Youth Support Team

Survey Report

January 2024 Year

1   Background and Methodology

Shropshire Council's Youth Support Team provides support through working on the streets, interacting with young people, and running arranged sessions in schools. There are 11 youth workers across the county, serving over 28,000 young people aged 11–18.

The Team are primarily detached workers which means they mainly work without the use of a building or activity. Instead, their work takes place where young people are, both geographically and developmentally. For the most part, this means working on the streets, though not exclusively. They work to deliver personal and social education whether at school, at home or in town, by using everyday situations as educational opportunities in an informal way. This helps to address the needs of young people as they see them, or as young people tell them what those needs are. They help with personal, social, and educational development in an informal approach and in an environment that is structured around the terms of young people.

This survey, conducted between 7th November and 8th December 2023, built on the findings of a survey in 2022 of 459 young people. Where possible and appropriate, comparisons have been made between the 2022 and 2023 survey results.

The survey was produced and run using Survey Monkey with paper options also provided to boost participation. A huge range of methods were employed by the Youth Support Team to encourage survey uptake. These included, but were not limited to:

- Emails sent to headteachers and school staff to inform and help encourage uptake.
- Sending out via school Parentmail listservs and school newsletters.
- Using schools' Teams sites to send the survey link to all young people.
- Manually entering the data from paper questionnaires that students were given to complete.
- Using social media, including the Shropshire Council and school accounts.
- A QR code poster was put up in specific areas in the community such as community centres and retail establishments, as well as distributed through the Community Outreach Team.

In addition to ensuring wide population uptake, the team also sought to ensure good uptake from traditionally underrepresented groups through the following methods:

- Taking a sample from each year group and vulnerable students.
- The voluntary and community sector's VCS Assembly youth leads were engaged to inform their groups of young people to participate.
- Youth Work Teams engaged young people directly in their communities.
- Elective home educated young people were given information via the Education Access Team.

In the analysis of results, qualitative questions were considered, and common themes were identified from the feedback. Examples of comments grouped into themes are provided below, and any potentially identifying information has been

redacted from these quotes. For the presentation of quantitative data, percentages in tables are rounded to the nearest integer.

The report is broken down into the following sections:
- **Section 1: Background & Methodology** (this section) explains the purpose of the survey, the methods used to collect and analyse the data.
- **Section 2: Respondents** provides an overview of the demographics of those responding to the survey as well as what they reportedly do in their spare time.
- **Section 3: Use of Transport and Services** presents the results of questions aimed at ascertaining the use of various modes of transport as well as use and interest in youth support services across Shropshire.
- **Section 4: Opportunities, Activities and Facilities** details the findings around what young people feel are the opportunities (or lack thereof) in Shropshire, what activities and facilities they enjoy, and what activities and facilities they feel are missing from their area.
- **Section 5: Young People Evaluating Where They Live** provides an overview of the responses to open-ended questions that young people were asked about what they like about where they live, what they don't like, including issues around safety, and how their area might be improved.
- **Section 6 Summary and Conclusion** provides a brief summary of the key findings in the report and conclusions.

2   Respondent Characteristics

1,873 young people from around the county answered the survey. Demographic questions about the respondents' location, place of education/training, age, gender, ethnicity and disability status were asked.

Geographical Location:
Figure 1 shows the distributions of respondents by their nearest town and **Figure 2** by their school. The survey represents young people from both rural areas and larger towns such as Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Ludlow, and has a good distribution across both the north and the south of the county.

