

Blackpool Council



Blackpool Youth Provision Review: Final Report

Introduction and Acknowledgements

The National Youth Agency (NYA) conducted a review of youth provision across the Blackpool footprint. The NYA engaged key stakeholders to collect views and data to inform the review in partnership with Youth Focus North West (YFNW) and with the support of the Youth Provision Review Steering Group (YPRSG).

The following report analyses quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (focus groups) engagement and consultation with young people, parents and carers who live in Blackpool, as well as organisations that provide youth provision in the town. Stakeholder consultations, as well as desktop and effective practice research, will be used to inform a development plan outlining the future potential of youth provision in Blackpool.

In this review, youth provision is defined as informal education for children and young people aged seven to twenty-five years.



youth focus NW
Improving the lives of young people

Blackpool Council

Table of Contents

Introduction and Acknowledgements	1
Executive Summary	3
Methodology	6
Effective Practice Review	8
Results	18
Demographic Profile	18
Young People Engagement and Consultation	20
Summary of Results from Parents and Carers Questionnaire	30
Organisations Providing Youth Provision	40
Conclusions and Recommendations	48



Executive Summary

The 2010 Marmot Review made the case that reducing inequity in social determinants of health amongst children and young people was the single most important factor in reducing health inequalities across the course of life. As a part of this overarching position, it was identified that developing capabilities is one of the essential components to supporting greater equity. Ten years on, the review panel revisited progress on the report between 2010 and 2020, recognising specifically that youth services have a significant role supporting health equity and greater equity throughout life.

The publicly available data that was analysed to profile Blackpool's population does not allow for correlation between disadvantages at the level of an individual. However, it is clear that a large proportion of young people in Blackpool face at least one disadvantage, and many face multiple disadvantages.

Blackpool often has significantly worse measures when compared to those of its nearest neighbours, and in several cases has the worst indicators nationally. Blackpool has the concentrated deprivation of the very poorest parts of major urban areas without the off-setting social mix and growth drivers that exist in Manchester or Liverpool. It could be argued there are very few places in England or Wales with the same intense and complex mix of social issues.

Where the data allowed for ward-level comparison it shows that there are a few wards clustered around the city centre that have comparatively worse measures: Bloomfield, Claremont and Talbot. These three wards alongside Brunswick and Tyldesley have the greatest concentration of reported youth anti-social behaviour (Feb 2021 – Jan 2022) in Blackpool.

Quality youth services are important for supporting life outcomes, and they are a part of and contribute to a wider eco-system of services that support and develop young people's capabilities. Youth work is a statutory service, as stated in the 1997 Education Act (updated in the 2006 Education and Inspections Act), and it is significant for this review that the NYA expects the government's current review of the 508B guidance to clarify local authorities' legal responsibilities.

Engagement, involvement and participation in youth services

Engagement and involvement of young people is a core element of the review, and the findings of the consultation with young people is central to informing the recommendations in the development plan.

To enable a comprehensive consultation, quantitative (mass and targeted questionnaire) and qualitative (targeted focus groups) methodologies were employed. The approach taken has enabled the consultation of those who are already engaged in youth provision and those that are not engaged in youth provision.

Youth involvement, engagement and participation

The importance of engaging and involving young people in design, development, delivery and evaluation of the services that are intended for them should not be underestimated. Participation in these processes facilitates a feeling of ownership that increases the likelihood of an initiative's success.

The review has identified the need to develop a Blackpool-wide coordinated youth participation strategy. It would help to inform programme/activity and support service design and development. The development and implementation of an effective participation strategy underpins the other recommendations identified in this report.

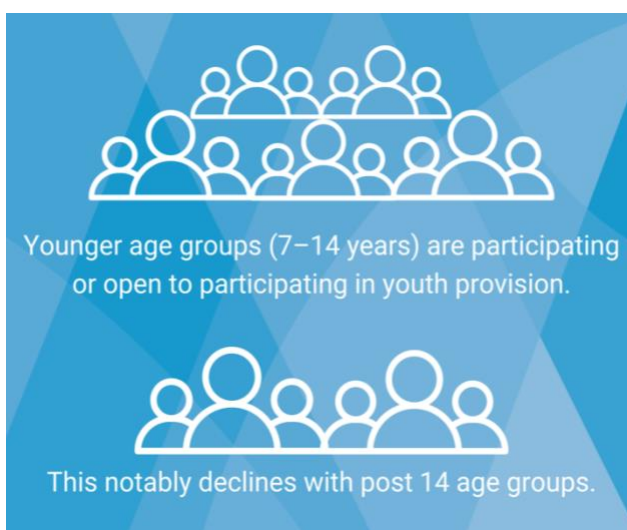
Successful implementation of the participation strategy would increase the probability of young people feeling ownership of the provision and services, improve the coordination between support services, and help increase the profile of youth provision with young people across Blackpool.

Accessible provision

Youth work is impactful because of the voluntary engagement of young people. The focus group discussions found that the voluntary engagement aspect of their participation was valued by the young people attending youth provision. The sense of membership and belonging young people felt towards the provision related to easy accessibility (locality), and the voluntary relationships built with those adults who delivered within the provision. Suggesting relationships and easy access were the important criteria for those attending youth provision. The recommendations reflect the importance of well-resourced local services informed by young people and delivered through a skilled workforce.

Significant numbers of young people are choosing not to participate in youth provision. Although it was found that younger age groups (7–14) were participating or open to participating in youth provision, this notably declines with age groups 14 and older.

Results suggest teenage girls aged 15 to 19 are especially closed off to youth clubs and groups. In general, as age increases, attendance and openness to participate in youth club and group activities decreases. There is a perception from those who do not attend that youth clubs and groups are boring and poorly resourced. If youth clubs and groups aspire to work with older age groups, there requires a change in approach, image, promotion and activities offered.



Segmenting membership by age, and in some cases gender, could support greater engagement and involvement. For example, a well-defined, co-produced, wide-ranging programme of activities for younger age groups would be more effective when engaging and capturing interest in youth provision. Conversely, involvement in the design, development and delivery of targeted activities could help to retain older participants and attract young people who are 14 years and older.

A well-defined, co-produced, wide-ranging programme of activities for younger age groups would be more effective in engaging and capturing interest in youth provision

In general, volunteering and social action is the activity most likely to attract and retain young people as they get older. Improving the range of volunteering and social activities on offer to young people and more effectively promoting the opportunities and benefits of participating in these activities could increase take up.

Awareness of activities and support services

Lack of awareness of where the nearest opportunity for each provision was widely quoted as a reason for not participating in activities and accessing services. The older age groups generally had less awareness by activity. On the surface, this would suggest a need to improve communication channels when promoting activities and support services.

A strong indicator that young people would be open to participating in activities was whether their friends attended or whether it was recommended by someone they trusted. This indicator increased with age, suggesting a campaign, aligned with a renewed offer designed and developed with young people, would be more effective if communicated through friends, teachers, youth workers and volunteers.

Undertaking the desk top research, it was clear there was not one place a young person could go to find services or activities. The difficulty in identifying the services, activities and the organisations that provide them demonstrates the need for better Blackpool-wide coordination. The recommendations outline the need for a centrally coordinated approach to communicating youth provision and more nuanced tactics to increase awareness and referrals.

Other barriers to accessing provision and services

Young people felt unsafe travelling to and from provision. The focus group discussions revealed that a perceived availability and high prevalence of drugs and alcohol increased the unsafe feelings when travelling within the community.

Engaging users and non-users of provision in identifying whether there is an issue locally and whether it inhibits participation in their provision would enable a greater understanding of the issues young people face. Once established, supporting young people to develop protective factors to change behaviours and identifying how the provision can modify arrangements to increase feelings of safety could support greater participation. For example, the provision could focus on the safety of young people during times where it is most important for them, such as when travelling to and from clubs and groups to mitigate risk.

The perspective of parents, carers and young people differed when discussing cost as a barrier. Parents and carers rated cost as one of the most significant barriers for participating in activities, whereas young people felt cost was a minor inhibitor. Analysing the quantitative data from the young people's questionnaire, it would appear cost has little impact on participation. However, when explored in the focus groups, young people felt that if the cost of provision increased, it would quickly become an inhibitor. Travel cost was a barrier to young people below 16 years of age, and this could influence the provision that they decide to participate in.

Related to cost barriers was the perceived inaccessibility to tourist leisure activities available in Blackpool. These unique leisure activities could provide an enhanced opportunity for young people in Blackpool. However, in general, the young people involved in the focus groups saw this as a negative rather than a positive.

Support services

Support services designed for young people require further consultation. Analysis from the data collected for this report infers that young people need clearer information about the support services available, and they are most open to receive this information from people they trust. Parents and carers also rated lack of awareness as a significant inhibitor for young people in their household being able to access support.



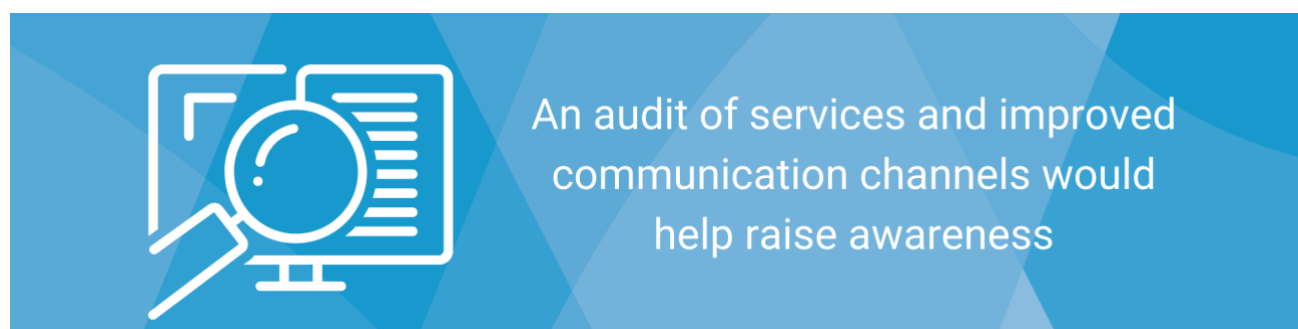
Recommendations outline the need for a centrally coordinated approach to communicating youth provision, as well as more nuanced targeted tactics to increase awareness and referrals.



Mental health was a prominent support need identified by parents, carers and young people. Additionally, guardians identified that others in their household with poor mental health had a detrimental impact on the young people. One in three houses also stated that issues related to fitness, physical health or lack of finances affected at least one adult in the household and that this had a negative impact on young people within the household.

Mental health, fitness/physical health, education/school work, financial advice, career/employment-related advice, and help with being bullied or feeling lonely were common themes young people identified as support needs.

Seventy-five percent of the organisations who participated in the consultation stated they provided some form of support service for young people. Alongside the statutory support services available for



young people, an audit of services and an improvement in communication channels would support greater awareness.

The way this information is communicated should be co-designed with stakeholders. Young people, in addition to providers, would be obvious stakeholders in this process, and because young people are more likely to access services as a result of a recommendation from a trusted person, parents, teachers and youth workers should also be involved.

Methodology

Demographic profile

The review was focused within the demographic and socio-economic context of Blackpool Council. A profile of Blackpool and the demographics of the population, focusing specifically on young people, was undertaken. The findings from this profile also summarise known data on youth provision.

Additionally, Blackpool's social indicators are contextualised relative to other upper-tier local authorities across England, especially those that are Blackpool's nearest statistical neighbours.¹

Young people - engagement and consultation

Young people were asked to complete a short questionnaire focusing on common out of school activities and support. They were asked to select activities and support they currently benefit from and identify activities and support they do not currently utilise but would like the opportunity to access. The questionnaire also explored obstacles to their engagement and involvement.

¹ We use CIPFA Nearest Neighbour Models. See: <https://www.cipfa.org/services/cipfastats/nearest-neighbour-model>

The questionnaire was aimed at young people aged between seven and 25 living in Blackpool. It was open between October 7th and November 5th 2021² and was promoted through schools, local infrastructure bodies, voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, the youth advisory group, and the contacts and networks of the YPRSG. The questionnaire responses were anonymous.

The questionnaire findings were used to identify themes that were explored further with young people in sessions designed to capture qualitative responses. Eleven focus groups were selected to reflect the diverse nature of young people from across Blackpool. Both service users and non-service users of local provision between the ages of seven and 25 years were targeted. Each focus group was delivered by two youth workers who facilitated each session using semi-structured, open-ended questions.

Parents and carers questionnaire

The questionnaire was informed by the data collected from the young people's consultation to support a comparison of perceptions and views. The questionnaire was open from November 11th 2021 until 8th December 2021 and distributed through schools, council services and via YPRSG to encourage parents to feed into the review.

The questions were designed to distinguish the activities and services that the young people they are responsible for access, as well as identify what the barriers were to provision, which they would like to access. The responses to the questionnaire were anonymous.

Organisations providing youth provision

Organisations providing youth provision were defined as those that deliver activities contributing to the personal and social development of young people aged between seven and 25, or where informal education takes place as a part of the activities or services offered.

No existing data or overview of youth provision in Blackpool was identified. An extensive manual review of public and private datasets was undertaken to identify organisations that were more likely than not to match the scope for delivering youth provision.

To identify any organisations not captured through the desk top research, a self-registration webpage was launched on 10th November. Engagement of youth providers were targeted through the YPRSG, Blackpool Council, YFNW networks and via the NYA network newsletter. The desk top research and the self-registration portal captured basic information for a total of 230 organisations.

A questionnaire informed by the data collected from the young people's consultation was created to enable comparison between demand and supply. From the 230 organisations identified, 150 organisations had enough up-to-date information to be directly contacted. The questionnaire was open between November 23rd and December 24th 2021.

Effective practice

The University of Cumbria (HASKE) has undertaken desk top research identifying effective practice. The effective practice summarised in the report is aligned with the findings of the stakeholder engagement and demographic profile of Blackpool.

² The questionnaire for young people aged 18 and over was re-opened to boost response rates from November 20th to 7th December.

Impact recommendations

The quantitative and qualitative data collected from the review will inform HASKE's recommendations on future data capture. A report will be compiled to summarise current frameworks and to support future decisions on measuring the impact of youth provision within Blackpool.

Effective Practice Review

Defining youth work

Despite a common narrative within the profession of youth work being hard to define, and being misunderstood by policy makers and some professionals, there is a clear definition used to describe those professionals trained as youth workers, those who are eligible to be paid on the youth work scale, and the descriptions of the aims of youth work. These are as follows:

Youth work is defined "as a distinct educational process adapted across a variety of settings to support young people's personal and social development – their values, beliefs, ideas and skills" (APPG, 2019). It is informal education that young people (usually defined as between the ages of 11 and 19, or up to 25 for those with special education needs and/or disabilities) voluntarily engage in (Marshall et al., 2021). This may take place with structured activities in a specific building (centre-based) or in places that young people choose to gather (detached). Some youth work aims to provide these opportunities to young people of specific demographics (targeted), and other youth work aims to work with all young people (universal). Youth work is not any activity that takes place with young people.

A professional/qualified youth worker is someone who has undertaken a degree or postgraduate level study in youth work or youth and community work that has been approved by the NYA. A youth support worker will have trained at level 2 or 3 and would be expected to provide services alongside a professional youth worker; a similar comparison could be made with a teacher and a teaching assistant.

Youth work is underpinned by a set of principles, including that it involves "trusted relationships and voluntary engagement of young people" (NYA, 2021).

While these working definitions are useful, there remains a challenge of finding reports from local authorities on specific youth work activity, where roles and services may be blended into other children's services, may be carried out by people with different job titles, or may be commissioned and carried out by other organisations.

The uniformed associations, such as the Scouts, sit within a grey area, with little recent research being found in this field. These organisations are based on volunteer delivery, and as such, the workforce tends to not have degree-level youth work qualification requirements. For example, recent paid job roles within the Scouts did not mention any formal educational training or qualification requirements for a lead instructor (website accessed 1st Jan 2022). However, much of their aims and principles are aligned with youth work, and they tend to have specific training programmes that their volunteers are required to complete.

As a profession that was predominantly reliant on government funding, and the statutory nature of youth work provision, the government decision to stop auditing the provision as part of Ofsted in 2014, and to give local authorities full responsibility for ensuring "access to recreational activities," has had a significant effect on youth work.

Youth work within the UK has a long history within the voluntary sector and uniformed associations, local authority youth services, and the charitable sector. Much has been written about the history of youth work (Bright & Pugh, 2019; [Bright, 2015](#); [Verschelden et al., 2010](#)) and the influence of national governments since the Abermarle report in 1960 (Abermarle, 1960), a helpful history of English services by Davies (Davies, 2018; [Davies, 2019](#)), and a response in relation to the different trajectories of the profession in Scotland ([Cohburn & Gormally, 2019](#)).

Workforce

Within the United Kingdom youth work is a devolved responsibility, and as such, each home nation has a slightly different structure in place for policy, governance and training, whilst sharing an overarching National Occupation Standards framework (NOS). Wales and Northern Ireland see youth workers as part of the educational workforce, which provides sustainable employment opportunities, and Scotland has seen financial investment from the government, which enables charitable organisations and local authorities to work collaboratively, again providing longer-term funds for sustainable roles.

The workforce is crucial to delivering the aims of youth work, which is described as a relational process whereby “transformative relationships” (Hart, 2015) provide a containing environment “in the space between school, family, training or work” (Nolas, 2013. P.35). Effective youth work enables young people to navigate peer-to-peer relationships, explore boundaries, traverse around risk, and enable opportunities for self-development, group cohesion (Ritchie & Ord, 2016) and a sense of belonging (Dickens & Lonie, 2013).

The workforce varies, depending on the setting, funding and aims of the organisation. It is clear that young people in the UK would have even more limited opportunities to access youth-focused opportunities without the voluntary, non-qualified workforce ([Marshall et al., 2021](#)). The history of youth work has its roots in both voluntary opportunities for young people to become youth leaders and with volunteer and uniformed associations.

This literature review considers the broad workforce as made up of a range of professionals who may manage youth provision services, those that deliver youth work, research youth work or educate future youth workers. It is recognised that managers of services may not be trained in youth work but could have training or experience in professions such as social work, housing, youth justice, mental health, sport and leisure. Some of these may have similar underlying theories and aims when working with young people but may also at times have different expectations of evaluating delivery.

There is an ethical framework that youth workers are expected to practice in ([Institute for Youth Work](#),) and a recently outlined curriculum for youth work ([NYA, 2020](#)) that provides guidance for youth workers when they review their own training needs. An APPG report for Youth Affairs in Youth Work recommended in 2019 that a register was needed, and a professional voluntary register will be implemented by the NYA by the end of 2022.

Terminology youth work roles

Within the area of people that are “doing” youth work, sometimes referred to as the “grassroots workforce,” the NYA defines a JNC-recognised “professional youth worker” as someone who has completed a degree or postgraduate degree (level 6 or 7) or who meets the criteria for historical JNC recognition ([NYA](#)). A youth support worker is defined as someone who has completed a level 2 or 3 via apprenticeship or formal study of youth work practice. The term non-qualified is used to define someone who may be working in a similar role who has not taken a youth work specific course.

The terms JNC-paid, full-time, part-time and volunteer are used to describe the way in which the workforce is contracted, as some volunteers will be qualified at level 7, and some paid roles are taken up by non-qualified people. JNC-recognised youth workers are entitled to be paid on the nationally negotiated pay scale when employed by local government authorities, similar to other professionals such as teachers.

Training and CPD

Currently, all training in England as a youth worker or youth support worker is self-funded; however, the government has provided funds for bursaries for level 2 and 3 courses since 2019.

A youth support worker is someone who has achieved a level 2 or 3 qualification or a diploma in youth work practice. These are qualifications for people who work with young people using youth work principles and practice. Level 2 is for the 16+ age group, and level 3 is aimed at the 18+ age group. To gain the status of qualified youth worker, practitioners must achieve a level 6 or 7 qualification provided through universities, recognised by JNC and validated by the NYA.

After qualifying there is no regulation body that monitors ongoing training or competencies of youth workers, and youth work is not a protected title or activity. Continuing professional development (CPD) is therefore not essential for employers to fund or support, and post-qualifying training needs are mostly funded by practitioners themselves.

There is a membership body that youth workers can voluntarily join, the Institute for Youth Work, which aims to support youth workers after qualifying. Additionally, in 2019, the NYA launched the [NYA Academy](#), providing a platform of quality-assured, cost-effective CPD. The Academy is designed for anyone who works with young people to learn, explore, thrive, engage and develop.

Supervision and reflective practice

Reflective clinical supervision within youth work is seen to be something that could enhance youth work (Harris, 2020), with the opportunity to continually consider what aspects of the self are enhancing or limiting the youth workers' relationships with young people. This may happen informally, within managerial relationships, or be provided formally in different settings. However, in professions where relationships are key to the outcomes of the activity (for example, within counselling and psychotherapy), having regular supervision as an expectation can improve practice, can provide additional levels of safeguarding and ethical practice, and can also reduce burn out.

Harris suggests that a psychoanalytic frame can be useful in understanding the professionals own "stuff" that may influence how they experience different clients and settings and bring it to consciousness. Other models of supervision that use trauma-informed intersectional theories, alongside strengths-based approaches, may also be useful.

Use of supervision can also help "uncover the secret" of what works in relational aspects of youth work and could help the profession be more confident in articulating what works and why from the grassroots perspective.

Quality marks and workforce standards

Harding (2019) of the Centre for Youth Impact (CYI) compiled a [report](#) with an overview of the current policy and practice of youth work in England. This report also details current quality marks available for organisations and proposes that the CYI quality mark will be useful across England and home nations, as it fills a gap identified and linked to improving the quality of youth work practice. As [Wales](#) and Northern Ireland have inspections linked to quality audits for statutory services, this may only be taken on by the charity sector in those nations.

	Country/ Organisation	Link to document
Evaluation and Impact Frameworks	Scotland	Youth Work Outcomes Youth Work Framework
	Northern Ireland	Process for Self Evaluation
	England	Outcomes Framework YIF Learning and Insight Paper TNL Comm Fund Paper
Quality Marks	Welsh Government	Quality Mark for Youth Work
	CYI (England)	Centre for Youth Impact Quality Mark
	NYA	NYA Quality Mark
	Foyer	Foyer Accreditation
	UK Youth	UKYouth Quality Mark
Curriculum	NYA	NYA Curriculum for Youth Work
Inspection/Audit Frameworks	Northern Ireland	Quality Assurance Framework
Workforce Standards		
National Occupation Standards	JET (4 nations) NOS	National Occupational Standards
Ethical Frameworks	Institute for Youth Work	Institute for Youth Work Code of Ethics
Membership Organisations in England		
	Professional association of lecturers in youth and community work	Professional association of lecturers in youth and community work
	Institute for Youth Work	Institute for Youth Work

Individual Memberships	British Educational Research Association Special Interest Group: Youth Studies and Informal Education	British Educational Research Association
Organisational Memberships	UK Youth	UK Youth
	Network of Regional Youth Work Units (England)	Network of Regional Youth Work Units (England)

However, having a number of separate quality and impact/outcomes has the potential to continue to overwhelm and confuse the sector, particularly when these frameworks don't identify which part of the workforce is expected to lead on particular aspects. In other words, there is a need to think beyond frameworks to consider the dynamics of youth work impact in practice.

