trapped in their own homes.

Every time I am out in public I feel like I'm being judged, profiled and treated differently because of my age. I wish these things were to change, they make a large amount of young people who just want the world to be a happy and healthy place feel very discriminated.

I would also like for children to be more included in decisions that directly affect them like education policies, like support for different needs or the structures of curriculum and teaching methods as well as the use of communal spaces like parks and fields.



DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH SERVICES

Thank you so much for everything you've done for me! From light catch ups to deep conversations about incidents I struggle with, you have made a difference and made me feel heard. It's always gotten better since having your sessions, so thank you really!

- Young Person



Feeling Safe

Youth organisations should work with children and young people to understand what safety means to them personally and within their communities. Every young person should feel able to confidently answer the question: "*How safe do you feel in your community?*"

Achieving this requires deeper insight into what safety looks and feels like for young people, whether that means having the freedom to try new things, take risks, or share worries about unfamiliar people, places, and behaviours that cause fear. The Youth Ambassadors leading this research want to see youth organisations play a central role in exploring how professionals can support young people's sense of safety.

While those with access to youth work value the positive role youth workers play, many young people still lack this support.

Social Media

Youth organisations should take a balanced and informed approach with young people on social media and online engagement, recognising both its benefits and risks.

They should support young people to navigate a world that blends virtual and physical spaces, while creating safe environments for open and honest conversations. With debates around social media often polarised, and some young people feeling shame about discussing it, youth organisations can play a vital role in amplifying their voices and ensuring they are central to shaping solutions to online challenges.

Youth Voice

Youth organisations continue to find opportunities for the voices of young people, particularly those who are seldom heard, to be included in conversations about the policies and services that affect their lives. Not all young people want to engage in this at all times, but the majority of young people have at least one area of interest that they feel strongly about and want to contribute to, both locally and nationally.



Increasing Access and Visibility

This survey has shown that there is still work to be done on increasing access to Youth Options services and making youth work accessible to all young people that need it.

Those young people accessing youth support through Youth Options were more likely to cite youth workers as a resource to turn to if they had problems and a factor in making a community feel safe. Only **12 % of young people said that they didn't want to be involved in youth work activities and yet only 30% were or had accessed Youth Options provision.**

Youth Options needs to be an advocate for the youth sector and the importance of youth work encouraging investment wherever possible so that access can be expanded to more children and young people. Young people were friendly, safe spaces where they can build relationships.











We believe that every child and young person has the potential to achieve a better future, whatever their life circumstances. We are committed to supporting children and young people, particularly those who need it most, to engage, develop and become empowered to improve their life chances.

We focus our work on reducing the number of children and young people at risk of exclusion from society, minimising the impact of negative life experiences and providing positive ways forward for those facing the greatest adversity. We do this in a way which is tailored to each child and young person's needs and inspires them to achieve their potential.

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A Better Future

Crescent House, Yonge Close, Eastleigh, Hampshire SO50 9SX
E: enquiries@youthoptions.org.uk - T: 01794 525510

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