

berkshireyouth.co.uk



Youth Survey 2021



Introduction



I believe the challenges facing young people today are greater than at any time during my long life.

The 2007 international financial crash, caused by international bankers, brought on 10 years of UK austerity and the virtual elimination of government services for young people and now today the situation is compounded by the coronavirus pandemic, so profoundly affecting those young people born at the time of the financial crash.

This is why I believe the major task of the Trustees of organisations such as Berkshire Youth is to do everything possible to get government and society at every level to recognise the duty we have to correct this situation and to build opportunity and hope back for this generation of young people.

**W E Jim Leftwich C Eng. MIET. FRSA. OBE,
Chairman**



We are all very grateful to the young people who have shared their voice, to trust us with their voice is a privilege.

After a decade of cuts to youth services plus dealing with the global pandemic, it is important not just for Berkshire Youth but also for our partners and supporters to make every effort to listen to the young people in our communities.

This report is a collation of the results which offers an insight into the concerns and worries that affect our communities. Let's use this survey to find more positive ways of creating a future for our young people.

Thank you to each and every contributor for your honesty and trust.

**David Seward,
Chief Executive Officer**

About Berkshire Youth

We are a local charity which works with approximately 12,000 young people across Berkshire every year, supporting them as they transition from childhood to young adulthood.

We encourage young people to reach their full potential and make a positive contribution to their communities through participation in fun and enriching leisure activities.

Many of the young people we work with are vulnerable or disadvantaged and unable to access help elsewhere. We focus on prevention and helping young people who are missing out, not yet in crisis and who can't afford what is on offer or face barriers to access; they may have mental health issues, responsibility as a carer or low self-esteem.



What We Do

As young people need a variety of opportunities both inside and outside of education to have fun with their friends, to be healthy and creative, to make positive changes in their community and to develop their skills and aspirations, we offer a variety of affordable and engaging programmes and projects for both young people and youth workers. Our courses include the Youth Leadership Academy, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, First Aid training and the Fit 4 Youth programme. We work with schools across Berkshire to provide preventative education, helping with early identification of those at risk of gangs, drugs and knife crime. Our youth workers regularly visit and work with students who have been identified by their schools as at risk and requiring extra support, most of whom go on to reengage with their education and choose a much more positive path.

We have adapted our offer during the pandemic to best meet the needs of the local community. The award-winning Berkshire Youth Hubs (wbyh.co.uk) is a virtual, text and telephone-based support platform bringing together all of the information and links available to support young people, families and youth workers through the lockdowns and beyond. We have already supported thousands of local people via the hubs which also provide access to our youth workers and volunteering opportunities.

Our specialist youth workers have been given key worker status, allowing them to support young people in their communities where they 'hang out', building relationships with them and encouraging them into local youth activities. We have continued to support local youth clubs by offering them free affiliation for the year and by sharing the latest guidance and best practice with them, supporting them to reopen when safe to do so.

Summary

The pandemic has hit young people and the youth sector hard. With youth centres having to shut their physical doors and many unable to open their virtual doors, young people have reported that they feel isolated and lonely, with many struggling with their mental health. A number of the youth organisations who did manage to stay open during Covid-19 have told us about the challenges they have faced reaching out to the young people who most need their support. UK Youth have echoed these challenges within their report 'The impact of Covid-19 on England's youth organisations'. The tricky balance between limited capacity and young people in desperate need of support prompted us to further explore the impacts of the pandemic for young people and to seek their views on current youth provision in their area.

We believe that having young people at the heart of all we do has many benefits. In addition to enhancing our work, it also enables young people to gain valuable skills and experiences. Therefore, we gathered a group of young people from around Berkshire and together we created this youth survey. With over 750 young people responding throughout Berkshire, it's clear that Covid-19 has had a significant detrimental impact on young people's mental health and young people are calling out for more support in this area. Young people have reported that they are struggling with school and education, and Berkshire Youth are pleased to be working with schools to provide both mentoring for young people and training opportunities for teachers and school staff to upskill around mental health and wellbeing.

This report highlights the overwhelming need for young people to have safe and inclusive spaces with positive role models to talk to and emphasises the importance of investing in both universal and targeted youth work. These recommendations are also echoed in recent reports by UK Youth and the National Youth Agency. Despite the uncertain times, Berkshire Youth has been determined to push ahead with ambitious plans to renovate the Waterside Centre in Newbury into a fantastic youth and community centre in the heart of the town. Like our other flagship youth centres (The Wayz in Bracknell and the Britwell Youth and Community Project in Slough) the Waterside Centre, opening later this year, will offer a programme of activities and a safe space and support for local young people. We believe that it's more important than ever at the present time to lift young people's aspirations, boost their self-esteem and inspire them to reach their full potential, showing them that they are valued and important and we are all invested in their futures.