Relationships

Key feedback from young people and youth workers included in the research was how the opportunities within youth work enables positive “transformative relationships” (Hart, 2015; Laredo & Hill, 2019), either between the young person and the youth work staff directly, or within the peer-to-peer group/dynamics that were enabled by the staff (Jaynes, 2019; Ritchie & Ord, 2016).

Providing a space for fun informal interactions with peers and adults gives young people opportunities to explore their identities, understand more about how they want to interact with others, and learn from their mistakes without the types of consequences that may be in place in school or in non-adult supervised environments (Ritchie & Ord, 2016).

The ability to provide an adult-supervised space, within which “complex group dynamics exist” where young people can develop interpersonally, and where relationships with adults are less power led, and optional, requires a high level of confidence within the staff (Ritchie & Ord, 2016).

They need to have the skills to understand when to intervene, when to allow the young people to self-manage (Hart, 2017), when to use humour, when to encourage play and when to increase authority to keep young people safe (Jaynes, 2019). This understanding of responsibility and need for reflexivity is likely to be explored and encouraged within degree training programmes, but it is important for all staff working with young people.

Young people valued the opportunities to have relationships with adults that unconditionally accepted and respected them. They appreciated youth workers that encouraged them to be aspirational in their lives and who established overarching boundaries and rules within the settings that helped everyone feel respected and included.

These were particularly noticeable in research within the Brighton music studio-based youth work (Dickens & Lonie, 2013), where the atmosphere facilitated by the youth worker enabled topics to be led by the young people, leading to collaborative equal power relationships with the staff. This led to increased autonomy, mutual respect, a sense of mastery and a sense of belonging within the young people.

Similarly, Dickens (2017) describes the use of a participatory, creative approach to exploring geographical imagination with young people in London, using film and radical youth work principles. The young people describe the experience of being a participatory researcher as offering an opportunity to develop “critical capacities,” which they did not have before. In this sense, there is a transformative aspect to creating evidence frameworks, which may be overlooked by more formal or “top-down” framework approaches.

Participatory research facilitated by youth workers with young people had outcomes that aligned with the principles of youth work (Factor & Ackerly, 2019; Wareing et al., 2019; Dickens, 2017). This supports the theory that the relationship within youth work is primary, and the activities are secondary.

Belonging

Young people report feeling a sense of belonging to youth work-led initiatives (Ritchie & Ord, 2016; Dickens & Lonie, 2013; Stanton, 2012). This may be through opportunities to meet others similar to them, for example via theme-based, faith-based, or targeted interventions ([GirlGuiding, 2020](#)), or by meeting people in open access, universal settings, where young people of all ages and school catchment areas have opportunities to socialise.

Having a sense of belonging is crucial to good mental health and wellbeing, and with indicators nationally about feelings of loneliness and low mood prevalent within the current young population, both before and during the Covid-19 pandemic ([Nice et al., 2021](#)), this is an area of strength for youth work that could be investigated further.

There is no evidence to suggest one type of youth work enables more young people to experience this sense of belonging than another; however, literature has shown the potential long-term impacts of positive mental health after involvement in youth groups, such as Scouts or Guides ([Dibben et al., 2017](#)).

Having a voice and giving back

Youth participation can benefit young people’s skill development and self-perceptions, as well as youth work policies, service design and implementation. It provides participants with the opportunity to connect with peers by building social capital, whilst achieving objectives beyond those possible by a mere individual ([OECD, 2017](#)). Furthermore, participation increases the ownership of initiatives, which is an important factor for their success ([OECD, 2011](#); [Dunne et al., 2014](#)).

Body and Hogg (2019) carried out a retrospective evaluation with young people who had been involved in a youth project ten years prior. Themes that emerged from their research were the longer-term effects that emanated from a feeling of belonging and the encouragement of youth voice within the community, resulting in the majority of young people continuing involvement within their local community and giving back via volunteering. Evidence from the New Economics Foundation suggests that there is a link between doing things for others and improved wellbeing ([Aked et al., 2008](#)).

Gender

One criticism of youth work prior to the significant cuts was that activities often focused on young men ([Nava, 1992](#)) and were more likely to be sports-based; uptake of services was higher in these groups, and there was a push for more interventions to encourage female participation.

We have seen an increasing population of young men ending their life by suicide (Samaritans, 2021), which can be linked to feelings of hopelessness and isolation alongside impulsive decision-making. In addition, male representation within the youth justice system continues to be consistently higher than

female representation. (Crown, 2021). The current intervention methodology or lack thereof needs revising. It would suggest health prevention models could benefit from youth work with a gender-informed focus ([Batsleer, 2015](#)).

Of course, many young men, women and non-binary people are interested in sports and creative activities less encouraged for their gender, but the reality of socialisation is that young men often feel pressure to be more involved in masculine activities. By reducing the availability of these services, whereby young men could have supportive relationships with trusted adults, the loss of youth clubs may have disproportionately impacted young men's mental health ([Batsleer, 2015](#)).

This, then, provides an important reminder that participatory research requires a good understanding of inclusive practice. For example, Harris (2020) describes a positive case study of a black male youth worker using their life experiences to be able to access and support marginalised young black men, but it also raises the need for supervision and training around gender to be available to youth workers, with the understanding that men with lived experience of violence can be great youth workers but may also need additional support in these roles ([Harris, 2018](#)).

Gender within the professional identity of youth workers was explored by Hatton & Monroe (2019) with an exploration of how LGB women identify and self-disclose within their youth work roles. Sexual relationships within LGBT youth and sex and relationship education (SRE) were also researched by Farmby & Donovan (2020), with strong support from young people to receive this education from youth workers. They identified a training need to ensure SRE is truly inclusive of LGBT youth and of different cultural perspectives within the UK.

Multi-Disciplinary working

Another trend that appears to be growing is youth work being embedded within health settings (Wilkinson et al., 2018; Hagell & Lamb, 2016; De Marco et al., 2016; Wortley & Hagell, 2020; Nash et al., 2012), and, in particular, multi-disciplinary teams organised via NHS Trusts, integrated care systems and integrated care communities. This approach is of interest when thinking about referral routes from youth workers to health professionals and vice versa, where young people may have complex needs but experience barriers to accessing statutory services, or where health settings identify that a young person may benefit from a youth worker-led intervention.

A good example of youth workers being used to ease the access for young people into health services is detailed by Hagell and Lamb (2016), where joint funding from an NHS innovation award, a local authority and a charitable trust enabled the trial of youth workers in a primary care GP setting. [The Well Centre](#) was co-designed by youth workers and clinicians and after the initial pilot ongoing funding was provided by the local Clinical Commissioning Group.

In this model, youth workers deliver health promotion, harm reduction interventions, and were the front face of the service, with the ability to then refer into GP, nurse and counselling services in the same building. This model enabled attendance by young people less likely to be registered with a GP and was used by many young people with mental health difficulties.

The service is still active, and the website is unusual compared with other primary care services, as it is tailored to young people and promotes local youth clubs and youth initiatives, alongside health focused services; it also promotes referrals to community youth activities. In 2022, their website showed that the service uses the description of "health and wellbeing advisors" led by a qualified youth worker and five other professionals with psychology backgrounds.

Another example of youth workers embedded within health systems is that of the London partnership between Guy's and St Thomas Hospital and OASIS Youth Services. This partnership was initiated with

an aim to intervene with young people who presented to A&E with violence-related injuries by offering them a referral to a youth worker. The success of this programme resulted in the partnership expanding its focus to support young people with diabetes.

Both interventions have shown positive benefits for young people ([Ilan-Clarke et al., 2016](#); De Marco et al., 2016). They demonstrated improvements in psychological and lifestyle risk factors for those referred via A&E, and for young people with diabetes, more adherence to self-managing their condition, with a 30% reduction in unplanned hospital admissions ([YES, 2022](#)).

Conversely, alongside reflections on the role of impact research within and about youth work, the literature review suggested aligned areas of potential development. In particular, this involved the training of professionals already using skills that align with youth work but haven't undertaken formal training (Crisp, 2020). For example, sports coaches often work with young people and may be offering opportunities within competitive sports or social sports.

Spaaij et al. (2013) describe an intervention that uses sports as an incentive for participation in a programme to reduce youth unemployment. This model included youth workers who delivered the practical elements of the programme to develop work-related skills, but the coaches delivering the sports activities were likely to be as influential in encouraging aspirations and a sense of achievement and belonging, which provide a foundation for wanting to develop other skills. This is supported by Crisp's paper (2020) that suggests training sports coaches in youth work principles would further develop the practice of the coaches and provide new opportunities for the workforce.

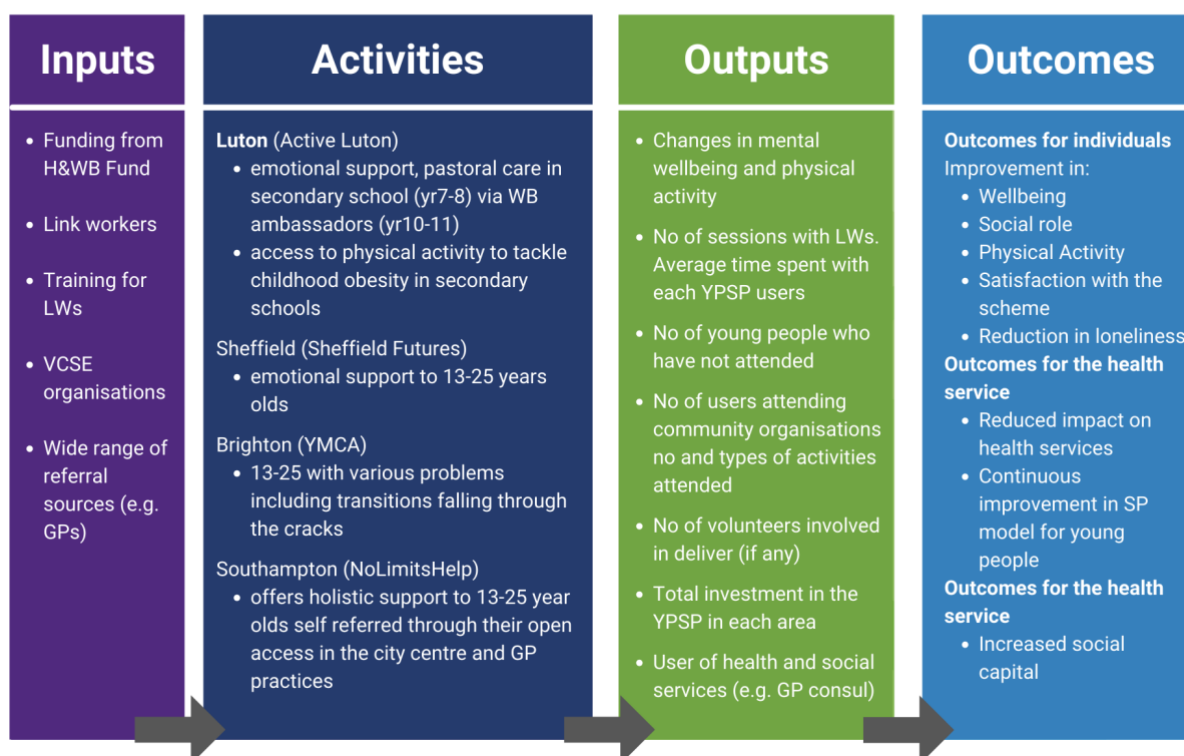
Participatory arts, including music, radio and film often have funding to work with young people (Howard, 2020). However, many artists will not have undertaken formal youth work training and may be working instinctively rather than within youth work principles. Offering youth work principles training to these disciplines could enhance the evidence-base of the impact these spaces have and offer additional benefits and outlets to support youth work outcomes.

In particular, [social prescribing](#) is presented as a key area where this may take effect. In some areas of England, the charity [StreetGames](#) is providing social prescribing (Brighton, Southampton, Luton, and Sheffield) and is also coordinating the youth social prescribing network and training and supporting youth link workers.

Early evaluations suggest that this approach is proving successful in improving wellbeing, reducing loneliness and reducing the need for NHS interventions. It provides a targeted approach that then enables signposting to universal services for young people to access ([Bertotti et al., 2020](#)). It also showed a social economic benefit of £5.04 for every £1 invested in the service.

However, the link workers needed more training, as the role was more complex than that of adult social prescribers, and young people were sometimes unclear about the boundaries of the role and the length of time that they could access the 1:1 support. The initial logic model (shown below) for the evaluation of the pilot is helpful in demonstrating a mixed methods approach to a longitudinal place-based intervention that could be used within youth work ([Bertotti, 2019](#)).

Programme Theory: Relationship between young person and link worker based on coaching, motivation, and listening creates behavioural change and promotes access to further support which enables the young people to consider an alternative set of actions and set out to change or more effectively manage their own health and well-being.



Youth partnership foundation

Models such as Youth Partnership Foundations (YPFs) are increasingly being used as vehicles to facilitate partner organisations and agencies working towards common objectives. The YPF Trust is a network of YPFs that coordinate place-based partnerships and investment in services for young people. They also collaborate to demonstrate impact of these services. YPFs recognise the critical role that universal, accessible youth services provide in the development, aspiration and potential of children and young people. Youth voice is central to understanding the needs and designing the services that the partners in the YPF provide for young people.

Young Westminster Foundation (YWF) is a cross-sector partnership connecting youth charities, young people, businesses, Westminster City Council and other partners, such as universities, the Met Police and the NHS.

Together, the YWF community shares a vision for all young people in Westminster to grow up healthy, safe and happy with the best opportunities for brighter futures. YWF's 100+ members range from large youth clubs to smaller grass roots organisations, all driven by their passion to provide the best services, opportunities and support for local young people. The Foundation believes that youth voice should be at the centre of decision-making. Their goal is to identify and address the challenges faced by young people today, all the while ensuring that they are truly at the heart of the conversation.

Impact of youth work

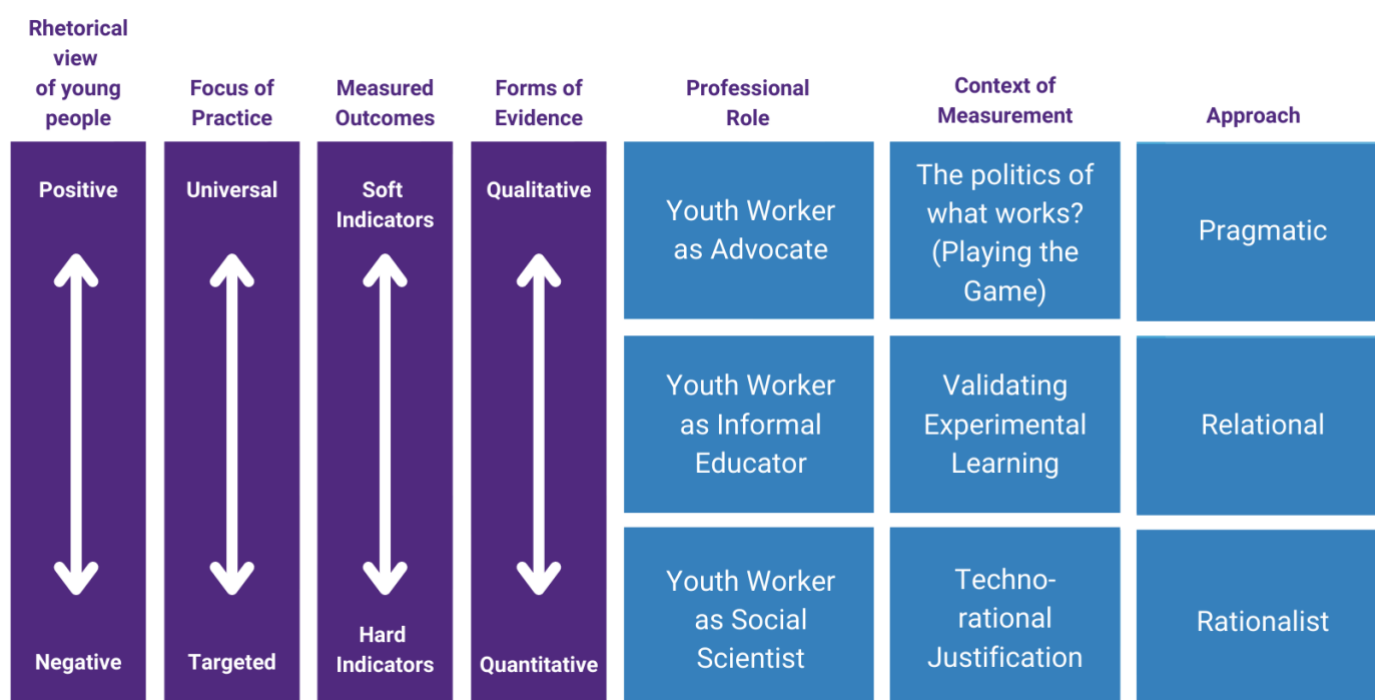
Marshall et al. (2021) highlight the potential of transformative evaluation as a methodology that is in harmony with the principles of youth work, with the scope to identify impacts of youth work and mechanisms by which this change occurred. It is not surprising that key literature within the Marshall report overlaps with findings of this literature review and also that of Dickson (2013), Dunne et. al (2014) and McGregor (2015), who believe that the inclusion of young people and grassroots youth workers in participatory evaluation/research is an area where youth work could focus.

There is a mismatch between the expectations for youth workers to train at degree level and to carry out evidence-based, reflective practice and the lack of investment in the sector. The sector has experienced job losses and limited funds has resulted in organisations to recruit less well-trained professionals into roles at lower pay. This subsequently means that people on the ground are even less equipped to balance effective evaluation and working with young people. This coincides with a UK-wide issue relating to stretches on other services, increasing the numbers of young people with more complex mental health difficulties without specialist help. This has meant that many young people are asking for help from trusted professionals within teaching and voluntary sector organisations.

As youth work was encouraged to move from a universal to a targeted provision model via the funding bodies, they are increasingly working within marginalised communities, which already have health inequalities from structural issues and are therefore even more likely to have complex needs relating to housing, finances, safeguarding and mental health. Some of these tensions relate to a lack of clarity over responsibility for different aspects of quality provision, evaluation, and demonstrating outcomes and impact.

In 2014, an extensive report on youth work in the EU was carried out by [Dunne et al.](#) (sponsored by the European Commission); it includes some references to youth work literature and impact. Overall, they found that “where youth work is well designed, informed by an understanding of young people’s situation and development process, and supported by competent youth workers, it can result in a range of positive results” (p. 180). They summarise these as both positively impacting young people’s personal skills and social capital and contributing to enhanced opportunities for enriching shared activities within and between generations.

In 2015, [McGregor](#), commissioned by YouthLink Scotland, carried out a literature review specifically scoping the impact of universal youth work. They used a less broad search strategy than Dickson (2013) and focused on literature that met the definition of youth work by YouthLink Scotland. The table below provides a helpful visualisation of the evidence they found, the links to the role of a youth worker, and the possibilities of measurement/evidence.



Key themes identified in the evidence to build on the literature review by Dickson (2013) were a focus on academic inquiry relating to a) difference and inequality, b) professionalisation and c) theories of learning and pedagogy. They found that the research within Europe (Dunne et al., 2014) and primary research suggest youth work can bring positive outcomes in relation to educational attainment, employability, and health and wellbeing. They suggest that success factors that enable positive outcomes from youth work identified in the literature were: “Prolonged and stable engagement over time; Voluntary engagement in processes that begin with lived experience yet provide structured opportunities to problematise and reflect on that lived experience; Adults and young people building authentic relationships and working as genuine partners in the learning process; Starting where young people are ‘at’ by taking their forms of cultural expression seriously” (p. 9).

Results

Demographic Profile

Blackpool is an upper-tier local authority district (LAD) sitting on the Fylde Coast in the North West region of England. Blackpool has a resident population of c. 139,400, a population density of 40.7 persons per hectare, the third highest in the North West behind the major cities of Manchester and Liverpool, and the seventh most densely populated borough in England and Wales outside Greater London.³

The LAD covers an area of just under 14 square miles and is divided into 21 wards that are all classified as urban. Aside from any accessible coastal and beach areas, there is limited open space – particularly within and around the centre.

Population

The population of Blackpool fell from an estimated 142,000 to 139,400 from 2012 to 2019, a combination of both outward migration and natural changes due to death and birth rates. During this time the North West population grew by c. 3.6%, while the rest of the U.K grew by c. 4.8%.⁴ The population of Blackpool is projected to fall by a further 500 persons by 2028 whilst other areas rise.⁵

Whilst there is little available data to understand movement within the local authority (and thus housing stability), the latest Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) for Blackpool recognises that “transience has been an identified issue in Blackpool for a long time”.

The JSNA identifies through “analysis of GP Register data” that “a small number of people move more than 3 times a year (less than 2%), and that the age group most likely to move at least once is young people aged 20-29”.⁶

Age

Blackpool has a higher proportion of people aged over 45 than England and a much lower proportion younger than 45. The age group from 20 to 44 has a considerably lower proportion than England.⁷

³ Nomis: QS102EW

⁴ ONS Mid-year population estimates

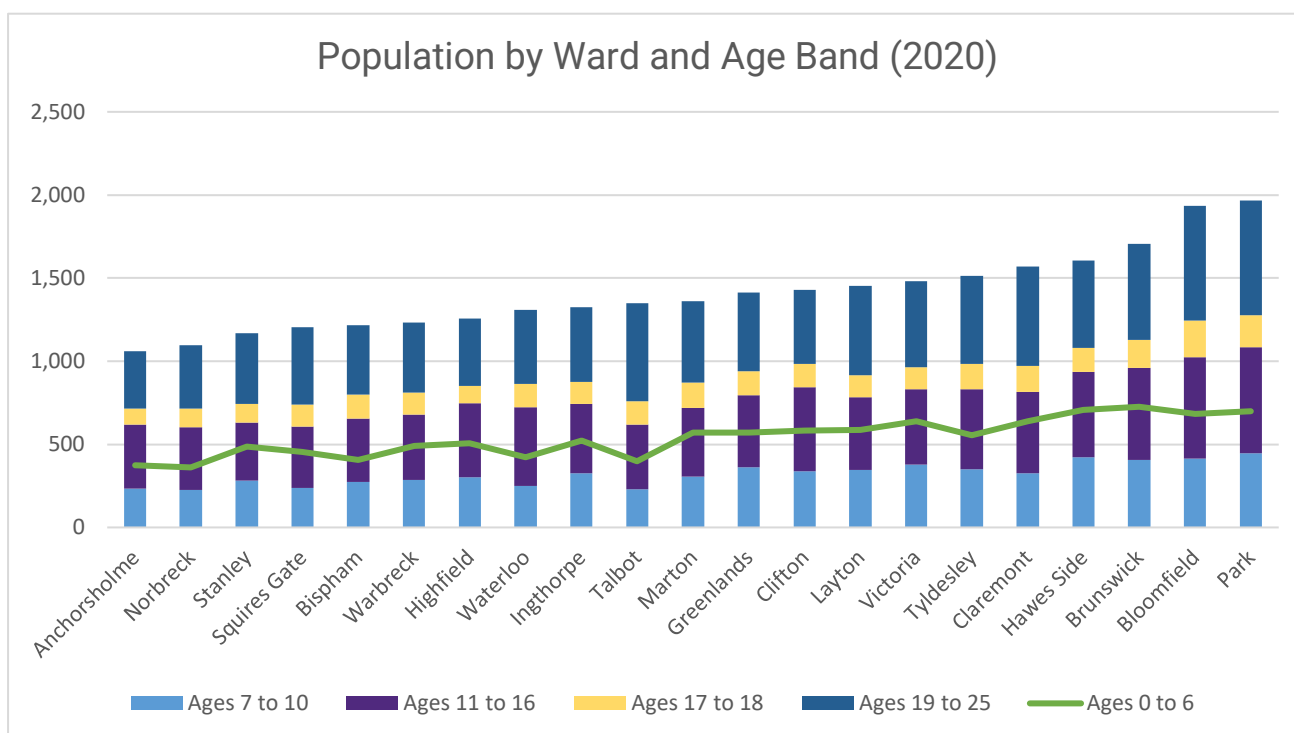
⁵ ONS Population projections

⁶ Blackpool JSNA

⁷ ONS Mid-year population estimates

Over the next decade it is projected that there will be proportionally fewer persons in Blackpool from 16 to 55 years old but more from 55 years old to 80 years old.⁸

Population projection estimates by single year of age are not available at ward level; however, current estimates of banded age groups show a varied distribution, with Park having nearly twice as many young people within the range of seven to 25 years old as Anchorsholme.