Summary From Young People in Steering Group

"I was really pleased that so many young people answered the survey. I was sad to see the self-harm rates were so high but this didn't surprise me. I feel like a lot of teenagers find that this is one thing they can turn to but I hope from doing this survey we can help find a way to help them better!"

Cameron

"This survey really shows how much of an issue mental health is for young people at the moment – we need to act now to support young people."

Chloe

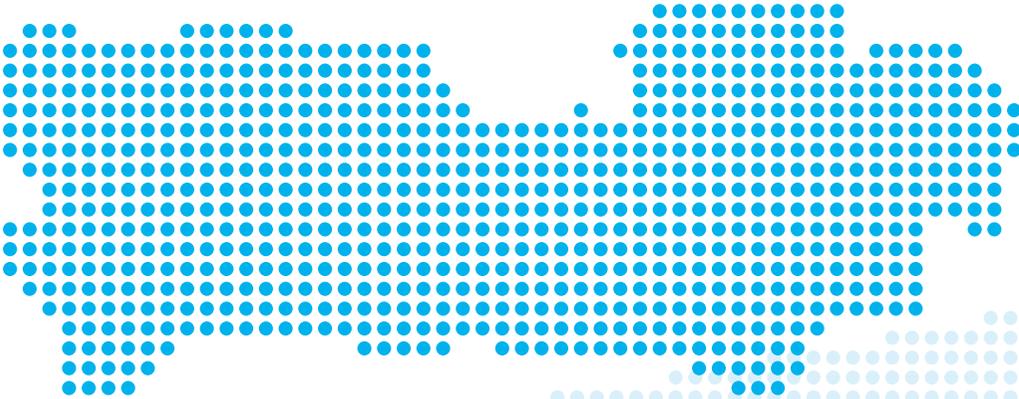
"I think it is important to do a youth survey as we can learn so much from it. We can see that there has been a trend in declining mental health but also young people are feeling more isolated and lonely. Young people are asking for safe places to have fun with their friends and I think we should listen to them."

Freya

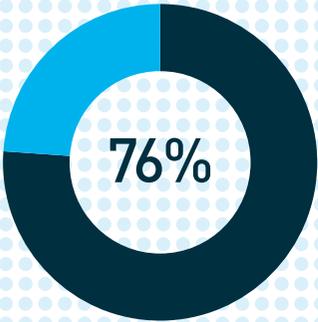


Key Statistics

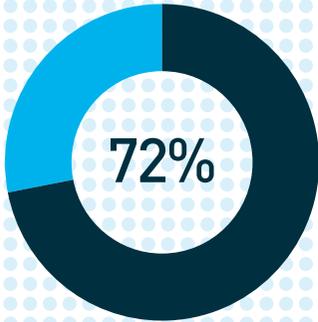
766 Young People Answered Our Youth Consultation



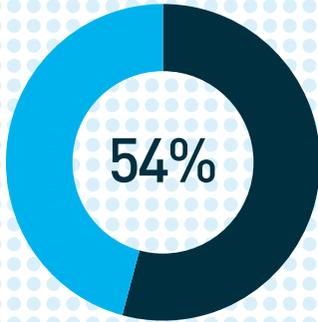
Most Important Issues Facing Young People



76% of young people told us that mental health and wellbeing was an important issue facing young people at the moment.



72% of young people told us that school/education and exams was an important issue.



54% of young people said Covid-19.

Effects of the UK Covid-19 Pandemic

Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the lives of young people over the last year. It is clear from the statistics below that mental health and wellbeing is a key issue facing young people, with 56% of respondents reporting a decline in their mental health due to Covid-19. The virus itself has triggered feelings of anxiety, isolation and loneliness amongst a large percentage of young people. It has also brought about significant concerns about school/education and exams.



56%

of young people told us that their mental health has declined due to Covid-19.

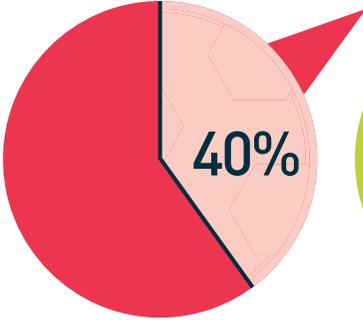


56%

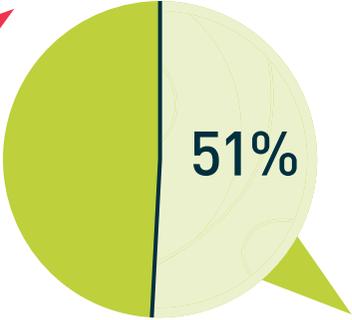
of young people told us that they have feelings of isolation/loneliness due to Covid-19.