Source: ONS Mid-year Estimates

Gender

Blackpool's population is slightly more female (50.3%) than male (49.7%). There is no significant difference in the gender distribution in Blackpool compared to other areas, either overall or by age group.

Ethnicity

The only reliable data on ethnicity is from the 2011 Census, which shows that Blackpool is one of the least diverse local authorities.⁹ It had a black and minority ethnic population of 4,726 people, or 3.3% of the total population. This is lower than the averages for the North West region (9.8%) and England (14.6%) as a whole.

The 2011 Census provided a breakdown of ethnicity by age bands at LSOA. Combining these to ward level and selecting only those aged eight to 24 showed that the younger age groups are proportionally more diverse, with 4.4% of young people being from a non-white ethnicity. Brunswick had the most diverse age group, with 7.6% of the population aged eight to 24 in 2011 being non-white.

⁸ ONS Population projections

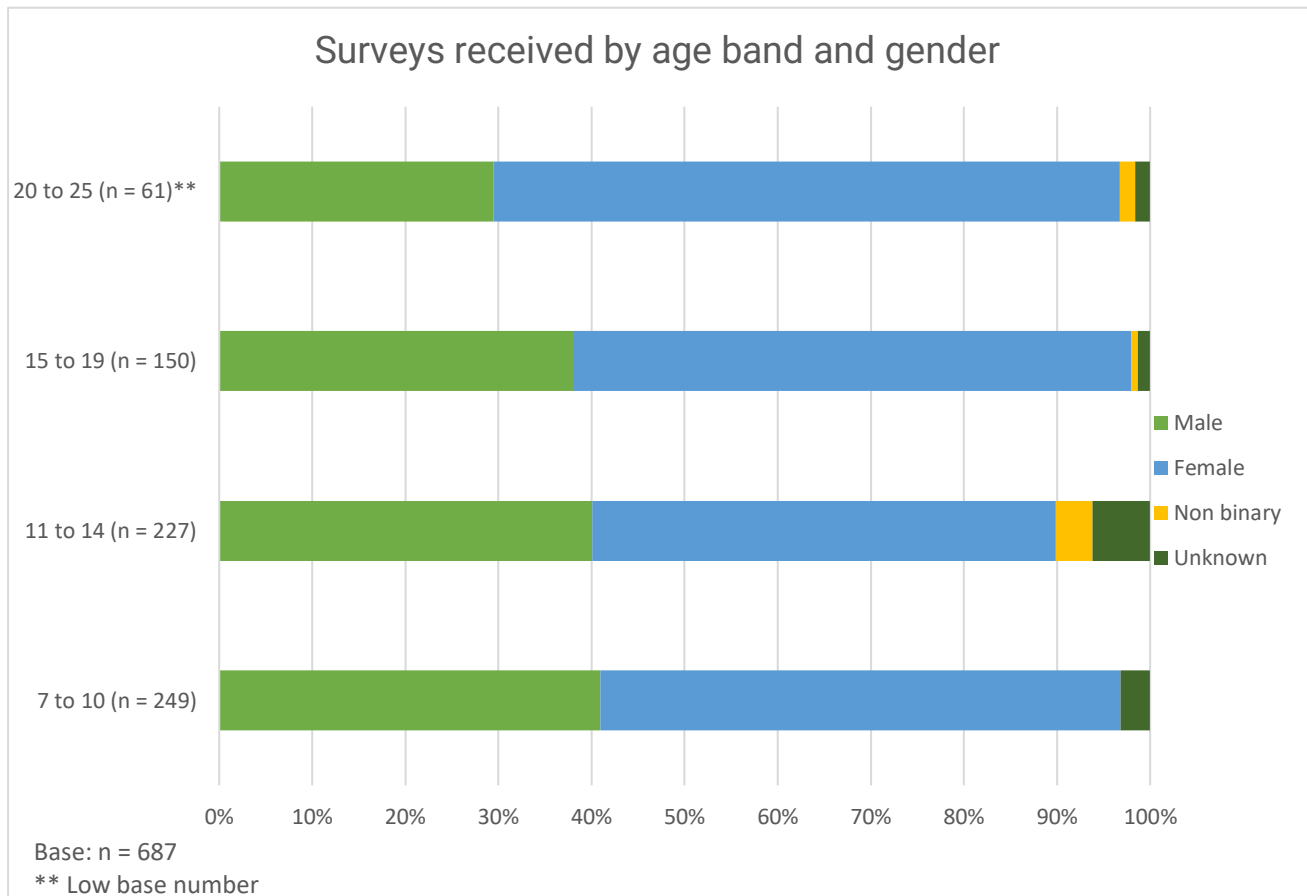
⁹ All data taken from NOMIS.

Young People Engagement and Consultation

There is a standalone detailed report with analysis of each question available for the quantitative consultations with young people.

Summary of questionnaire responses

In total 742 responses were received, 43 were out of scope, and a further 19 had insufficient data, leaving 680 responses that were usable. There was a disproportionately low response rate from young males, decreasing as the respondents got older. The response rate was highest amongst those aged between seven and 14.



Limitations

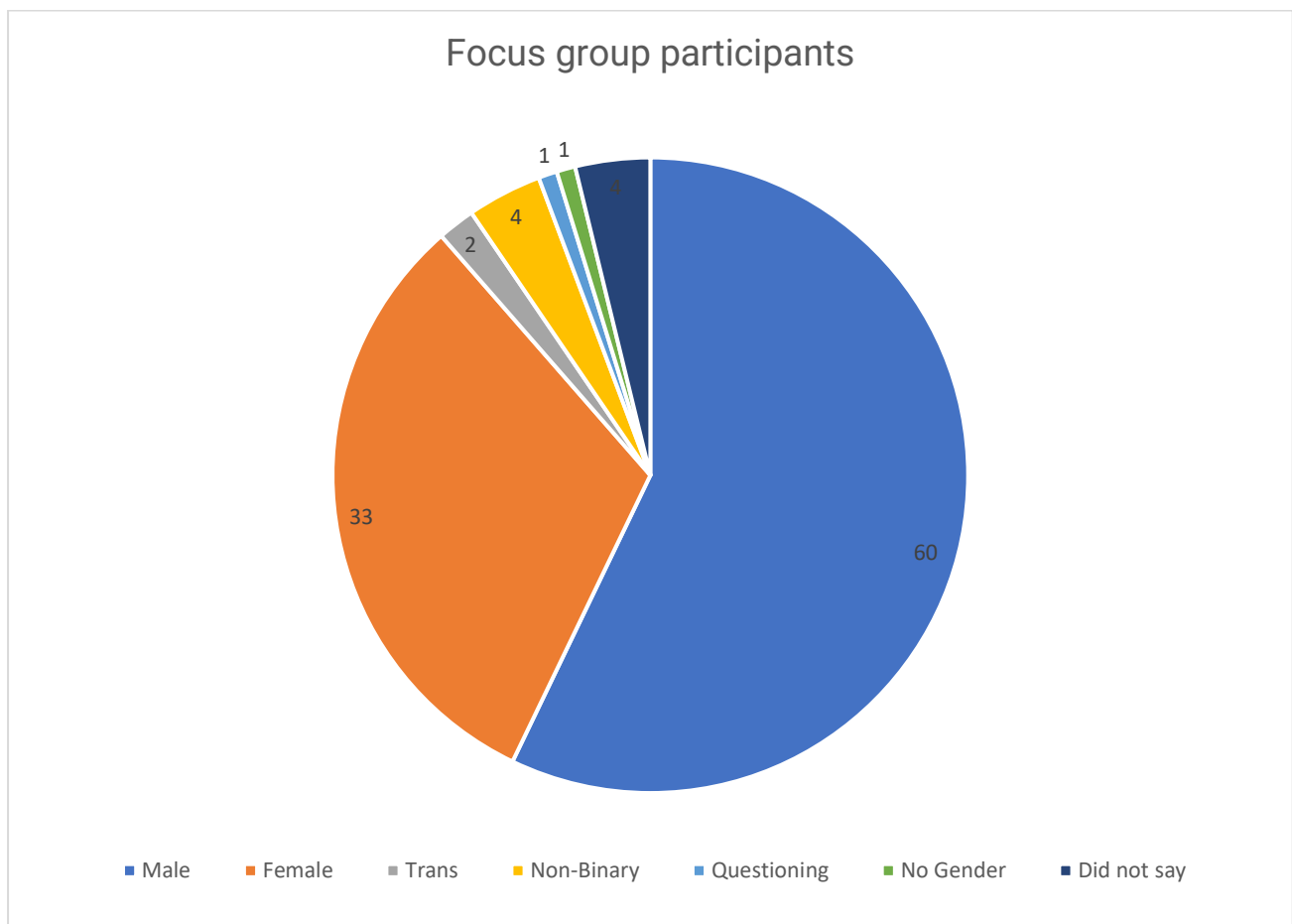
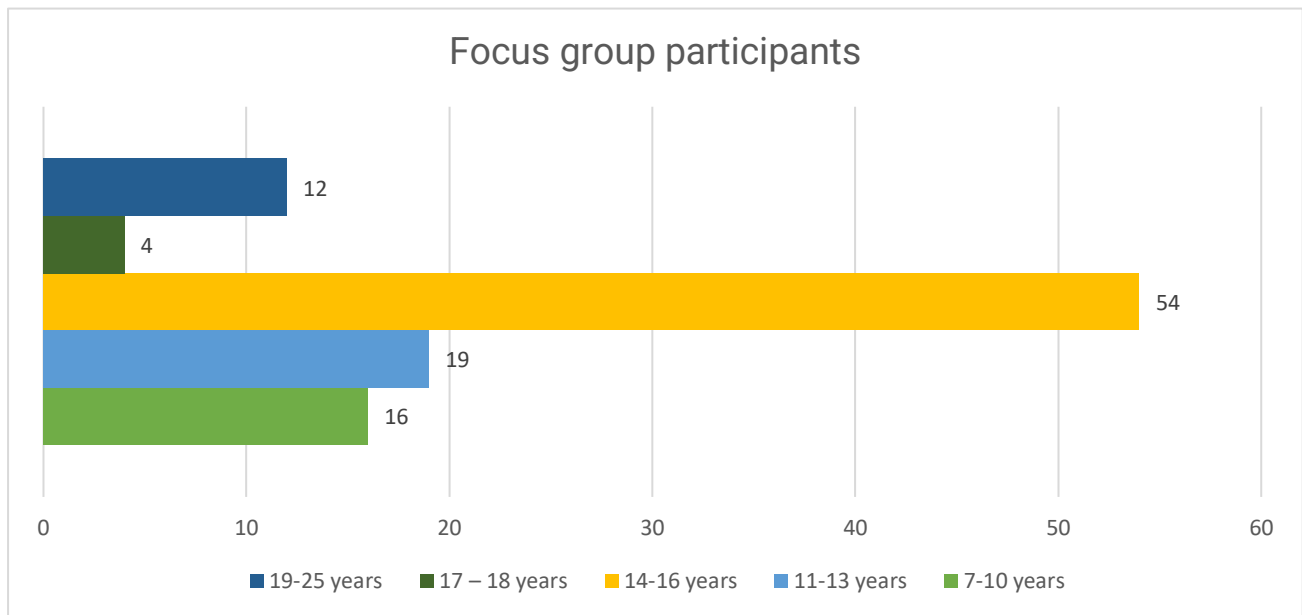
There were 11 responses from those who identify in a non-binary way; therefore, these were not able to be analysed in isolation.

Those aged 20 to 25 have only been reached through more exclusive channels and have fewer responses. Therefore, there may be some selection bias, and the low base number means this age group are excluded from some differential analyses (e.g. by gender).

As the data collected was from a single point in time, there is no way to understand potential cohort effects or changes over time.

Summary of focus group participation

The host services of the focus groups were selected to reflect the diverse nature of young people from across Blackpool. YFNW facilitated 11 focus groups, working with 105 young people, aged between seven and 25, 60% of whom identified as male.



Participating in youth provision activities

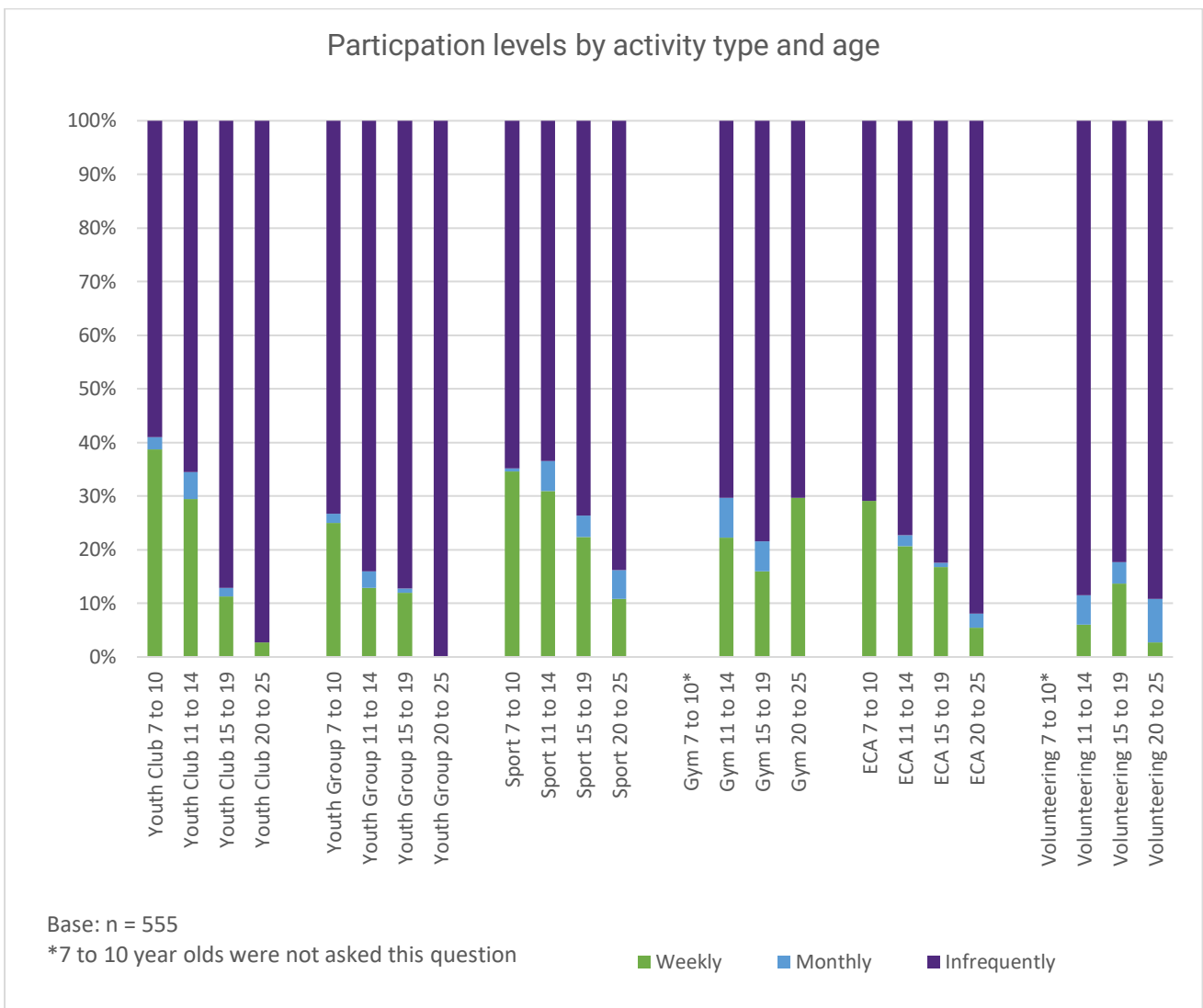
Respondents were asked how often they participated in any activity. Overall, the responses show that regular participation rates decline with age for each activity (Figure 4). The exceptions to this are:

- Volunteering, which showed higher participation rates amongst 15- to 19-year-olds
- Gym, which showed higher participation rates amongst 20- to 25-year-olds

The responses show that in general, a young person is either regularly engaged with an activity or does not attend regularly. There are very few who have occasional attendance (monthly), although this is a little more prevalent in the 11 to 14 age group.

Participation is highest at youth clubs and sports for young people aged seven to 10. These activities continue to prove popular at ages 11 to 14, but with a small shift towards occasional attendance. However, from ages 15 onwards youth club and youth group engagement decline significantly, becoming the least popular activities.

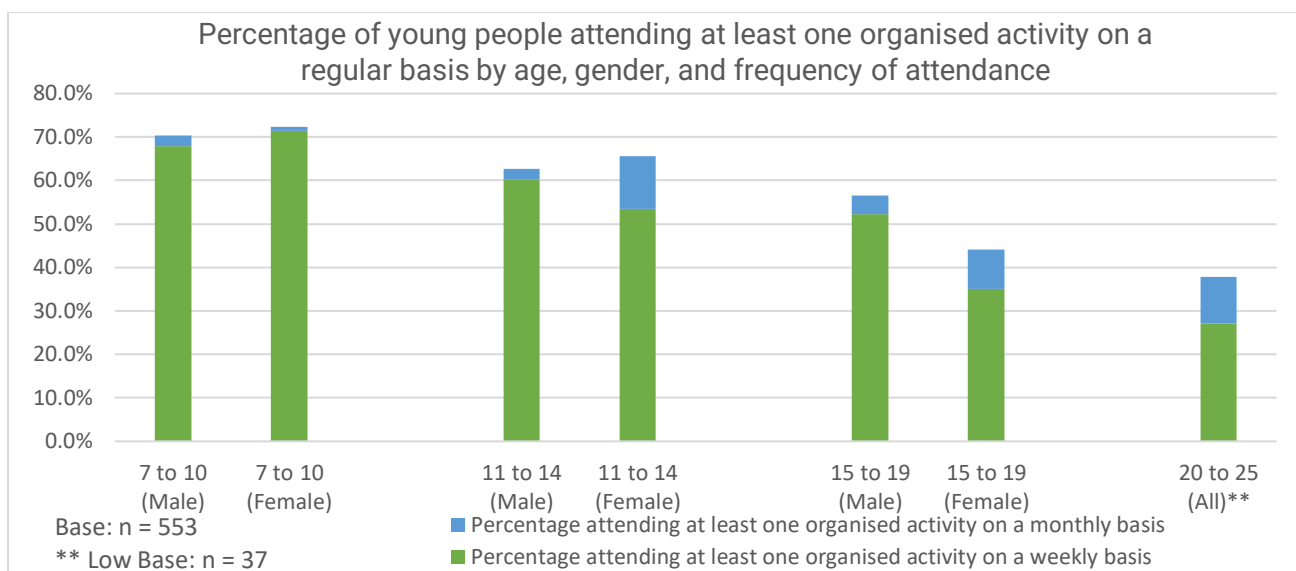
Youth provision attendance was explored with focus group participants. The sense of membership and belonging to the provision that young people attend was found to be of high importance to those young people regularly participating. When examined further, the sense of membership and belonging was particularly influenced by easy access to local provision and the relations that the young people had with workers.



Differentiating responses by gender suggests two general themes:¹⁰

- Those identifying as male are more likely to participate in sports, gym and youth group activities across all age groups.
- Those identifying as female are significantly more likely to participate in dance, music or arts (ECAs).

Taken in aggregate, the proportion of young people who attend at least one organised activity on either a weekly or monthly basis decreases with age. Differentiating by gender, the proportion of females with regular attendance at any organised activity decreases more with age.

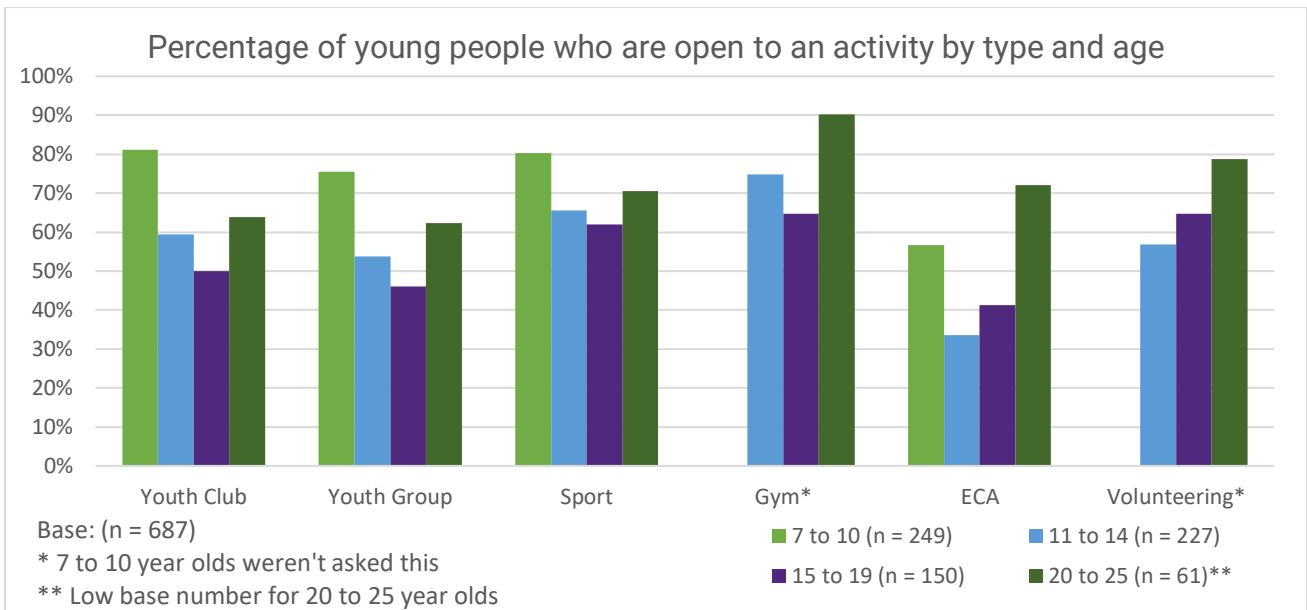


Openness to youth provision activities

Young people were asked whether they “didn’t want to” do any of following activities (figure 7). Those who didn’t choose this response are considered “open” to an activity. The responses show that:

- Generally, openness to activities lessens with age throughout teenage years but picks up again from 20 to 25
 - low responses for 20- to 25-year-olds mean this latter statement should be treated with caution
 - volunteering shows a different trajectory with openness to participating in volunteering increasing with age
- Those aged seven to 10 are most open to partaking in any activity
- Sports, exercise in a gym, or other organised physical activity is the activity that young people were most open to across all ages
- Any one of arts, music, or dance (ECAs) are activities that young people are least open to

¹⁰ Given the low number of responses from those who identified as non-binary, we have not included this as a category in gendered analysis.



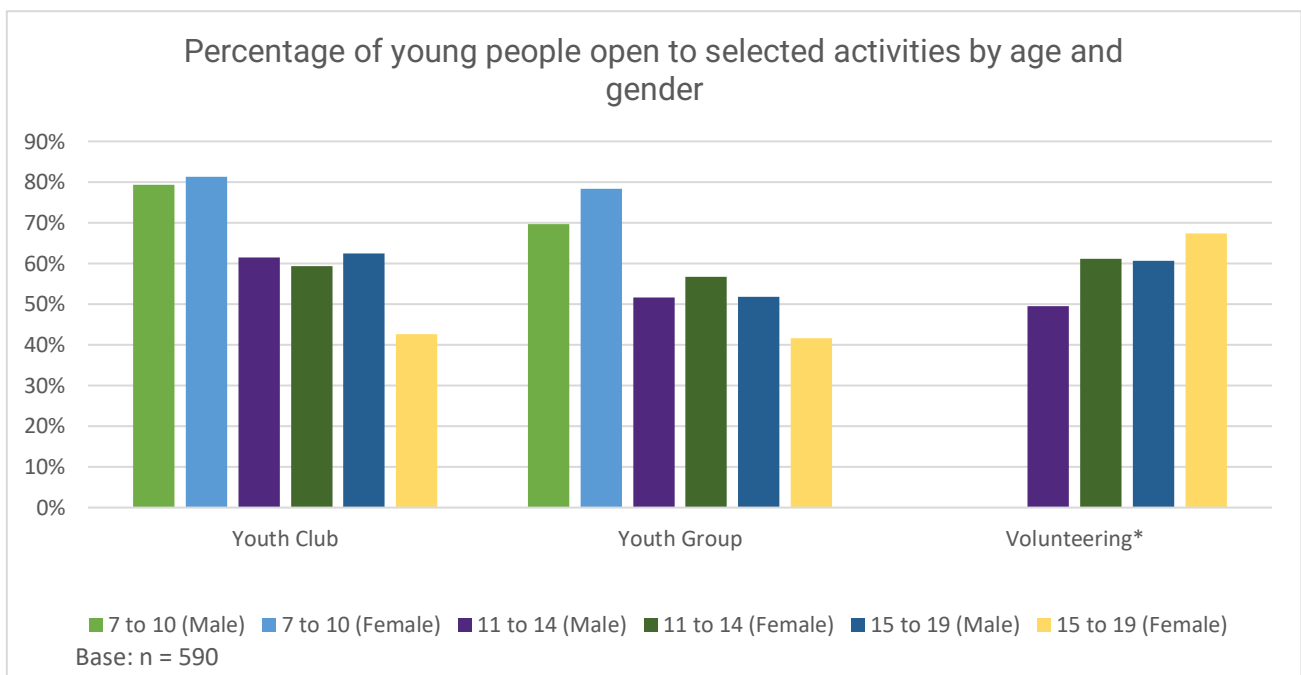
When differentiating by age and gender there are some distinct patterns:

- At ages seven to 10, young girls are more open to all activities
- Girls are more likely to be open to arts, music, and dance across all age groups
- By ages 15 to 19, young boys are significantly more open to youth clubs, youth groups, sports, and gym
- Interest in volunteering grows consistently across the age range, regardless of gender

Openness to accessing youth services

The older the responder, the more likely there is a shift away from being interested in traditional “youth service”. This is especially marked for those identifying as female (figure 8).

When reasons for not attending youth centres were explored in the focus groups, there was a perception that they were ‘boring’, and the resources and facilities that were available within them were unappealing. This was a prominent view with the participants who were 16 and over.

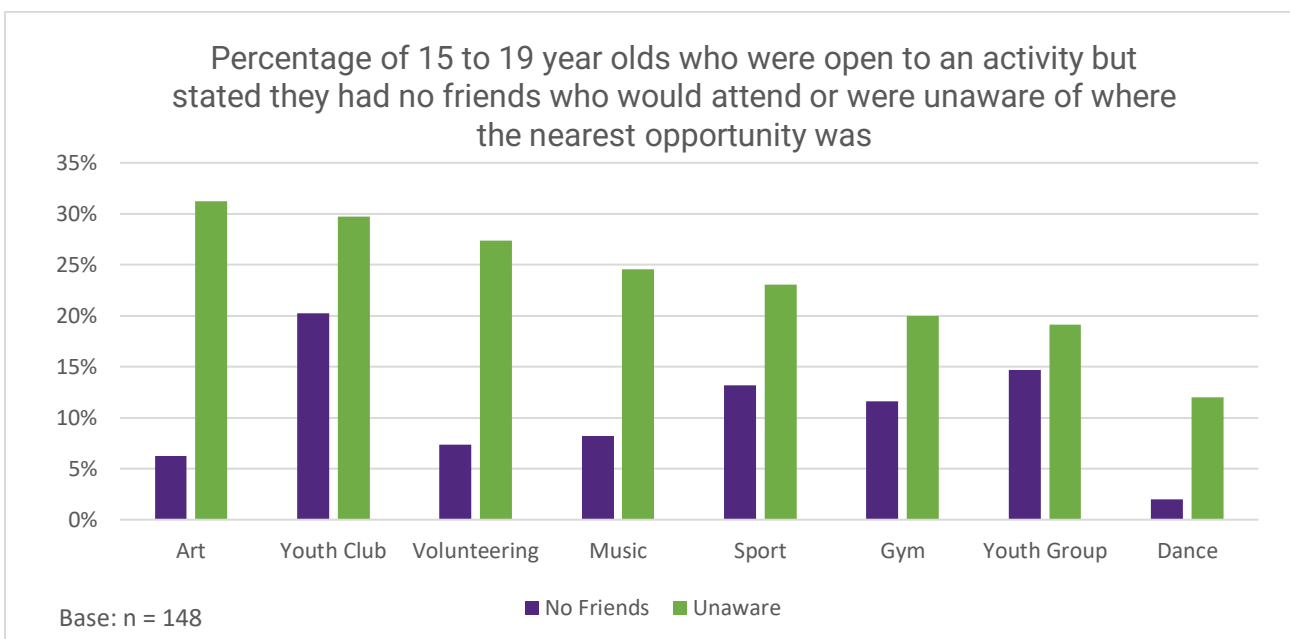


Impediments to activities

Young people were asked to select any common obstacles which might affect their ability to partake in activities.

There was variance by activity type but with the common following trends:

- Most commonly, young people of all ages and across all activities stated that there were no obstacles preventing their engagement.
- The most common impediment across all age groups was a lack of awareness of where the nearest opportunity for each activity was. Older age groups generally had less awareness by activity.
- The second most common impediment suggested that many young people might be open to an activity but had no friends who would partake in that activity with them.
- By age 15, almost no young people faced difficulties in travelling to opportunities.

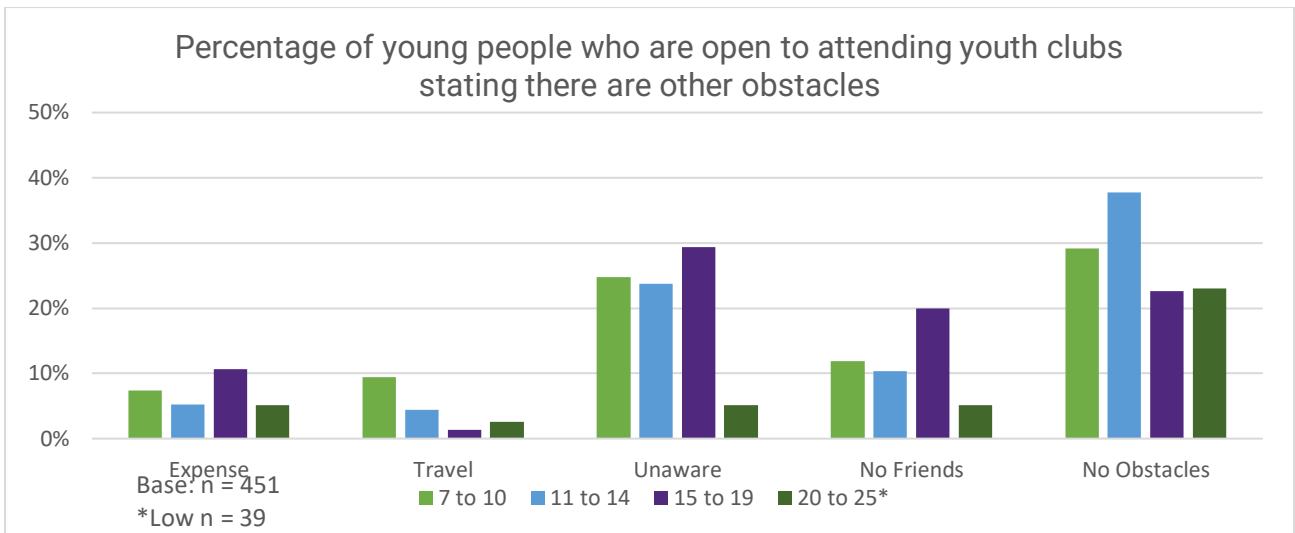


Barriers to accessing youth service activities

Around 26% of young people who are open to attending youth clubs are unaware of where the nearest opportunities to them were, peaking at 30% amongst 15 to 19 year olds. This age group also was more likely to identify other impediments, with one in five stating they had no friends who would partake in youth clubs.

Exploring barriers within the focus groups identified apprehension amongst some young people in attending youth provision that was aimed at high attendance, citing large groups increased anxiety levels. This was particularly pertinent for young people who identify as having a special education need/disability.

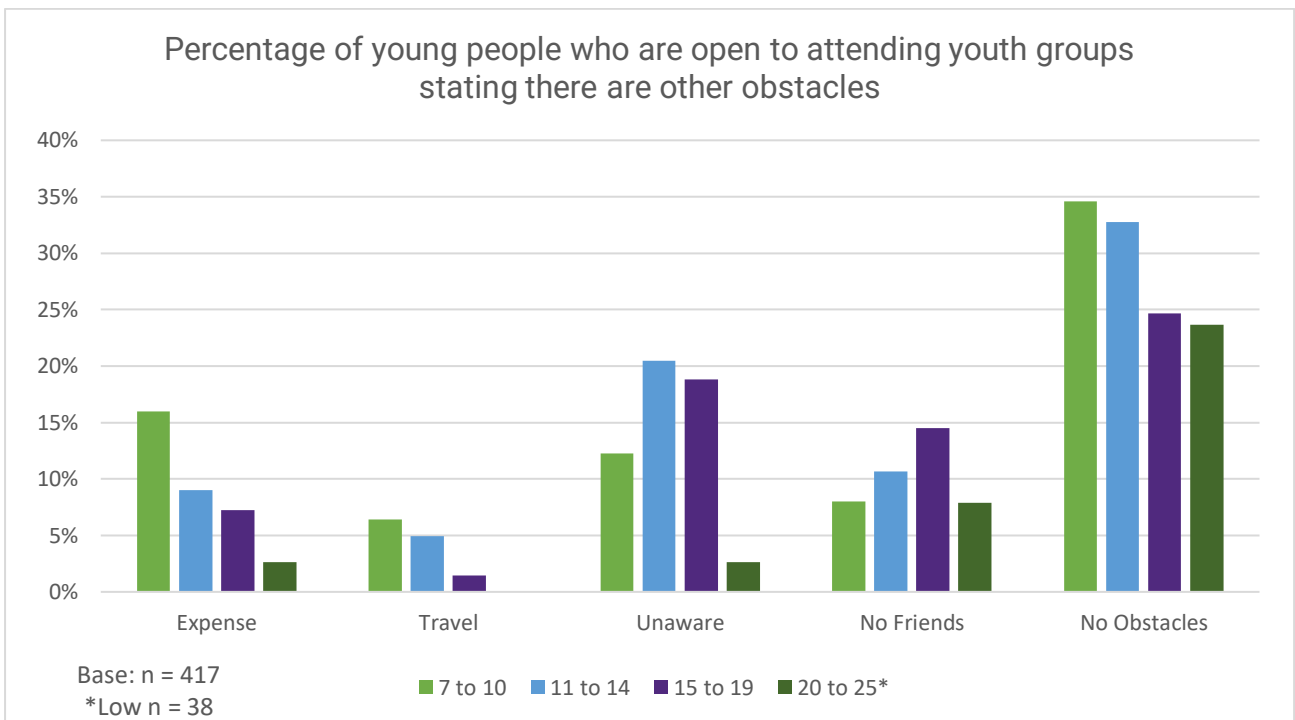
Furthermore, personal safety was raised as a barrier within the focus group discussions; common themes included travelling to and from provision and general life in Blackpool. There was also a perception that drink and drugs are readily available, and this increases their feelings of not being safe.



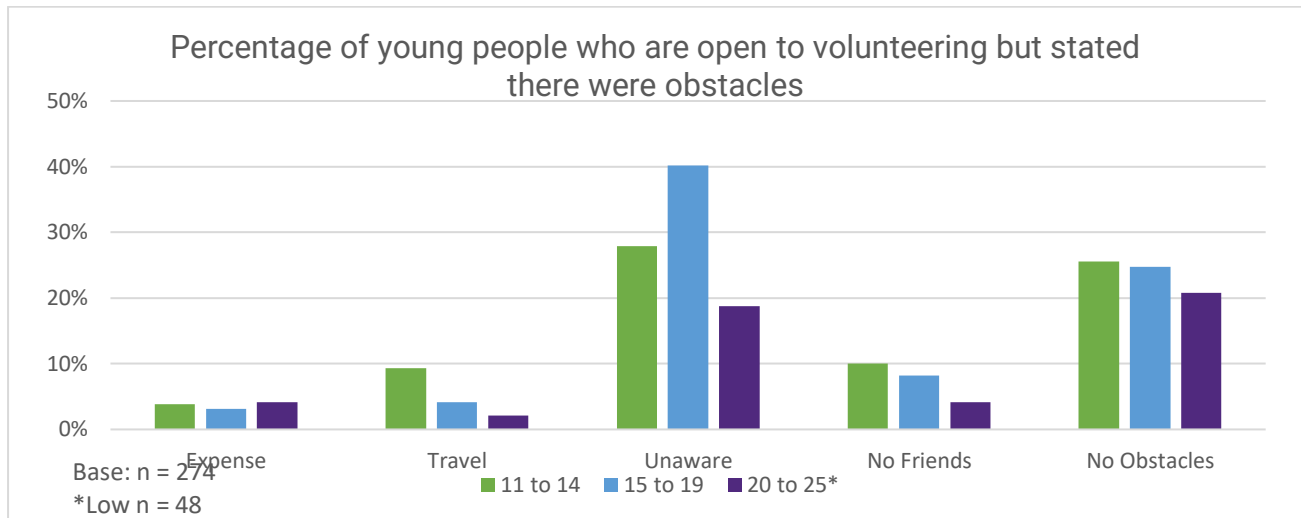
There were around one in six (16%) seven to 10 year olds who considered that the cost of attending youth groups was an obstacle.

When explored within the focus groups, young people accessing youth groups or clubs stated cost of provision was not considered a barrier. However, concerns were raised that if cost increased it could inhibit future attendance due to financial constraints at home.

Public transport prices were considered an inhibitor to accessing provision for young people aged seven–16. Whereas those 16 and over felt that public transport costs were not a barrier to travelling to provision.

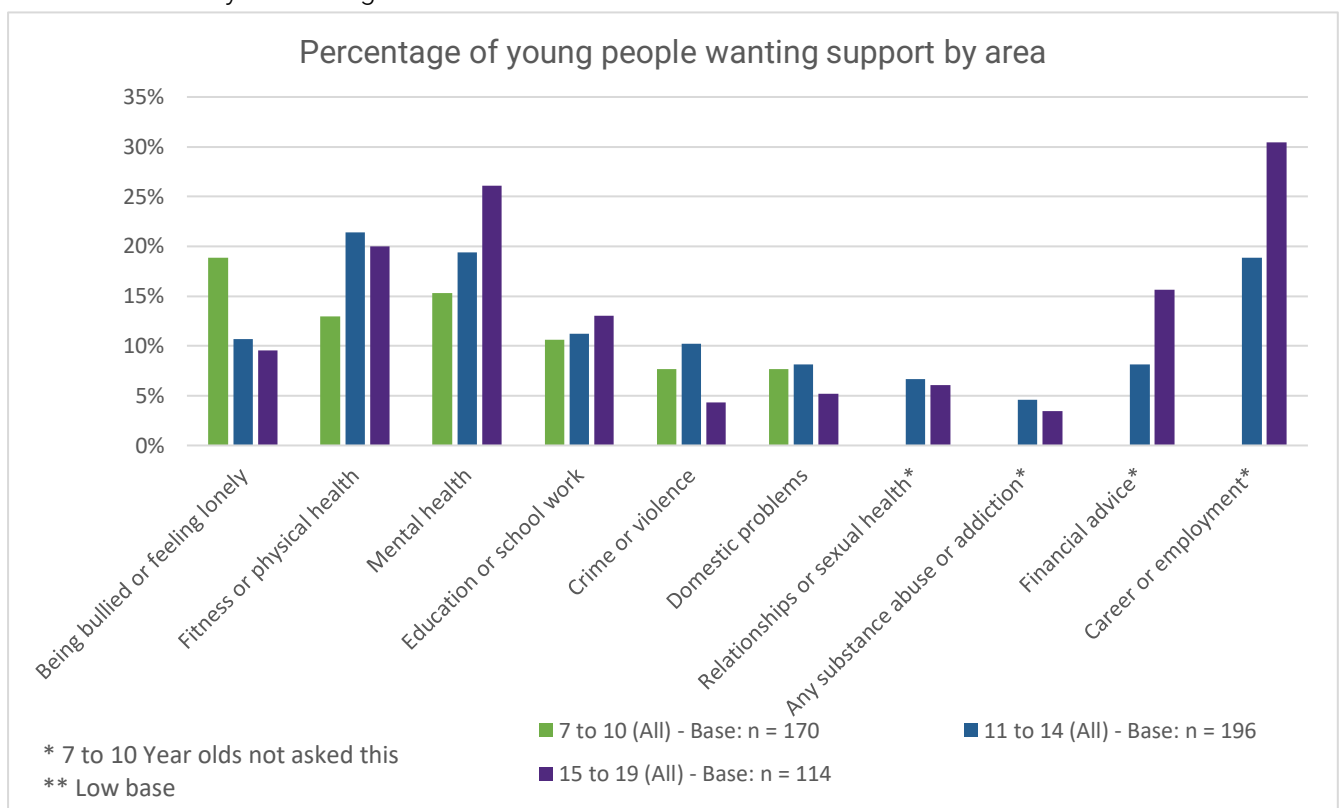


A high proportion of young people were unaware of where the nearest opportunities were to partake in volunteering or social action. This was the highest level of unawareness for all activities and age groups. Conversely, there were relatively few who identified other obstacles.



Support services

The questionnaire asked young people to state if they wanted or would benefit from support in several different areas. Fitness/physical health, mental health, education/school work, financial advice, career/employment related advice and help with being bullied or feeling lonely were the six prominent themes that respondents identified as areas of support they could benefit from that they were not currently accessing.¹¹



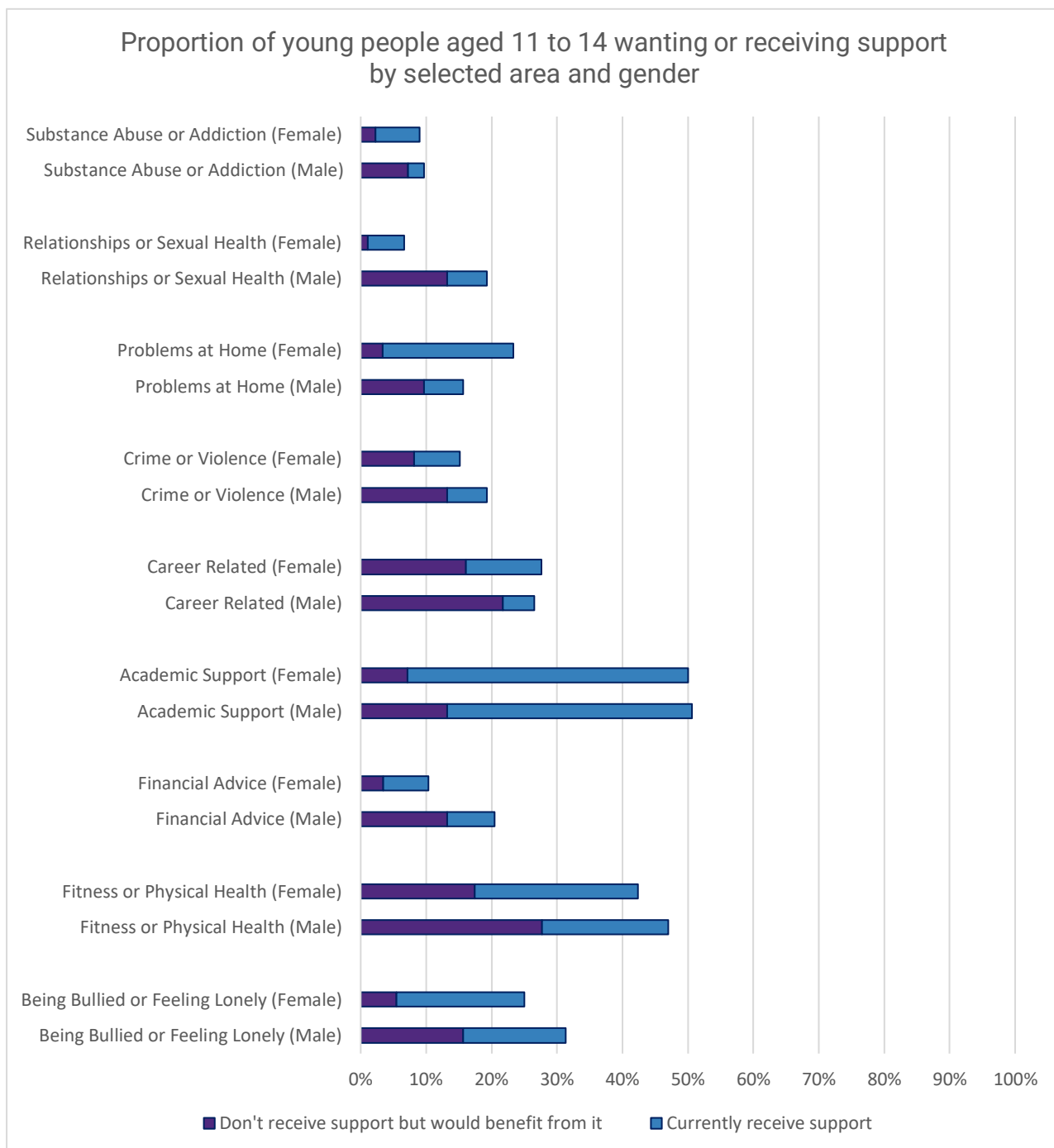
¹¹ Results for those aged 20 to 25 have been excluded given a small base number and likely bias in the respondents due to the channels through which the questionnaire was distributed to them.