Young People’s Voice

Over 300 young people reported that they never felt listened to within their local communities and councils with only 3 to 4% of young people feeling like they were always listened to. We believe strongly in the power of young people’s voices to enhance services and to improve communities around them.



of young people think they are never listened to within/by their local community.

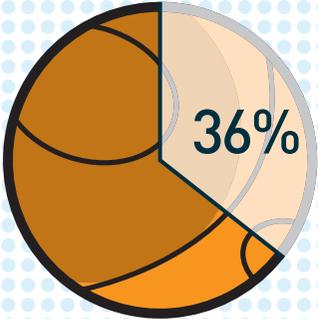


of young people think they are never listened to by their local council.

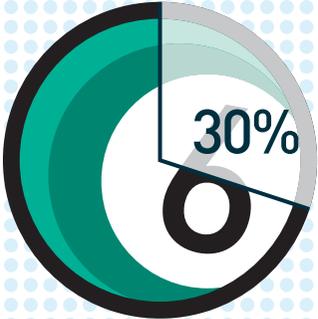
What Prevents Young People From Taking Part in Activities Outside of School?



of young people told us they were too shy to attend activities outside of school.



of young people told us that have no one to attend outside activities with.



of young people told us that there isn't anything available in their area.

Services Needed Within Local Community

There is overwhelming evidence that young people need safe and welcoming spaces to spend time with friends, try new activities and have access to support services when needed. We believe an investment in universal youth work is essential, alongside a collaborative and innovative approach to wellbeing.

69% of young people told us that they wanted a place to have fun with friends.

49% of young people felt there was a need for more specialist support for young people around mental health and wellbeing.

47% of young people wanted somewhere safe to go.

40% of young people wanted more careers and employment advice.

Serious Issues Arising for Young People this Year

350

young people told us that they knew someone who had self-harmed.

303

young people told us that they knew someone who had taken part in bullying/discrimination.

287

young people told us that they knew someone who has drunk excessive alcohol.

281

young people told us that they knew someone who had taken part in violent behaviour.

267

young people told us that they knew someone who had carried a knife.

247

young people told us that they knew someone who had taken illegal drugs.

Recommendations

Key Priorities Identified

Investment in Universal Youth Work

The youth sector is well-placed to support young people to overcome the increased challenges they face due to Covid-19. Youth organisations provide safe spaces, opportunities to try new activities and meet friends and a space to talk to someone. However, youth organisations need financial support to reopen, train and upskill their workforce and adapt their services through and beyond the pandemic.

"It would feel safe. A place to have fun and meet with friends and have someone to talk to if we needed."

Young person, aged 15

Holistic and Collaborative Thinking Around Mental Health

Young people have been separated away from the services they previously accessed and services are reporting an increased demand for provision. Youth workers are in a good position to offer wellbeing support to young people within safe spaces but need to receive further investment in order to do this. This report recommends that we seek holistic and collaborative ways of offering young people support with their mental health.

"I think we need to think outside the box and join services together to better help young people."

Young person, aged 20

Understanding the Importance of Youth Voice

It is essential that young people are heard and have the opportunity to shape services and spaces around them. We believe strongly in the power of young people's voices and want to create communities that listen and enable young people to play a vital role in the development of spaces and services around them. We believe that by doing this we will not only enhance the services we offer but it also enables young people to gain valuable skills and experiences.

"We want our voices to be heard."

Young person, aged 14

Creating Inclusive Spaces for Young People

This report has demonstrated a need to create safe and inclusive spaces for young people where they can have fun with their friends in non-judgemental spaces. Attention needs to be paid to making services more accessible to young people and further questions need to be asked about what accessibility of services looks like.

"I think that young people should have services that they are able to come out and be themselves. A place where they feel safe."

Young person, aged 16

Actions Already Taken

- Berkshire Youth have been working closely with local councils and community groups to raise the importance of youth voice and youth participation. Berkshire Youth will be supporting Newbury Town Council and partners to launch a youth participation event in June
- Berkshire Youth are excited to be working with Aspire2Be to launch our new Wellbeing programme for students across West Berkshire Schools
- Berkshire Youth are invested in offering mental health and wellbeing training to our staff and volunteers and in March we trained up 9 of our staff members and volunteers in Mental Health First Aid
- Berkshire Youth will soon be opening our new youth and community centre – The Waterside Centre, Newbury. This will be an accessible and inclusive space for young people and others within the community