With exception to advice and help with being bullied or feeling lonely, the other prominent support areas increased with age. These areas were also amongst the most selected, suggesting early intervention is either not being received, not successful or that the desire for support rises by age group.

There were 16 “other” responses of which 10 stated support was desired for LGBTQ related issues.

Support by topic, differentiated by age and gender

There was little difference in the proportion of males or females wanting support when differentiated by each area amongst the age groups for seven to 10 year olds and 15 to 19 year olds. However, amongst 11 to 14 year olds, there was a distinctly greater desire for support across nearly all areas for young males.

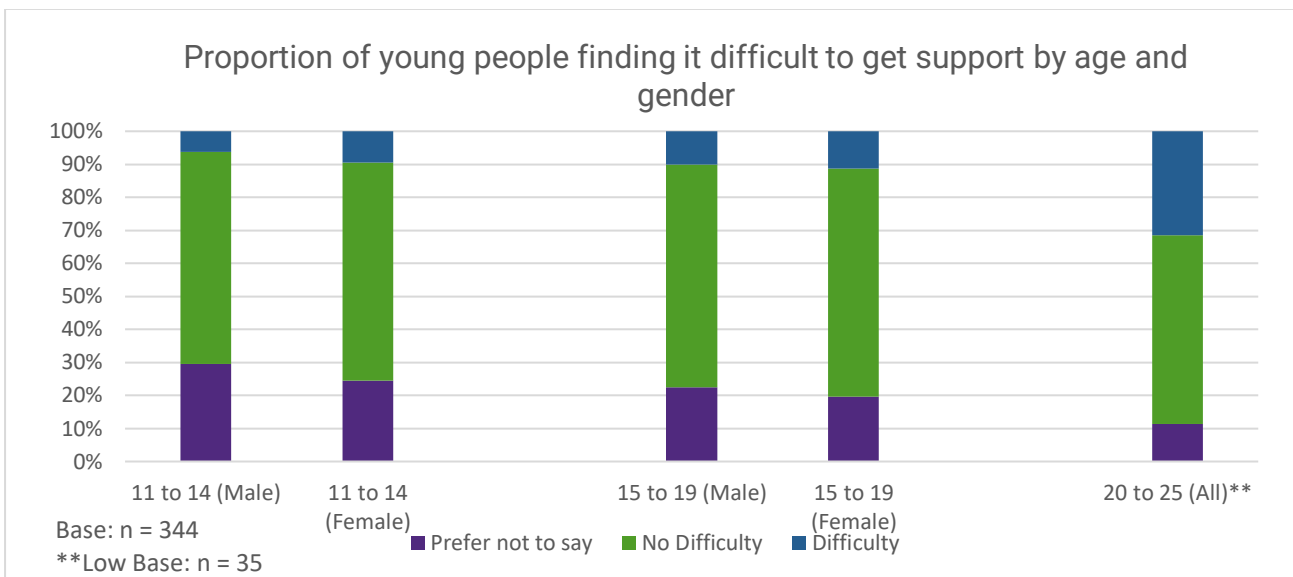


Difficulty in accessing support

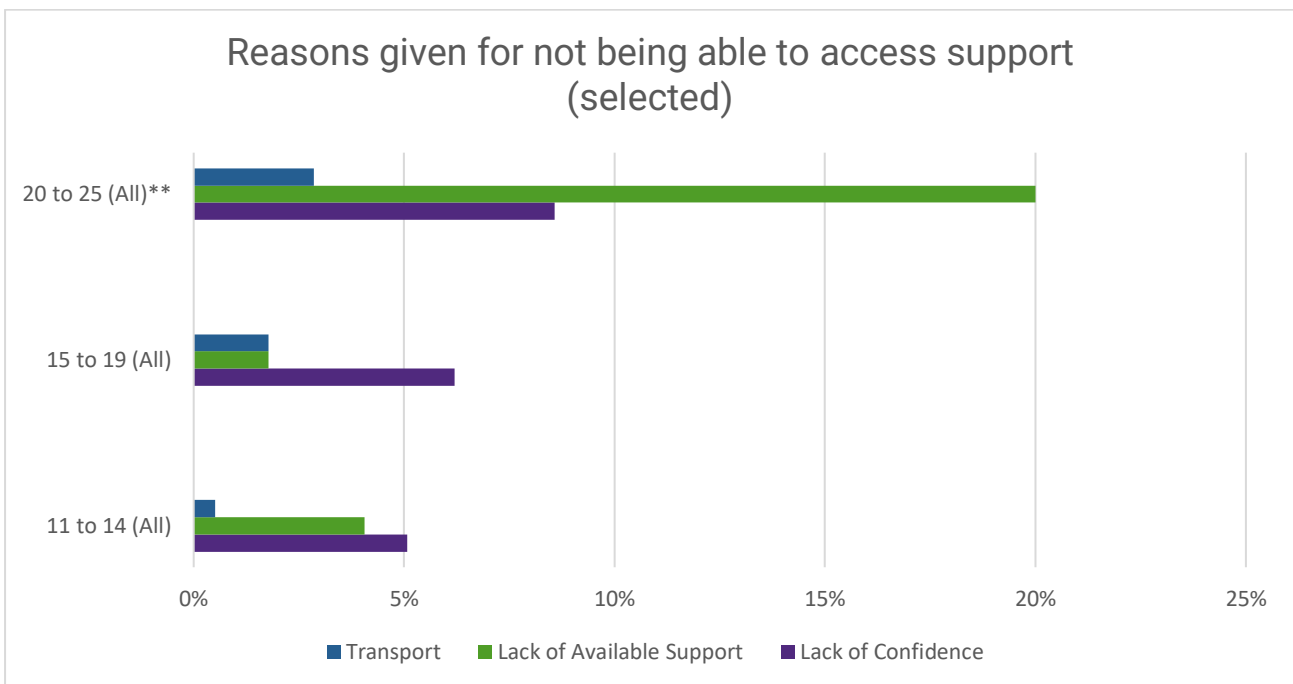
Fourteen percent of respondents, who were 11 or older, said that there were barriers to accessing support, with nearly a quarter of respondents choosing not to answer the question. Young men aged 11 to 14 were least likely to say that they found it difficult to get support (6%).

There was little difference in the proportions when differentiated by subsets of those who attended any activity on at least a weekly basis and those who did not.

Whilst 31% of those aged 20 to 25 said they found it difficult to get support, this figure must be treated with caution because a small number of responses were received, which are likely affected by bias in the respondents due to the channels through which the questionnaire was distributed to this age group.



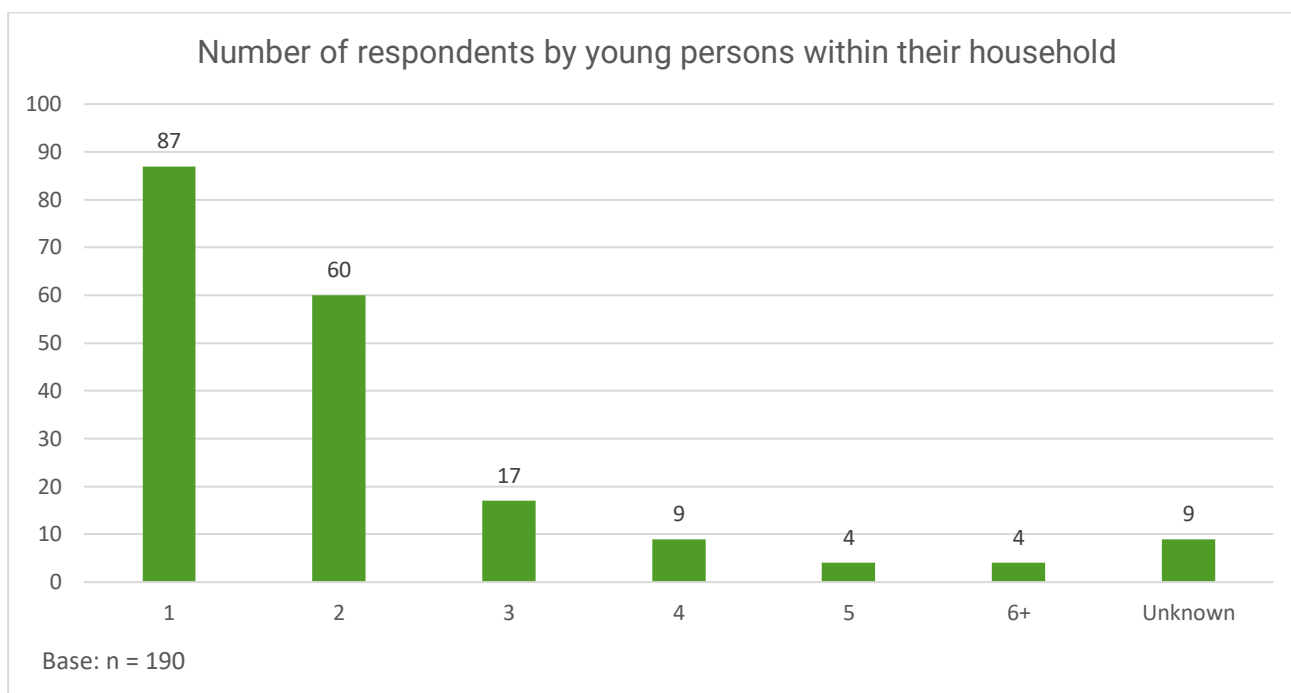
Respondents were asked to explain what might be causing the difficulty to access support. Three areas received more than one response.



Confidence or anxiety and issues related to a lack of available support were the most prevalent reasons for difficulty in accessing support. Again, figures for those aged 20 to 25 must be treated with caution because we received a small number of responses, which are likely affected by bias in the respondents due to the channels through which the questionnaire was distributed to this age group.

Summary of Results from Parents and Carers Questionnaire

In total 193 responses were received, of which three were unusable, leaving 190 responses which were usable, primarily from those with one or two young people (aged seven to 17) living within their household.



Limitations of responses and assumptions

Questionnaires were promoted through schools and a working group of local youth providers to different populations of parents and carers, and therefore the responses will likely suffer from bias in that respondents are predominantly adults whose children are already involved in youth provision.

Respondents were not asked about household composition (e.g. number of adults/parents/families within a household) or household socio-economic status.

It has been assumed that all young persons within a household are dependent.

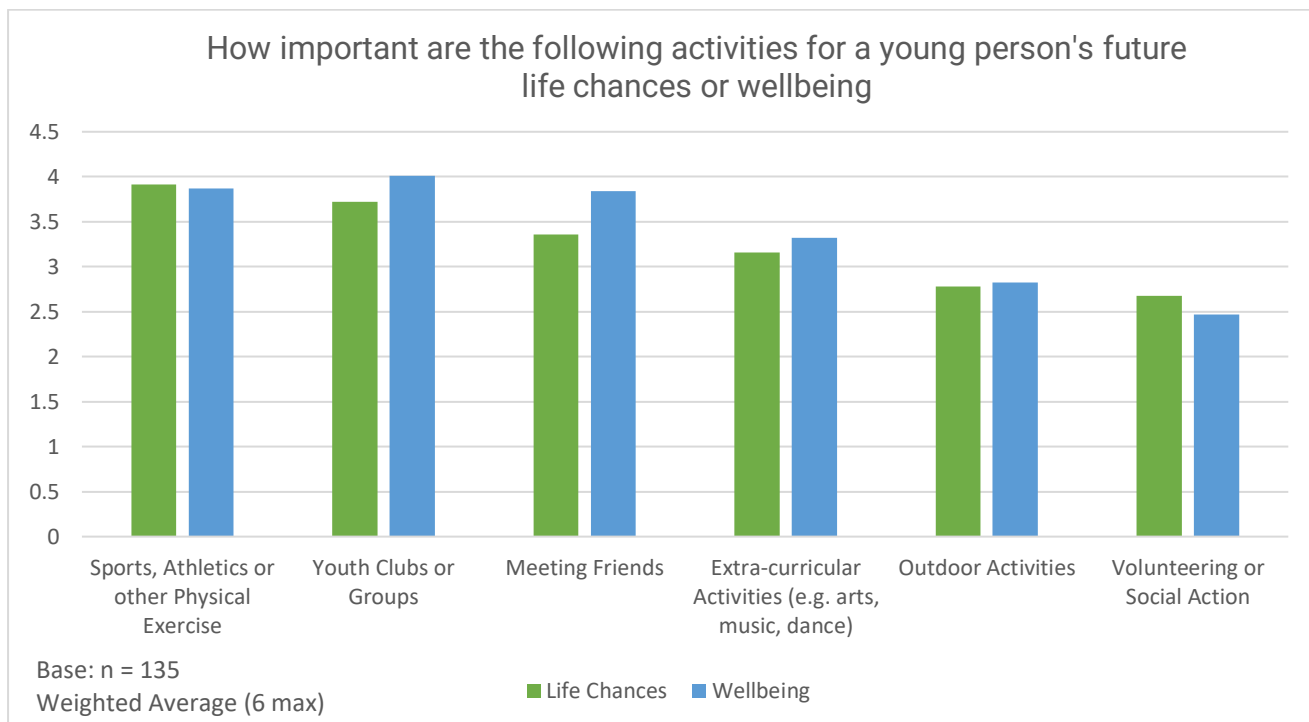
Importance of activities for social outcomes

Respondents were given a list of common activities for young people and asked to rank them by how important they felt they were for a young person's:

- Future life chances after education
- Current wellbeing and happiness

The chosen activities were derived from the results of the children and young person's questionnaire, with some grouped by type to avoid overfitting. Weighted averages were given to each "rank" with a high score meaning the activity was considered more important.

The responses suggest that parents and carers viewed sporting and traditional youth provision as most important overall for young people, whilst volunteering or social action (including political campaigning) was considered least important.



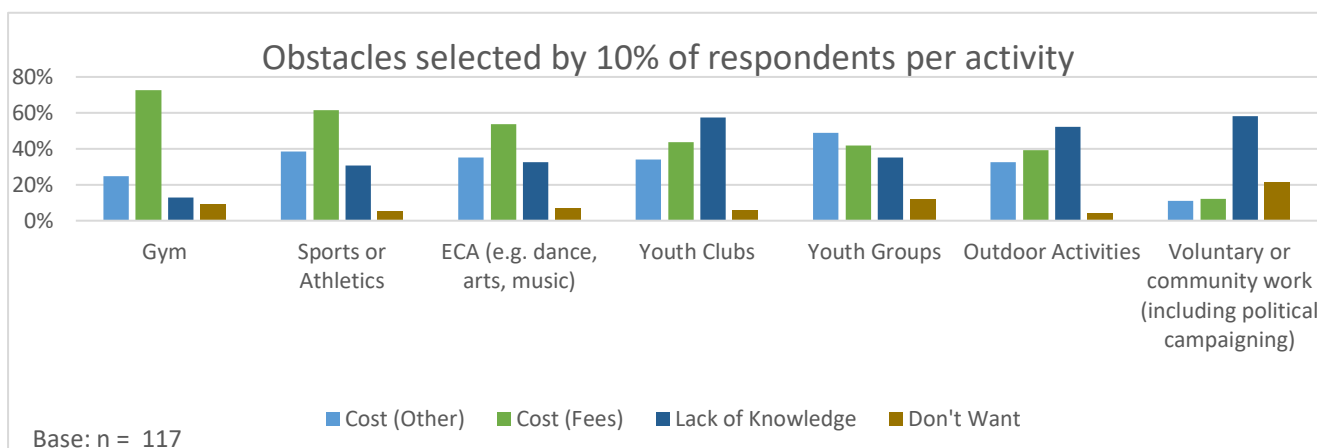
In households that stated they had three or more children (n = 34), the relative importance of youth clubs or groups on wellbeing increased to be ranked highest across both measures with an average of 3.74 points for “life chances” and 4.6 points for “wellbeing”.

Obstacles to activities

Respondents were asked about each activity and whether there were obstacles that prevented young people within the household participating in activities. At least 10% of respondents selected the following obstacles for each activity:

- Cost (fees) – fees for participation or subscriptions for joining
- Cost (other) – purchasing of equipment or uniform necessary for engagement
- Lack of knowledge – not knowing where the nearest opportunities were

21% of respondents also stated that they did not want any young persons in their household to partake in “voluntary or community work” (including political campaigning).



When differentiating by whether a household had one or multiple young persons in the household, there was little difference in the proportion who found costs prohibitive, suggesting that overall, household finances were a greater indicator of an obstacle than the costs per child.

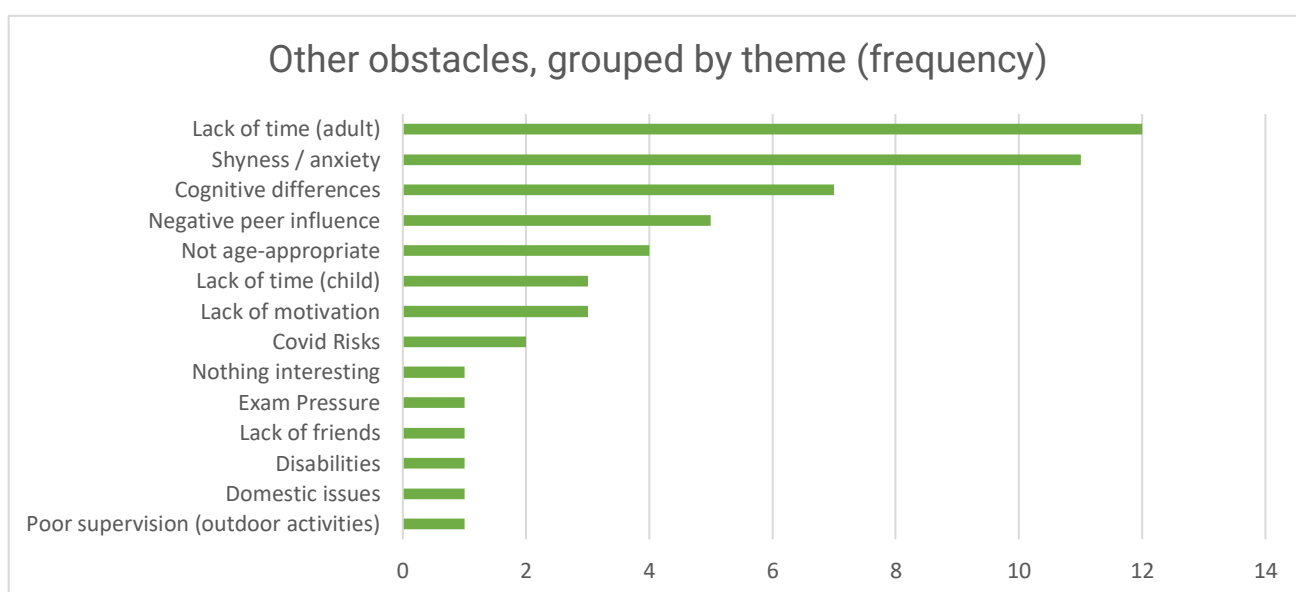
Other obstacles

Respondents were invited to provide a free-text response to describe any other obstacles. Any responses that were already answered have been removed. Other non-informative responses have been removed. For example, if a respondent stated that “activities are too expensive”, this was checked against that respondent’s answer to determine whether cost was a prohibitive factor towards activities. In general, obstacles can be conceptualised in three main ways:

1. Those which are on the demand side, i.e. are related to the circumstances of the individual household or young person.
2. Those which are on the supply side, i.e. are related to the offer from providers of activities being not suitably tailored to the young people within their household.
3. Those which are related to other externalities, i.e. are related to circumstances outside of the above (such as exam pressure or Covid-related risks to shielding households)

The lack of detail in many responses means we have not sought to differentiate responses in this way and have instead grouped them into broad thematic areas. But this basic framework is useful to consider alongside the results. Respondents told us that the most common obstacles are:

- A lack of time within the household. This is largely due to the adult(s) not being able to facilitate engagement or participation, but it was also often due to young persons already participating in multiple activities or having other competing interests.
- Behavioural or cognitive differences of young people. These responses lacked detail but varied across a spectrum wherein respondents would state that young people ranged from being shy to those who had behavioural or learning difficulties. It was not clear if that was preventing engagement, or if there was a lack of activities suitable to engage in.
- A few households stated that the age groups for many activities were too broad, meaning those at the younger or older ends of thresholds had little in common.
- A few households stated that other peers and activities would be negative influences on the children and young people within their household.

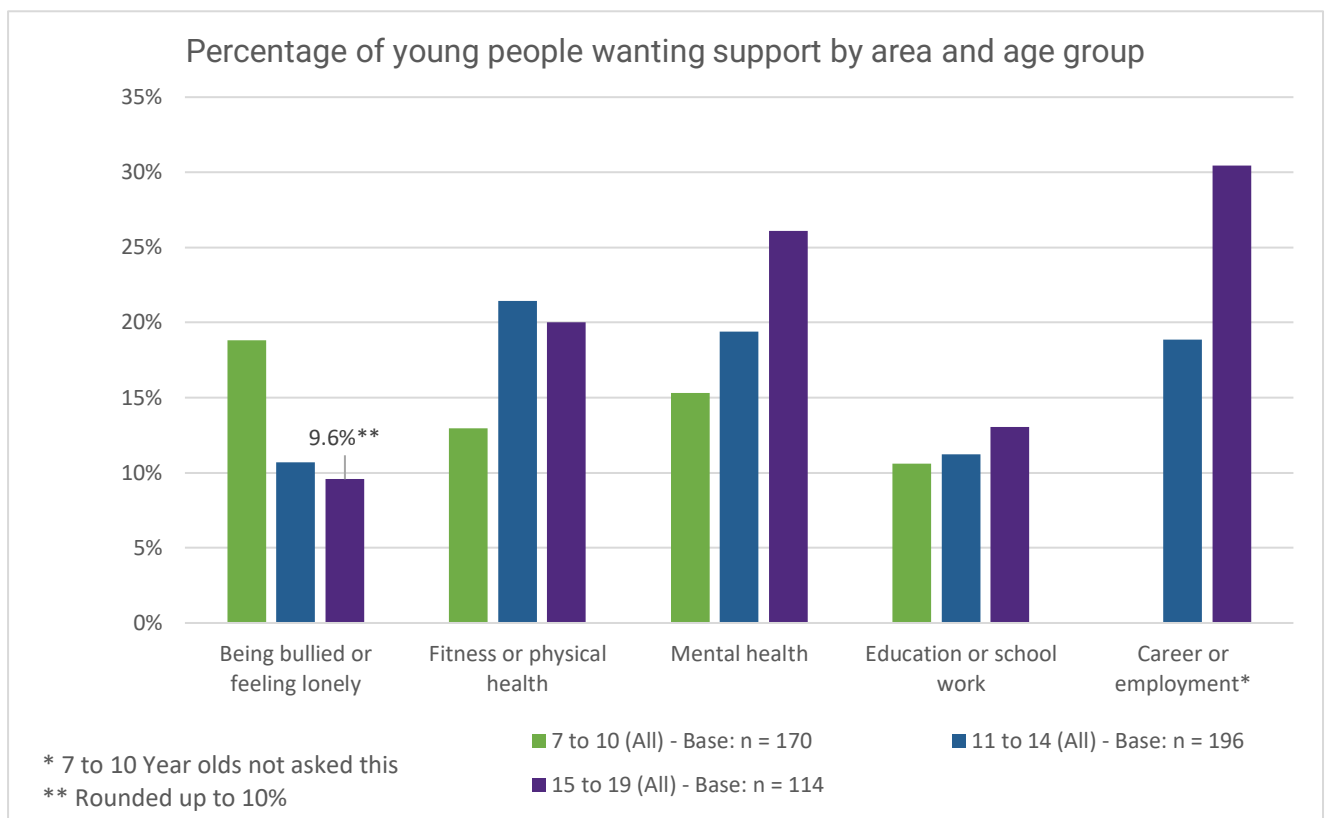


Areas of support for young people

The children and young people questionnaire asked respondents to tell us about any areas in which they wanted support and whether they were receiving any or not.

At least 10% of respondents for each age group told us that they wanted support but were not currently receiving it in the following areas:

- Mental Health or Wellbeing
- Fitness or Physical Health
- Education or School Work
- Being Bullied or Feeling Lonely (especially for those aged seven to 10)
- Career and Employment Advice (especially for those 15 onwards)



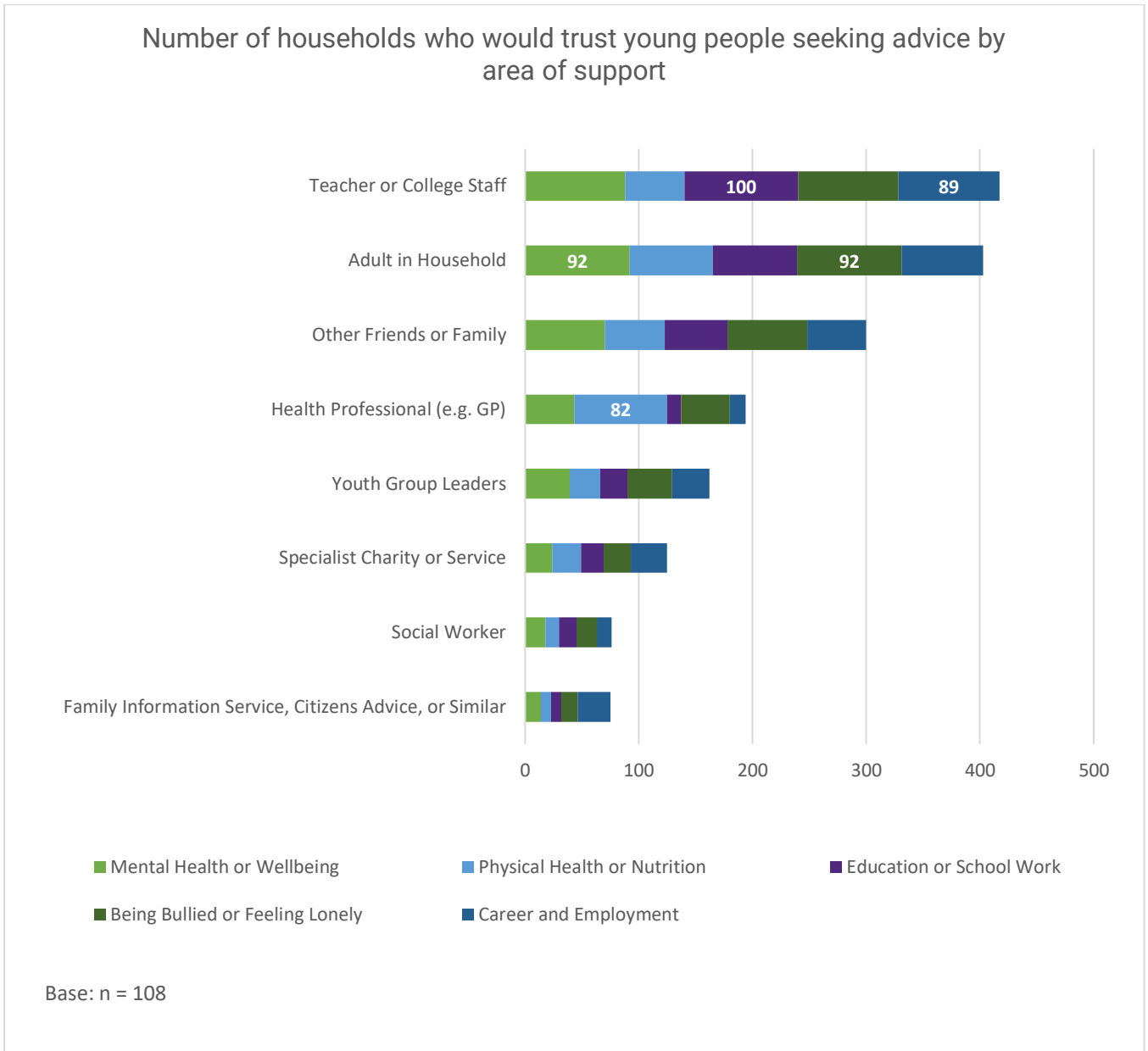
These results are from the Children and Young People's Questionnaire

Using these topics as a base, parents and carers were asked to select persons who they would trust to provide good advice to young people in each topic.

Trusted sources of advice and support

For advice and support regarding “fitness or physical health”, respondents were most likely to trust advice from a health professional. For advice and support towards “education or school work”, respondents were most likely to trust advice from a teacher or college staff.

These could be considered as “specialists” within each topic. In all other areas, respondents were between three to four times more likely to trust advice from an adult in the household or a teacher/college member of staff than they were to trust advice from a “specialist charity or service”.



Teacher or College Staff

Aside from support or advice regarding “fitness or physical health”, at least four in five households would trust teachers or college staff to provide good advice in any of the listed areas of support.

Respondents were most likely to trust advice from teaching or college staff above any other sources of support for topics related to “education or school work” and “career and employment”.

Base: n = 108

Area of Support	Percentage of respondents who would trust advice in this area from a teacher or college staff member
Mental Health or Wellbeing	81%
Fitness or Physical Health	48%
Education or School Work	93%
Being Bullied or Feeling Lonely	81%
Career and Employment	82%

Adults in the Household

Over two-thirds of households would trust an adult within the household to provide good advice or support in any area. Up to 85% would trust adults within the household to give advice and support regarding mental health or wellbeing or for young people being bullied or feeling lonely.

Area of Support	Percentage of respondents who would trust advice in this area from an adult in their household
Mental Health or Wellbeing	85%
Fitness or Physical Health	68%
Education or School Work	69%
Being Bullied or Feeling Lonely	85%
Career and Employment	67%

Base: n = 108

Respondents were most likely to trust advice from an adult in their household above any other sources of support for topics related to “mental health or wellbeing” and “being bullied or feeling lonely”.

Other Friends of Family

In general, around 50% of respondents would trust other family or friends to provide advice or support in any area, rising to nearly two in three for topics related to “mental health or wellbeing” and “being bullied or feeling lonely”.

Area of Support	Percentage of respondents who would trust advice in this area from other friends or family
Mental Health or Wellbeing	65%
Physical Health or Nutrition	49%
Education or School Work	51%
Being Bullied or Feeling Lonely	65%
Career and Employment	48%

Base: n = 108

Health Professionals

Respondents were not likely to trust advice from health professionals in areas unrelated to emotional, mental or physical health. Three in four respondents would trust support or advice from health professionals above any other sources of support for topics related to “physical health or nutrition”.

Area of Support	Percentage of respondents who would trust advice in this area from a health professional
Mental Health or Wellbeing	40%
Physical Health or Nutrition	76%
Education or School Work	11%
Being Bullied or Feeling Lonely	40%
Career and Employment	13%

Base: n = 108

Voluntary and Community Sector: Youth Group Leaders and Specialist Charities and Services

Across all areas, respondents were less likely to say they would trust youth group leaders or specialist charities and services to give good advice to young people than “a teacher or college staff member,” “an adult in the household” or “other friends or family”.

Area of Support	Percentage of respondents who would trust advice in this area from	
	Youth Group Leaders	Specialist Charity or Service
Mental Health or Wellbeing	36%	22%
Physical Health or Nutrition	25%	23%
Education or School Work	22%	19%
Being Bullied or Feeling Lonely	36%	22%
Career and Employment	31%	30%

Base: n = 108

Formal Support Services: Social Workers and Family Information Service, Citizens Advice, or Similar

Across nearly all areas, respondents were less likely to say they would trust “family information services, citizen advice, or similar” than any other source of support. Respondents were less likely to say they would trust “social workers” than any other source of support to give good advice on topics related to career and employment.

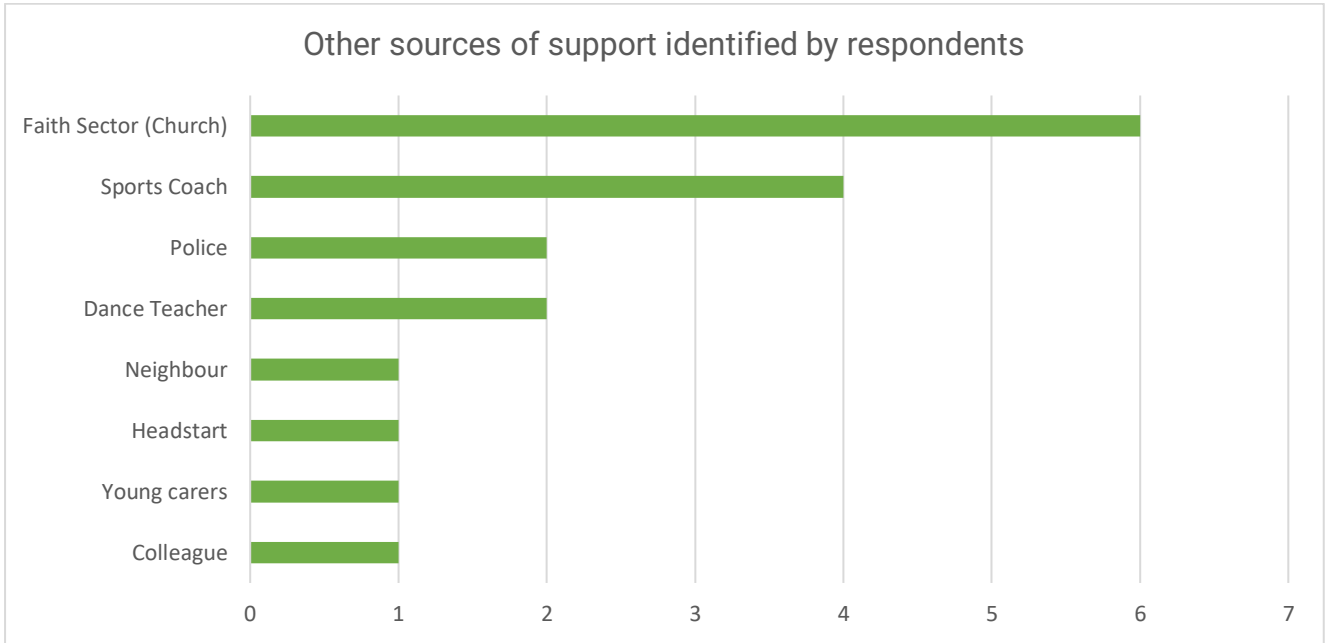
Area of Support	Percentage of respondents who would trust advice in this area from	
	Social Workers	Family Information Service, Citizens Advice, or Similar
Mental Health or Wellbeing	17%	13%
Physical Health or Nutrition	11%	8%
Education or School Work	14%	8%
Being Bullied or Feeling Lonely	17%	13%
Career and Employment	12%	27%

Base: n = 108

Other Sources of Support

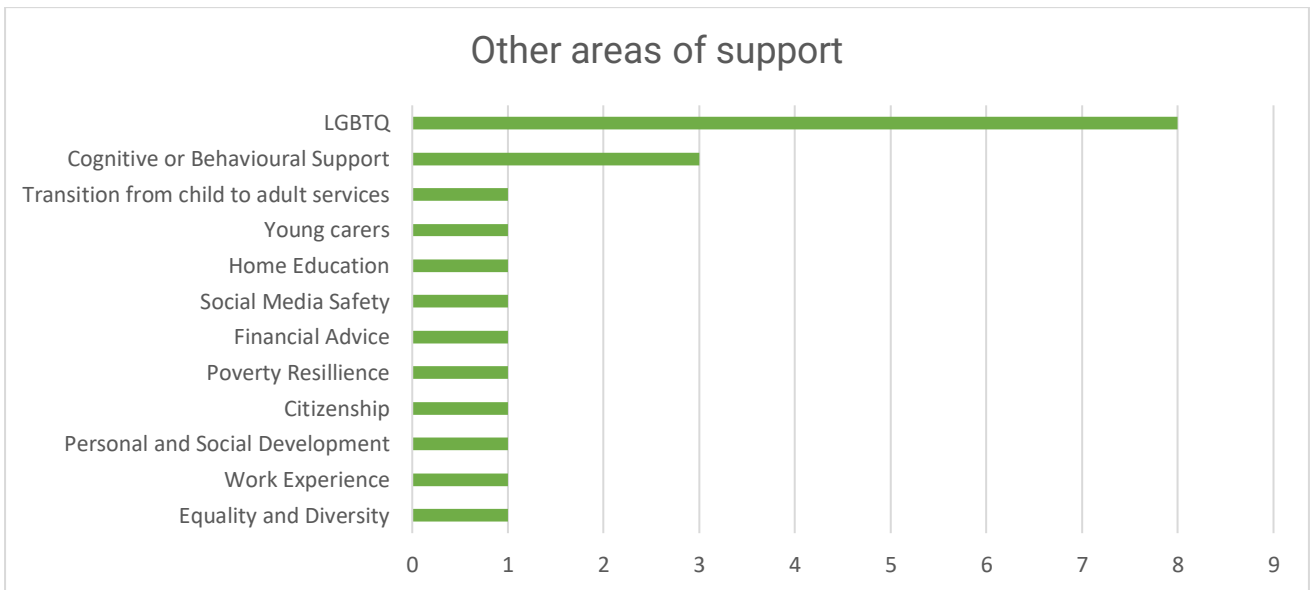
Respondents were invited to provide open-text responses to list any other sources of support or advice which they would trust to give good advice if approached by young people within their household.

The results suggest there are a few households who had faith-based associations or trusted relationships with providers of specific activities, such as sports or dance.



Other areas of support (by topic)

Respondents were also asked to indicate other areas in which they felt a young person in their household might benefit from support. Seventeen respondents provided at least one response, with 8 of those stating that provision of support related to LGBTQ topics would be beneficial.

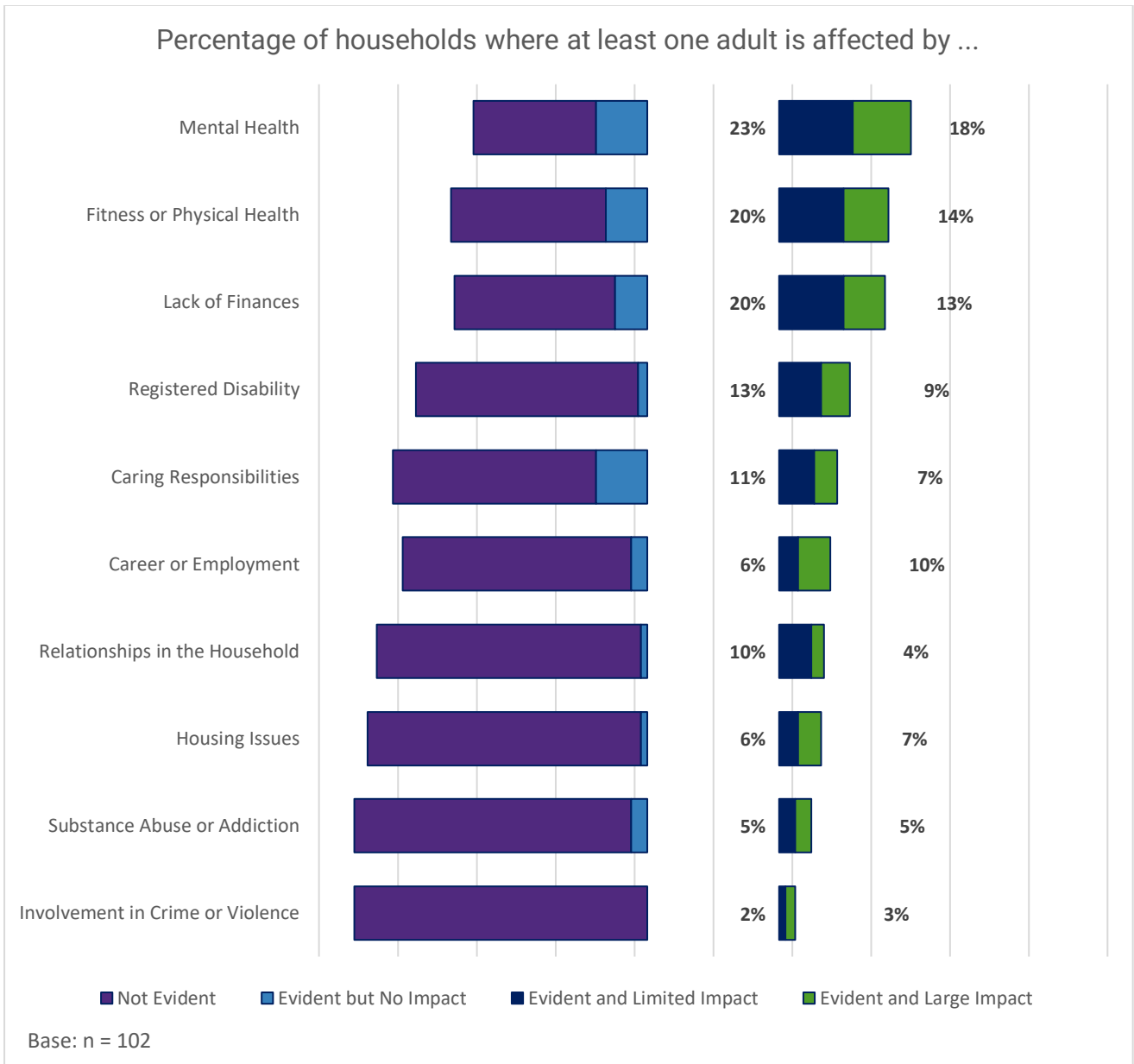


Areas of support for the household

Given that around 22% of young people told us they currently received or would like to receive support related to “issues at home”, we asked respondents to this questionnaire about common issues which might affect any adults within the household and whether these had a negative impact on young people in the same household.

The most selected area was “mental health” with 41% of respondents reporting that this had a negative impact on young people within the household. One in 3 houses also stated that issues related to “fitness or physical health” and “lack of finances” affected at least one adult in the household and had a negative impact on any young people within the household.

The full breakdown of responses is shown in the graphic below.



Organisations Providing Youth Provision

Local authority youth provision

There is no universal youth work provision offered directly by the local authority. All youth provision provided by the council is targeted intervention and with delivery in the main one to one in outreach settings.

The Adolescent Service comprises of four teams and provides support to vulnerable young people:

- The Youth Justice Team provides a multi-agency partnership whose aim is to prevent children from offending and to help them restore the damage caused to their victims. The services work in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and subsequent criminal justice acts. The service supervises and supports children aged between 10 and 18 years who have committed offences and have received a Youth Caution, Youth Conditional Caution or an order from the Court.
- The Family Worker Team provides targeted support for young people, as part of a statutory duty, to promote the effective participation in education, training or employment. The team also provides holistic support for children aged 16 to 17 who are homeless following a joint assessment of need via Children's Services & Housing.
- The Family Practitioner Team provides psychosocial, non-clinical support for young people at risk of poor sexual health outcomes and young people misusing substances. The team facilitate access to clinical support including social prescribing, community and residential detox and rehabilitation.
- The Leaving Care Team provides corporate parenting support for care-experienced young people from age 16 to 25 years old, providing a statutory duty to enable "our children and young people" to achieve their potential and to prepare for independence.

Leisure services offer a broad range of activities and programmes across the town to encourage young people to lead an active lifestyle. This includes free and heavily subsidised access to leisure facilities including gyms, exercise classes, swimming, team sports and activities.

The Active Lives Service delivers a range of community-based programmes aimed at engaging with young people in their local community. Whilst the primary aim of the service is to encourage people to be active, many engagement activities take a different focus with a more holistic approach to support young people to improve their social, mental and physical wellbeing.

Local authority spending on youth services

The data shows that overall, spending through the Local Authority in Blackpool on services for young people has dropped from c. £150 per head to £12 per head. The spending returns indicate that these cuts were initially exclusively from universal services, which were cut from £70.60 per head in 2011/12 to £7.40 per head in 2012/13, with a reallocation of resources shifted to targeted services, which saw a per head rise from £82.68 to £134.28 over the same period.¹²

Whilst universal provision was almost entirely cut in that single year, the spending on targeted provision has steadily declined since. The past two years have seen services cut to the extent that when measured against England and its nearest CIPFA statistical neighbours, the spending in Blackpool is lower than the relative averages against all metrics in the past two financial years.¹²

¹² Section 251 data

Non-local authority delivery

The review identified 230 different organisations (or sub-units of an organisation) that were likely to match the criteria for types of activity delivered. A postcode was determined for 225 organisations enabling each to be categorised by the ward in which they were based and therefore likely to operate from. Each organisation was given a basic “type” based on available information to create a basic taxonomy of the sector.

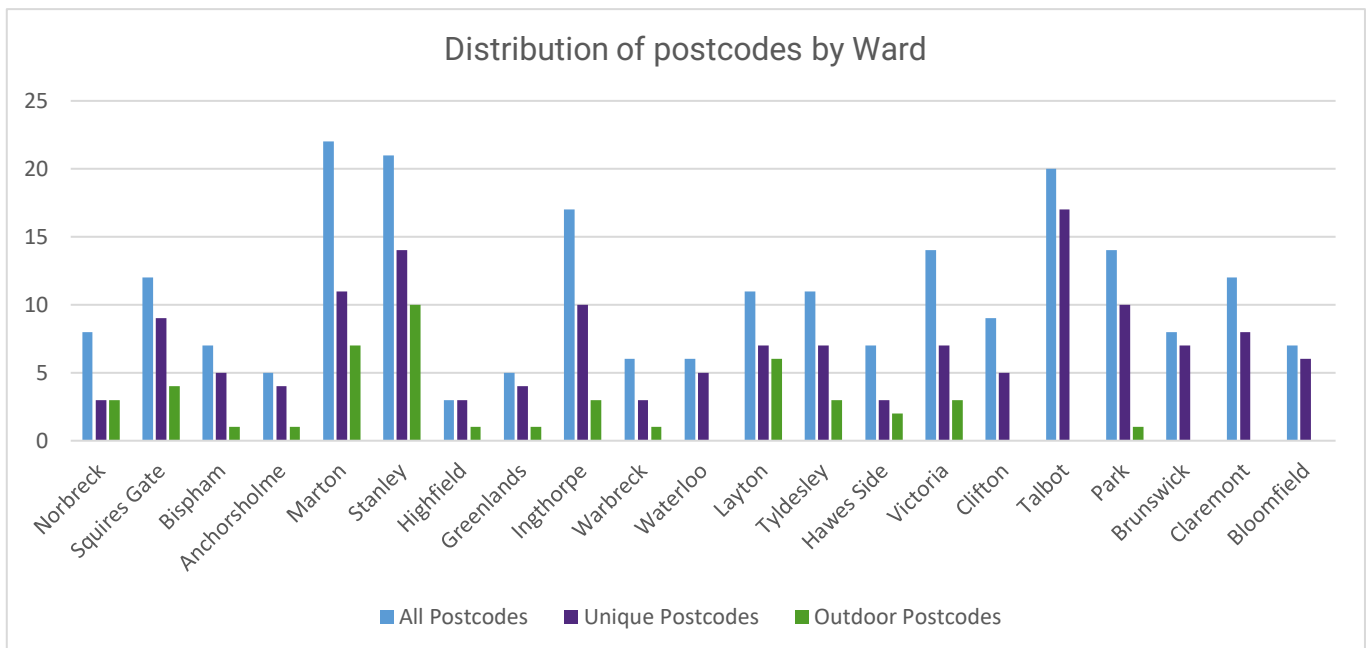
Types	Count	Type	Count
Social Housing Provider	1	Community Centre	7
Other	1	Family Hub	8
Information or Advice	1	“Friends Of” Groups	13
Legal Support	1	Universal	30
Children’s Centre	1	Targeted	35
Faith Group	2	Uniformed	60
Performing Arts	3	Sporting Club	59
Infrastructure	3		

Organisations by location

In assessing the spatial distribution of organisations, the analysis of the following took place:

1. How many organisations were located within a ward
2. How many sites organisations operate from per ward (i.e. not counting instances where multiple organisations operate from a single postcode)
3. How many ‘outdoor’ sites operate per ward

Assuming all organisations identified were in scope, 184 unique postcodes were found. The distribution shows that in all wards some organisations operate from the same premises. These were mainly Scouts and Guide groups and a few sport clubs. Forty-seven sites (mostly sports clubs and “friends of” outdoor spaces) were more likely than not to provide activities outdoors.

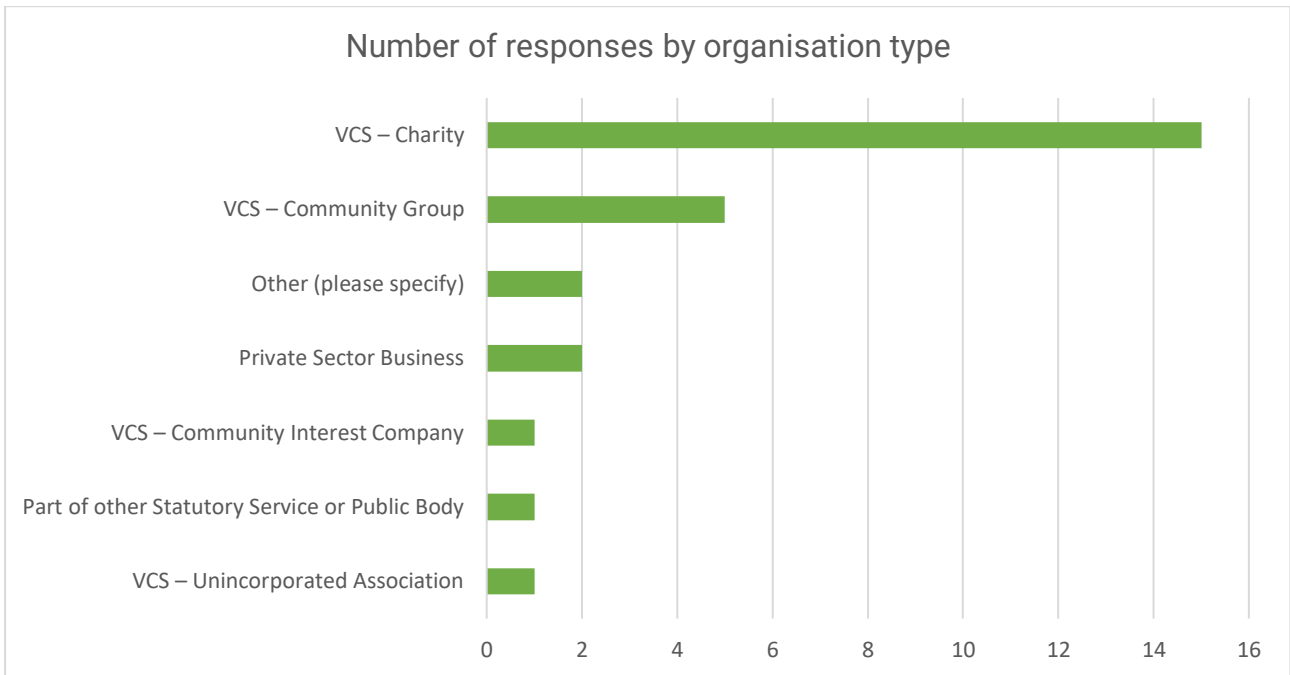


Results from organisation questionnaire

In total there were 24 complete responses provided, with 10 partial responses and 12 screen outs (i.e. those who responded but did not qualify or did not wish to participate). Three of the partial responses supplied enough data to inform this analysis, providing a final working sample of 27 respondents. The respondents make up 12% of all identified organisations providing youth provision within Blackpool, and 18% of those had details that allowed for them to be directly contacted.

Makeup of responding organisations

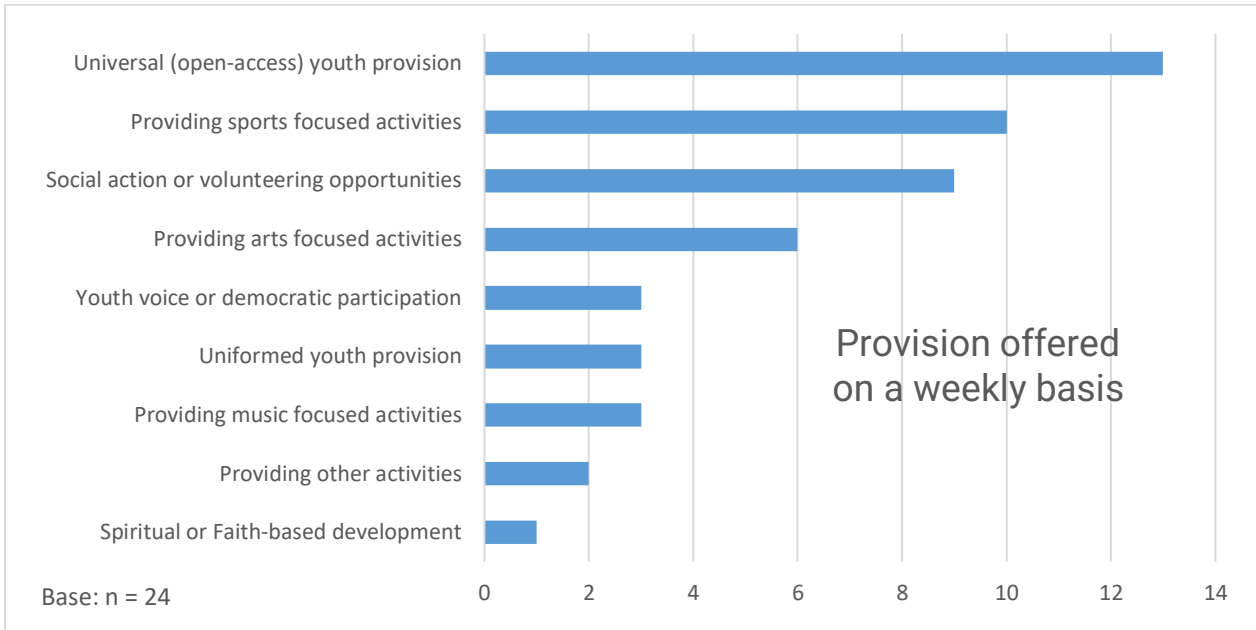
Twenty-two out of 27 respondents (81%) were organisations operating in the VCS, with registered charities (n = 15) being most numerous.



The majority of organisations operated at a local level (17%) or within more than one ward within Blackpool (61%). Twenty-three (85%) organisations directly delivered youth provision, 4 (15%) organisations provided infrastructural support for other organisations, and 6 (22%) organisations contracted or commissioned other organisations to deliver youth provision.

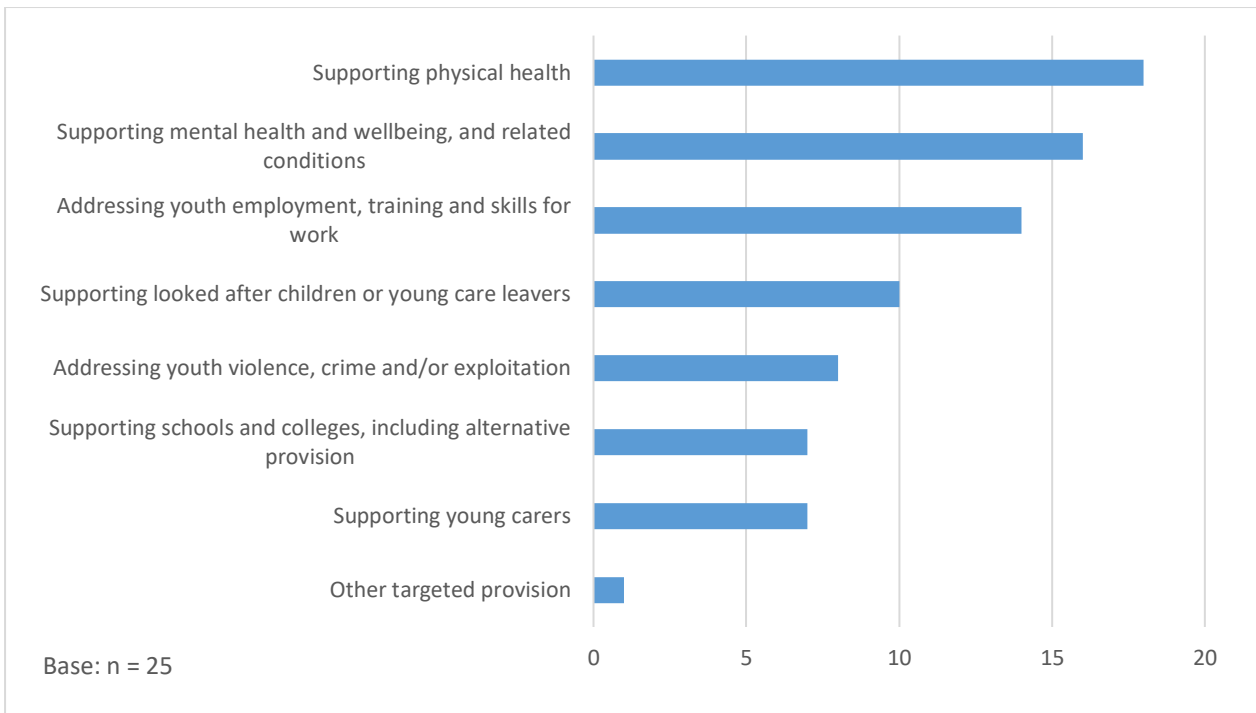
Type of regular activities or services

Respondents were asked to select any services or activities which they offered on a weekly basis to determine what their regular offer was. Over half (54%) of respondents provided universal or open-access services as a part of their core weekly core offer, and 25% offered at least one of the arts-focused activities, social action or volunteering opportunities, or sports-focused activities.

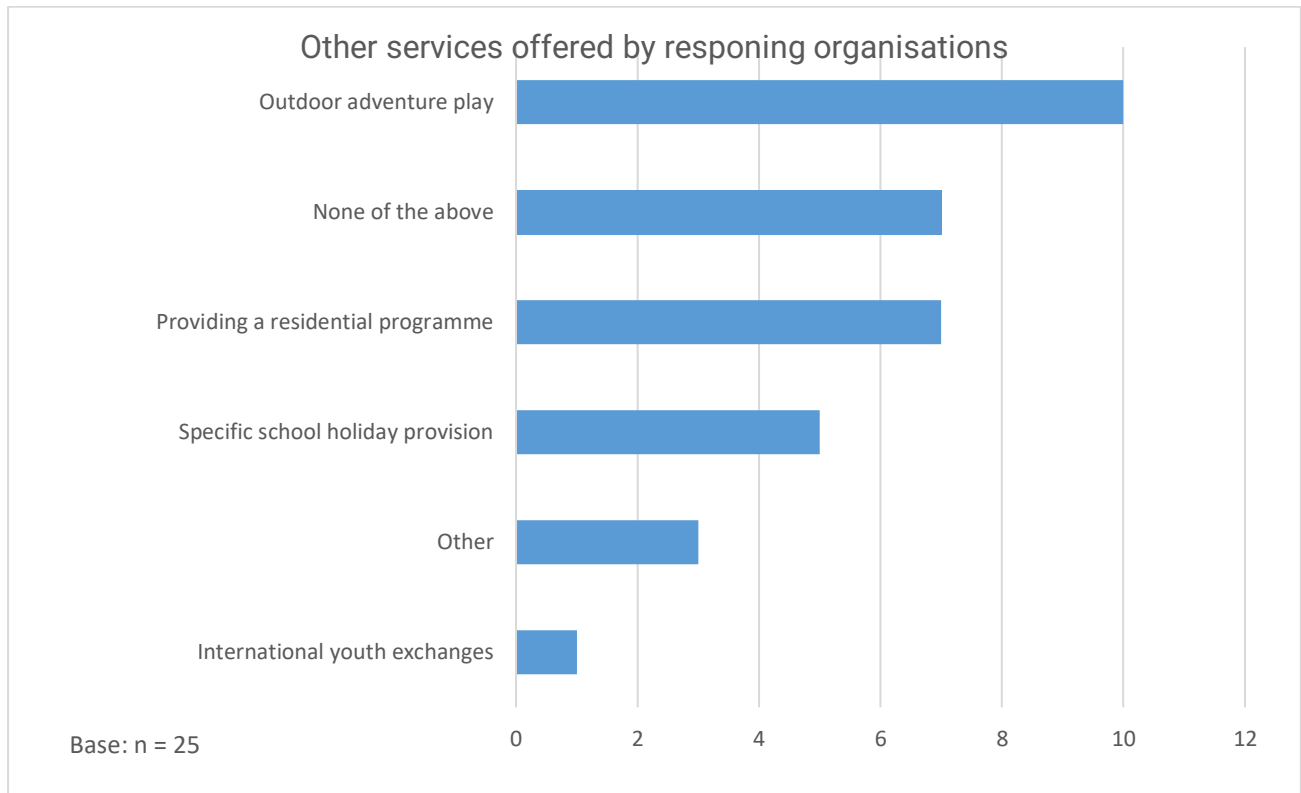


Most (25) of the responding organisations provide a programme of support for young people. Supporting physical health (72%) and mental health (64%) were the most frequently selected responses, closely followed by programmes that address youth employment (56%).

Number of respondents providing dedicated support in the following targeted areas:

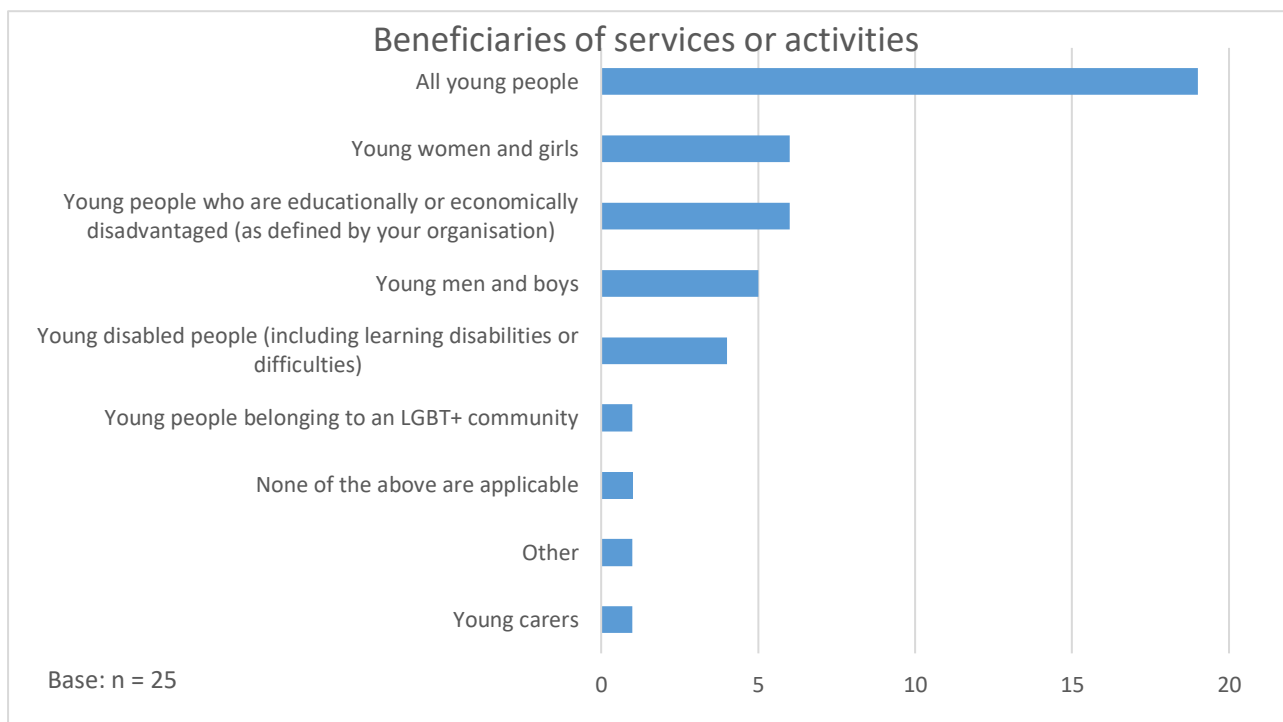


Respondents were asked to select any other services or activities they offered from a select list, of which 16 organisations indicated that their organisation provided at least one of these. Seven out of 25 (28%) did not provide any of the available options.



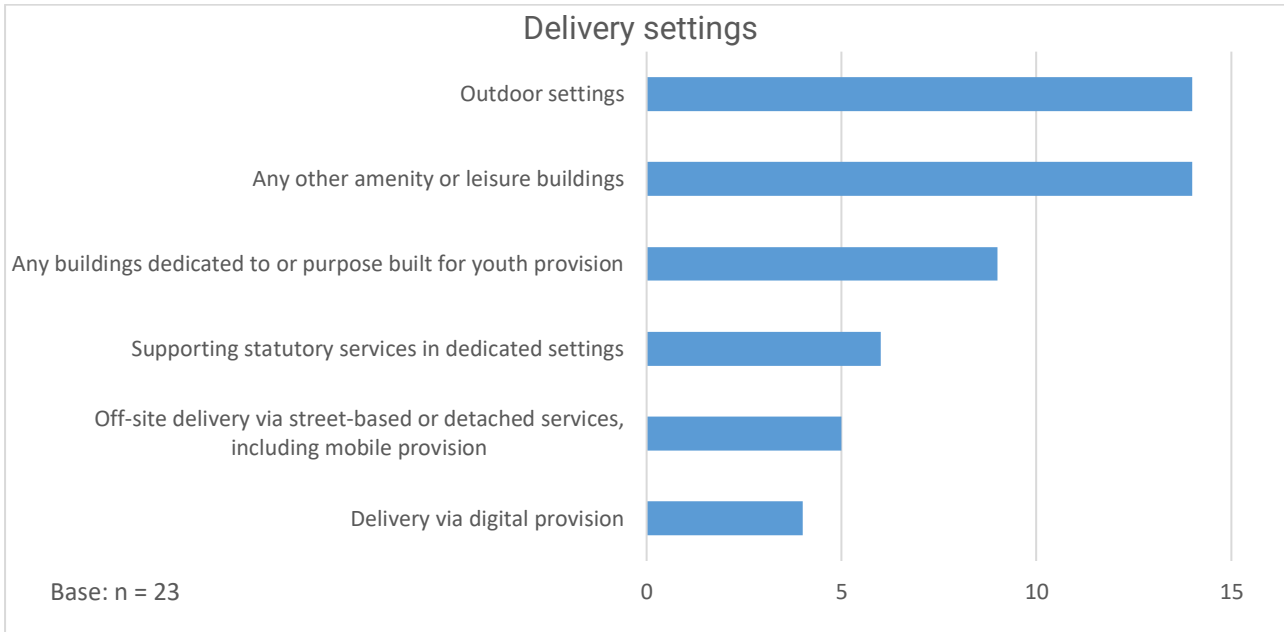
Audiences served

Respondents were asked to select any beneficiaries who made up 75% or more of their audience or were otherwise targeted by a dedicated service or activity. Nineteen of 25 (76%) organisations had “all young people” as one of their main beneficiaries.



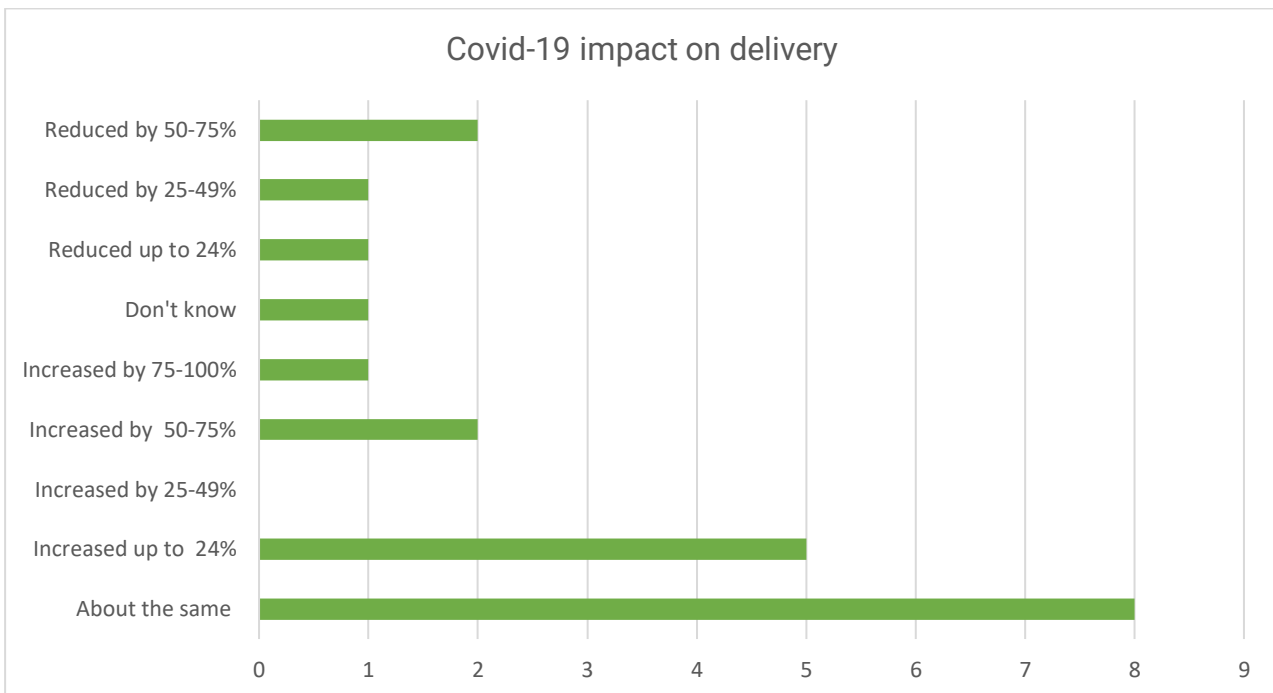
Settings used for delivery

Respondents were asked about the settings that they used for delivering youth provision from. The most selected options were delivery from “outdoor settings” and/or from “amenity or leisure buildings”, with these options selected by 14 out of 23 (61%) organisations. Nine organisations stated they delivered from buildings dedicated to youth provision.



Impact of Covid-19 on provision

Respondents were asked to identify whether their levels of provision had changed from before Covid-19. Four out of 21 (15%) stated that their offer had reduced. Twice as many, 8 out of 21 (30%) stated that their offer had increased or had remained about the same.



Workforce

Eighteen respondents provided some information about their workforce, with paid employee numbers ranging from 0 to 60.

The number of respondents is too low to identify any trends in workforce numbers, but the responses indicate that seven organisations had at least one staff member with a JNC Youth Work Degree, and 10 organisations had at least one member of staff with a level 2 award related to working with young people. Four organisations also had at least one volunteer with a JNC Youth Work Degree.

Twenty-one organisations out of the 23 that responded stated they either had a dedicated Designated Safeguard Lead within the organisation or had access to a DSL.

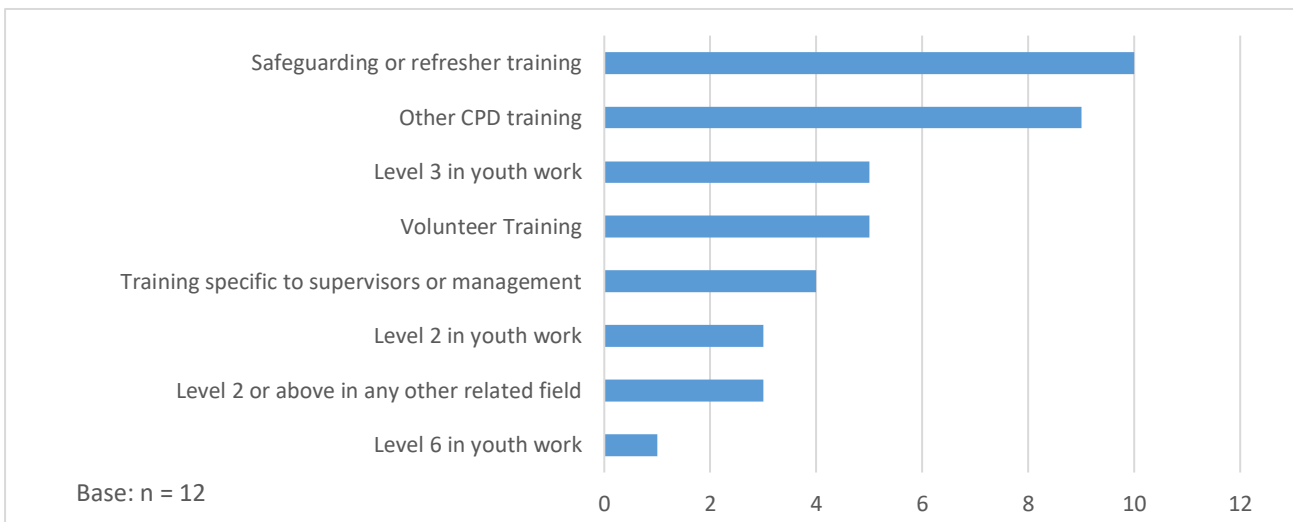


Training

However, when asked about training in the past 12 months, only 10 out of 21 stated safeguarding training had been provided, with nine organisations identifying safeguarding as a future training need.

Twelve organisations stated that they had provided some form of training in the previous year. All responders (23) stated there were future training requirements for their workforce in the coming 12 months, 21 of which specified thematic areas they would like to provide. Over half, 12 out of 23, wanted training towards supporting young people's mental health and wellbeing.

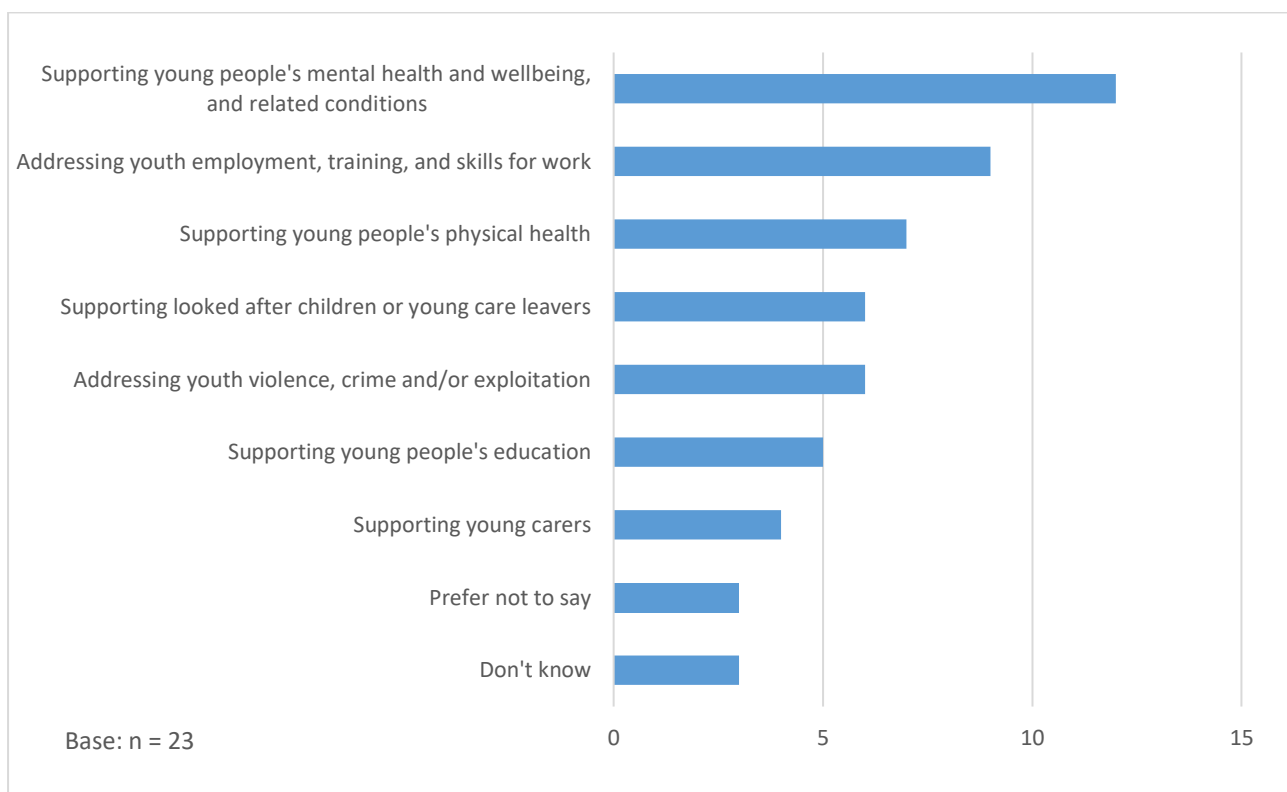
Training provided over the last 12 months:



Training needs over the next 12 months:



Thematic training needs over the next 12 months:



Conclusions and Recommendations

Effective youth work employed with young people can enhance life chances. It offers young people safe spaces to explore their identity, experience decision-making, increase their confidence, develop interpersonal skills and think through the consequences of their actions. This leads to informed choices, changes in activity and improved outcomes for young people.

The review of Blackpool youth provision was undertaken to capture current delivery, identify what works for young people and determine areas for development. The review has been designed to advise a development plan that will inform future youth provision in Blackpool. The findings from the desk top research, stakeholder engagement and the effective practice literature have informed the following conclusions. The critical themes are discussed with recommendations for consideration by the YPRSG.

Youth involvement, engagement and participation

The importance of engaging and involving young people in design, development, delivery and evaluation of the services that are intended for them should not be underestimated. Participation facilitates a feeling of ownership that increases the likelihood of an initiative's success.

Additionally, youth participation fosters transferable competencies, promoting personal development and enhancement of practical skills. It also supports individuals to connect with peers, to build social capital and to enable them to achieve objectives together beyond what is possible by an individual alone. Young people who feel that their views and needs are being included and respected develop a positive sense of self-awareness and identity, which can increase resilience and wellbeing.

Developing a Blackpool-wide coordinated youth participation strategy to inform programme/activity and support service design and development underpins the recommendations identified in this report. It would increase the probability of young people feeling ownership of the provision and services, improve the coordination between support services and help increase the profile of youth provision with young people across Blackpool.



The review identified the need to develop a coordinated Blackpool-wide participation strategy

The [NYA's Hear by Right](#) tool would provide a useful framework for the youth participation strategy development, implementation, and for monitoring progress. Hear by Right has evolved over 10 years and has been developed with and for young people. Built on a framework of seven standards with 20 indicators, it describes best practice, supporting organisations to plan, develop and evaluate their participation practices and provision.

Recommendations to consider:

- Co-produce a youth participation strategy to support young people's involvement in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of youth provision.
- Adopt a framework to support Blackpool-wide young person participation.
- Coordinate a young person group to oversee the implementation of the development plan that will support the evolution of youth provision in Blackpool.

Coordination of youth provision

Most of the youth provision in Blackpool is provided by the voluntary community sector (VCS). Blackpool Council, in collaboration with the VCS, provides targeted provision and support services for young people. However, the lack of awareness of how young people can access provision and services demonstrates the need for improved communication, which should be coordinated by one agency.

The report's findings indicate the need for centralised coordination to support infrastructure, youth voice, research, insight and funding. The prominent VCS youth provision, Blackpool Council's commitment to reviewing youth provision (in addition to their statutory duty to secure an offer of youth provision) and Blackpool's unique leisure-oriented businesses all suggest that a coordinated collaboration could support improved outcomes for young people living in Blackpool.

In addition to youth voice and participation, the development of a cohesive coordinating body is critical for the successful implementation of the development plan and the evolution of youth provision in Blackpool. The first step in advancing the development plan will be to identify and commit to the most appropriate model for supporting central coordination of youth provision across Blackpool.

Recommendation to consider:

- Explore a model to support central coordination for youth provision across Blackpool.

Accessible provision

Youth work is impactful because of the voluntary engagement of young people. The focus group participants felt their voluntary engagement in youth provision was fundamental to their participation, which facilitated a feeling of belonging and membership. This was reflected in the views of the young people interviewed as part of youth work-led initiatives, summarised in the effective practice literature review, where a sense of belonging underpinned all the successful schemes.



The sense of “membership and belonging” the focus group participants felt towards their provision was related to ease of accessibility (locality) and the voluntary relationships built with those adults who delivered within the provision. Suggesting relationships and easy access were the important criteria for those active in youth provision.



Having a sense of belonging is crucial to good mental health and wellbeing. The strength in developing this sense of belonging found in quality youth work provision should be investigated further. This could contribute to counteracting the feelings of loneliness and low mood that have been found to be growing within the current young population, both before and during the Covid-19 pandemic ([Nice et al., 2021](#)).

Reviewing the results of the questionnaires, both young people and their guardians identified support for mental health and wellbeing as their greatest need. With effective youth-led initiatives providing this essential element of belonging, it would be useful to understand why and how youth work supports belonging and its positive impact on mental health. Any impact framework that is considered should include measuring belonging and wellbeing as a fundamental outcome.

Recommendations to consider:

- Coordinate the delivery of high-quality provision by a youth work trained workforce in each of the 21 wards. All young people should have the right to youth provision that is within a 15-minute walk of their homes.
- Ensure that the measurement framework monitors the impact of youth work on feelings of belonging.

Youth sector workforce

The review has not captured all youth workers operating in Blackpool. However, analysis of the provider data suggests that full-time equivalent (FTE) qualified youth workers and youth support workers are under-resourced. An audit would identify gaps and enable targeting to address this imbalance. This workforce should be strengthened and supported to work with other disciplines providing services with young people in Blackpool.



The effective practice literature review offers examples of how providers operating in health, sport and arts have upskilled professionals from these disciplines or how these providers have worked alongside youth workers to support positive outcomes. Blackpool should aim for youth work skills and traits to be utilised in all young people services. For example, the active delivery team could be offered level 2 and 3 youth work training to facilitate the holistic approach to improve the social, mental and physical wellbeing of the young people they work with.

The evidence appraised as part of the literature review demonstrates the importance of the transformative relationships that were enabled by youth workers. The expertise to facilitate an environment where complex group dynamics exist, where young people can develop and where relationships with adults are less power led should not be underestimated. The skills and traits required to manage this dynamic are complex, with a need for reflexivity that should be an element of training for all staff working with young people.

Reflective clinical supervision is recognised as a practice that enhances youth work (Harris, 2020). The quantitative research did not provide enough data to inform understanding in how embedded this practice is within Blackpool youth provision. However, there is qualitative evidence that reflective practice is used to support youth workers' learning and development. For example, the service review observations demonstrated reflective practice being used by the participating organisations. In addition, Blackpool's Children's Services' Reflective Supervision Model includes reflective supervision for colleagues working with children, young people and families. The model includes personal reflective supervision for practitioners and observed practice.

The information collected in the review was insufficient to make specific recommendations for a workforce training programme. However, the analysis of the quantitative data suggests that training is under-resourced and therefore, a wide-ranging development programme would benefit the workforce. The development plan could be informed by a wide-ranging audit to capture youth provision's recruitment, training and CPD needs.

Recommendations to consider:

- Coordinate a workforce recruitment and training needs assessment that includes both paid and unpaid workers.
- Include colleagues who provide broader young people services in the recruitment and training needs assessment.
- Develop a support programme based on the recruitment and training needs assessment findings.¹³
 - Reflective practice should be promoted and supported, and peer observations could be coordinated.
- Implement the NYA's recommendation to provide two FTE JNC professional youth workers per secondary education establishment, as outlined in the sector's [Ten Year Vision for Youth Work](#), to ensure sufficient community-based youth provision for Blackpool's young people.
- Adopt and adapt an evidence framework aligned with youth work principles to measure the transformative power of youth work.

Youth work supporting wider social outcomes

As discussed in the effective practice review, quality youth work can enable the development of critical capabilities, including autonomy, mutual respect and a sense of mastery, in an environment

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- ¹³ This could include access to level 2 and 3 youth work training and support to increase the numbers of youth work qualified staff within Blackpool.

that is designed to facilitate a sense of belonging. These critical capabilities, developed in a supportive environment, could help young people to build the resilience to develop protective factors and identify what they need to do to realise their personal aspirations.

Ensuring that the voluntary nature of the relationship between the youth worker and young person is safeguarded, youth work would be an asset in contributing to better outcomes for the young people of Blackpool. For example, [the Blackpool Rock Families, policy, procedures & practice guidance](#) states the importance of families building “a wider eco support system”, which enables them to make the changes they need to thrive and succeed. The guidance also emphasises the importance of staff working across teams to provide a “jigsaw of support”. The relationship-based approach the Blackpool Rock Families model promotes would align well with youth work principles.

An understanding of where youth provision currently supports wider outcomes and how this can be expanded into other disciplines would support broader positive outcomes for the young people of Blackpool. Once gaps are identified, expanding the training programme to other disciplines and exploring how youth work can support wider outcomes should be investigated.

Recommendation to consider:

- Explore opportunities where youth work can contribute to the wider community outcomes.

Attracting and retaining young people to access youth provision

Nineteen of 25 (76%) organisations had “all young people” as one of their main beneficiaries. This combined with 52% stating that their provision is open access/universal could create the potential for delivery being too wide in terms of age profile and activities. This could be mitigated by organisations involving young people in design and development of provision, as observed in the organisations that took part in the practice review exercise.

Organisations who provide all age, universal services will be minded to segment their programme to target groups within their universal offer. For example, a universal multiple activity programme is fine with the seven – 11 age group, but as participants get older, their preferences get more refined, e.g., volunteer or social action programmes.

Segmenting participants by age, and in some cases gender, could support greater engagement and involvement. Evidence from consultation suggests a well-defined, co-produced, wide-ranging programme of activities for younger age groups would be effective at engaging and capturing interest in youth provision. Conversely, involvement in the design, development and delivery of targeted activities could help to retain older participants and attract young people who are 14 years and older.

In general, volunteering and social action is the activity most likely to attract and retain young people as they get older. Improving the range of volunteering and social action activities on offer to young people, as well as improving the promotion of opportunities and highlighting the benefits of participating in these activities, could increase uptake.



volunteering and social action is the activity most likely to attract and retain young people as they grow older

Volunteering and social action was the lowest priority for parents and carers, with 21% stating they did not want their children to participate in these activities. As volunteering and social action are motivators for young people to participate in youth provision as they get older, it is important that parents and carers are supported in understanding the benefits of these initiatives.

A gender-informed focus was highlighted in the effective practice review. This was recognised both in terms of the activities used to engage young people and support service need. In the context of Blackpool having the ninth-highest rate of suicide of any upper-tier local authority in England during the period of 2015–2017, an example to highlight was the increasing national suicide rates for young men. In line with the national picture, males in Blackpool are consistently more at risk over all age groups (JSNA Blackpool).

There were also gender preferences identified through the consultation. These could be explored with young people as part of the participation process at both a strategic level and within individual organisations.

Recommendations to consider:

- Conduct an in-depth audit to gather additional information on providers of art, music and dance activities in Blackpool.
- Develop and coordinate a Blackpool-wide programme of volunteering and social action opportunities aimed at young people aged 14 years and above.
- Help providers modify their programmes and activities to support the engagement of 14-year-olds and above.
 - This should provide progression from universal multi-activity at seven – 13 years to focused activities such as the gym, the arts, music sessions, volunteering or job clubs at 14 years and above.
- Adopt a framework to help organisations improve participation practices, specifically in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of activities and services. It should be:
 - designed to help organisations segment participants to target activities and services that are most likely to interest them
 - aligned with and informed by the Blackpool-wide youth participation strategy
 - achieving the appropriate [NYA Quality Mark](#) standards for youth work provision
- Assist other stakeholders in understanding the benefits of children and young people engaging in youth provision. For example, parents and carers did not appear to recognise the benefits of volunteering and social action.
- Collaborate with stakeholders and young people to identify areas where gender-focused provision may be beneficial.

Awareness of activities and support services

Lack of awareness of where to access activities or support services was widely quoted as a reason for not participating in provision. The older age groups generally had less awareness by activity and service. On the surface this would suggest a need to improve communication channels when promoting activities and support services.

Volunteering and social action as an example provides an interesting case. Young people, as they get older, are more likely to engage with or are open to participate in this activity. However, this activity had the poorest return when it comes to awareness of available opportunities. This demonstrates there is at least some mismatch in communication between supply and demand when you consider 33% percent of the surveyed organisations stated they offered social action or volunteering as part of their weekly programme.

Undertaking the desk top research, it was clear there was a lack of up-to-date information for young people to find services or activities. The difficulty in identifying the services, activities and the organisations that provide them demonstrates the need for better Blackpool-wide coordination. This observation was confirmed through the stakeholder consultations, with a lack of awareness of activities and support available being stated to be a significant barrier for all cohorts.

A strong indicator that young people would be open to participating in activities was if their friends attended or if it was recommended by someone they trusted. This indicator increased with age, suggesting that a campaign aligned with a renewed offer and designed and developed with young people could be more effective if communicated through friends, teachers, youth workers and volunteers.

Recommendations to consider:

- Develop a marketing and communication plan to promote and communicate available activities and services to and with young people. It should be:
 - coordinated by an agency with a remit to promote the statutory offer throughout Blackpool
 - developed with young people, and serious consideration should be given to segmenting the offer by age
 - promoted, with information segmented for different audiences to facilitate referrals from trusted people known to the young person

Safety

Young people felt unsafe travelling to and from provision. The focus group discussions revealed that a perceived availability and high prevalence of drugs and alcohol increased the unsafe feelings when travelling within the community.

Engaging users and non-users of provision in identifying if there is an issue locally and if it inhibits participation in their provision would enable a greater understanding of the issues young people face. Once established, supporting young people to develop protective factors to adapt behaviours and/or routines, and identifying how the provision can modify arrangements to increase feelings of safety, could support greater participation. For example, focusing on the safety of young people during the times where it is most critical for them such as when travelling to and from clubs and groups.

Recommendations to consider:

- Adopt a framework to help organisations improve participation practice and support co-production.
- Develop a co-produced tool kit to support youth workers in engaging young people in identifying real and perceived safety issues (local) and developing action-based protective factors to mitigate real and perceived risks.
- Develop a safer route to youth provision plan in collaboration with the local Police to reassure young people.

Cost

The young person quantitative data suggests cost has little impact on participation. However, when explored in the focus groups, young people felt that if the cost of provision increased it would quickly become an inhibitor. Travel cost was a barrier to young people below 16 years of age and this could influence the provision in which they decide to participate.

Parents and carers cited cost of fees and equipment for engagement, alongside lack of awareness of opportunities as the biggest barriers to youth provision participation. This demonstrates a disparity in perception when it comes to inhibitors to participation between young people and their parents and carers.



Another aspect related to cost barriers was the perceived inaccessibility to tourist leisure activities available in Blackpool. These unique leisure activities could provide an enhanced opportunity to access leisure time provision. However, in general, the young people involved in the focus groups saw this as a negative rather than a positive.

Recommendations to consider:

- Increase awareness and potentially enable more young people to access services that they currently cannot afford.
 - Leisure services offer a wide range of heavily subsidised provision for young people in Blackpool. Align this offer with the coordination of a marketing and communication plan to promote services and activities.
- Engage tourist leisure businesses to improve the services they offer to local young people and raise awareness of the current offerings.
- Make youth provision free of charge and provide resources to local youth providers by generating a council-coordinated funding stream.
- Undertake targeted work with youth clubs and youth groups to help their members to access funding to enable them to participate in provision (i.e. equipment). This could be a centrally funded grant system led and coordinated by young people

Support services

Support services designed for young people require further consultation. Analysis from the data collected for this report infers that young people need clearer information about the support services available, and they are most open to receive this information from people they trust.



Most of the provision that participated in the questionnaire provided support services. A centrally coordinated audit would clarify what organisations in Blackpool are offering in terms of support services and to what level. This combined with the support offered by statutory bodies could provide a directory of services that are available for young people. The opportunity to improve awareness through a coordinated communication approach could then be created.

Young people would be one stakeholder in this process, but as young people are more likely to access services as a result of a recommendation from a trusted person, parents, teachers and youth workers should also be engaged.

Mental health was a prominent support need identified by parents, carers and young people. Additionally, guardians identified that people within their household affected by poor mental health detrimentally impacted the young people in the household. One in three households also stated that issues related to “fitness”, “physical health” or “lack of finances” affected at least one adult in the household, and this had a negative impact on young people.

It appears from the data that support need increases with age and that the support most frequently selected across the age groups continues to increase. This suggests several hypotheses; early intervention is not being received, is unsuccessful, or support need increases with age. However, barriers could also contribute to support not being received. This could be a result of a lack of confidence, anxiety and/or issues related to a lack of available support.

Recommendations to consider:

- Develop a marketing and communication plan to promote and communicate young people's activities and provision.
 - Promotion and information should be segmented for different audiences to facilitate referrals from trusted people known to the young person.
- Adopt and adapt a multi-discipline evaluation framework to monitor the impact and effectiveness of support services partnerships.
- Investigate where provision could benefit from a gender focus in collaboration with stakeholders and young people.

Next steps

The review of Blackpool youth provision was undertaken to document current delivery, identify what works for young people and identify areas for development. The review is designed to advise a development plan that will inform future youth provision in Blackpool.

The development plan will underpin the evolution of youth provision in Blackpool. It will be published in early summer of 2022 and regular progress updates will be shared with stakeholders.

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