Bishop's Castle Community College, The Priory School in Shrewsbury, and The Corbet School in Baschurch were the schools with the highest numbers of respondents, again demonstrating a nice distribution across the county.
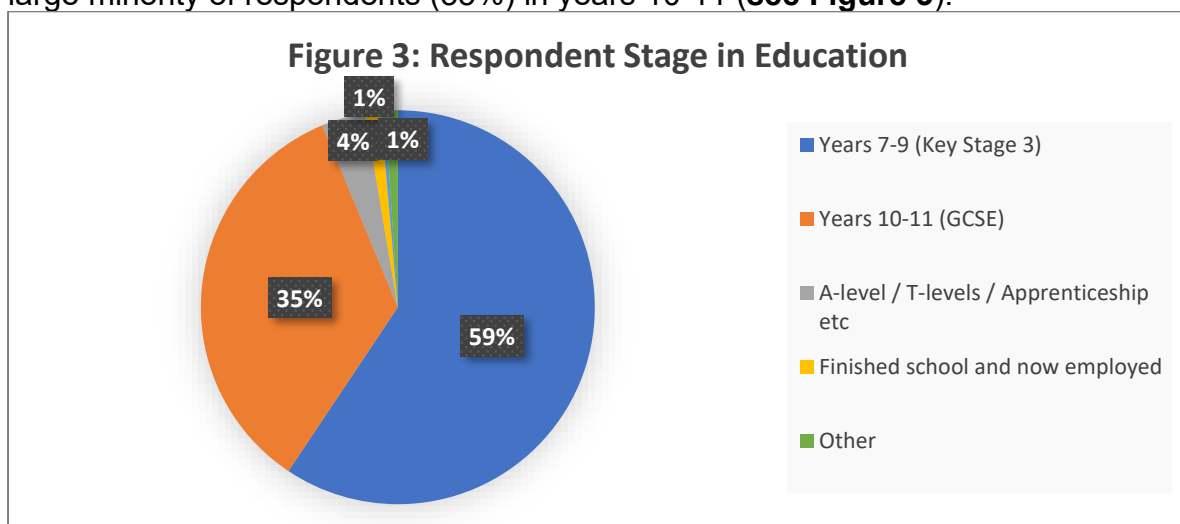
Figure 1: Respondents' Nearest Town

Figure 2: Respondents' School
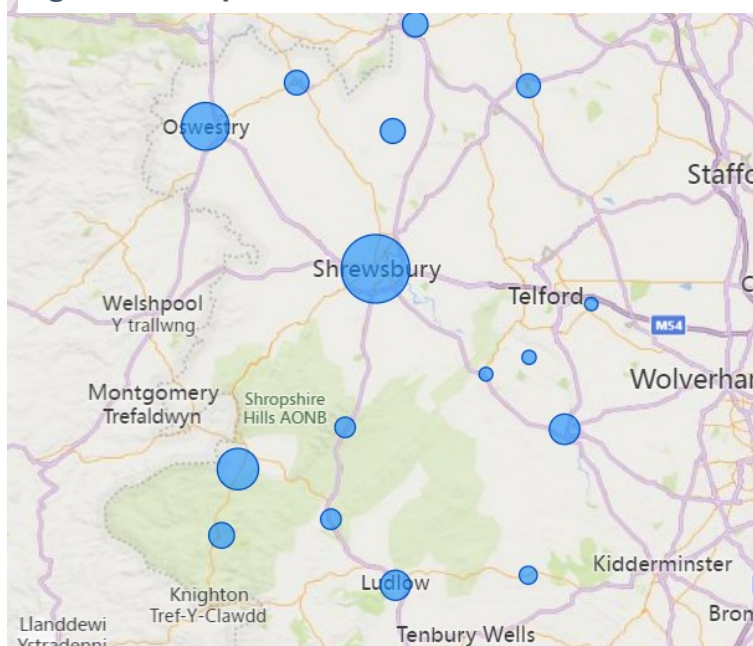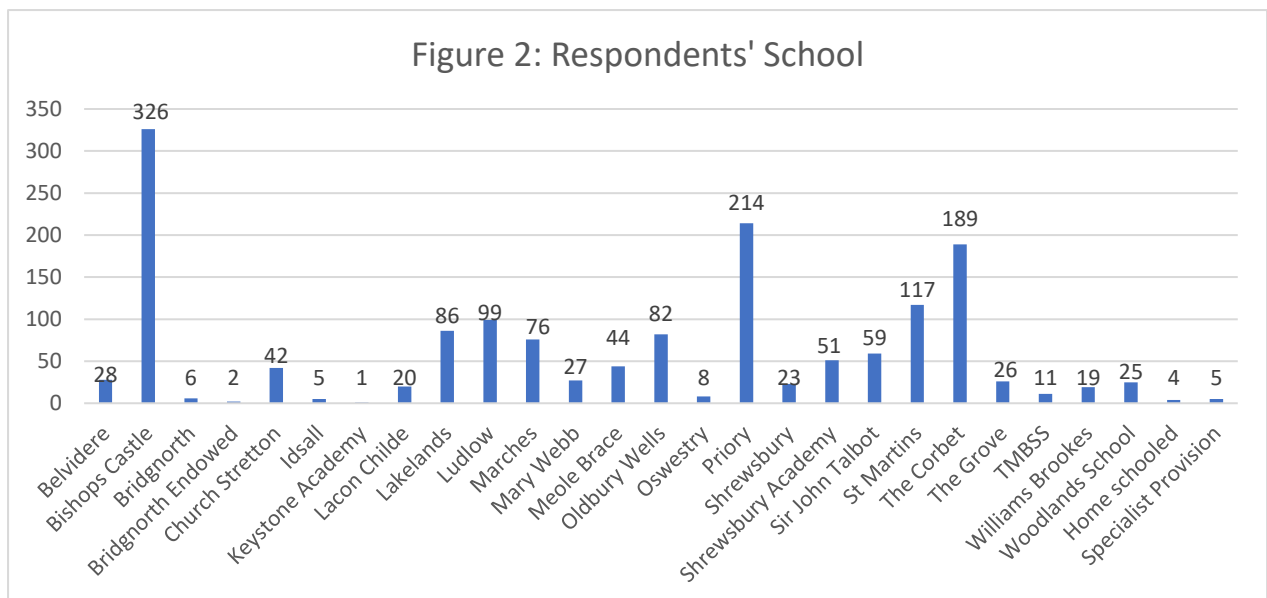
Age:

The majority of respondents (59%) were pre-GCSE students in years 7-9, with a large minority of respondents (35%) in years 10-11 (**see Figure 3**).

Figure 3: Respondent Stage in Education

Gender:

Female identified young people made up a small majority of the respondents (52%) while male identified young people made up 43% (**see Table 1**). 1% of respondents identified as Transgender and 1% as Non-binary.

Table 1: Respondent Gender Identity	Count	%
Female	977	52%
Male	796	43%
Transgender	22	1%
Gender variant	7	Less than 1%
Non-binary	17	1%
Other	14	1%
Prefer not to say	33	2%

Ethnicity

Consistent with the ethnic makeup of Shropshire, the vast majority of respondents identify as white with British, Irish or Welsh background. A smaller percentage identify as white from other backgrounds, and only 6% identify as being from mixed or other ethnic backgrounds.

Table 2: Respondent Ethnicity	%
White (British, Irish, Welsh)	87%
White (Gypsy, Roma or Irish Traveller)	1%
White (Other - e.g., Bulgarian, French, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, South African, or any other White background)	4%
Asian (e.g., Asian British, Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Japanese, or any other Asian background)	1%
Black (e.g., Black African, Black British, Black Caribbean, or any other Black background)	1%
Mixed (e.g., White and Asian, White and Black British, or any other mixed background)	3%
Arab	Less than 1%
Other ethnic group	1%

Disability:

The large majority (86%) of respondents said that they do not have a longstanding illness or disability that limits their daily activity, but 8% of respondents did identify as having a disability (**see Table 3**).

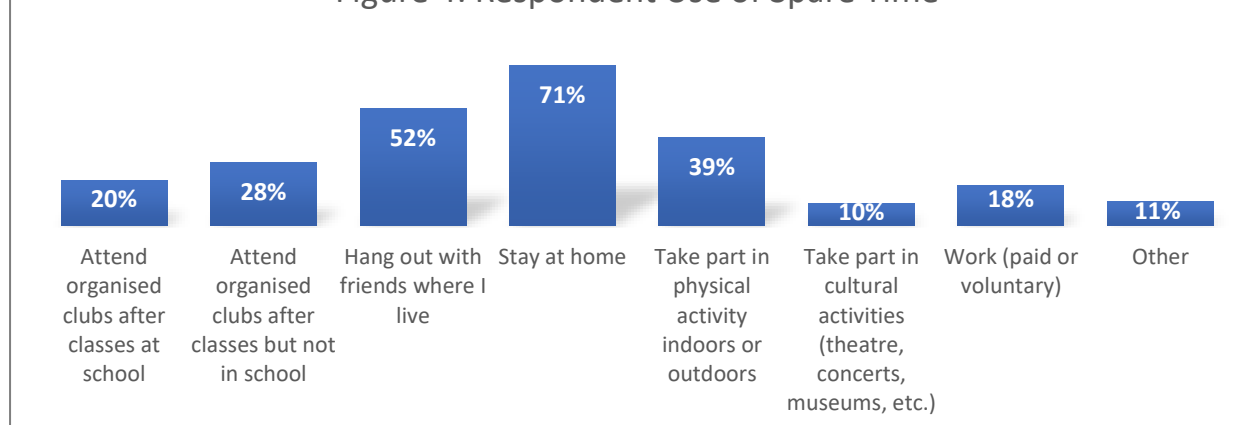| Table 3: Respondent Disability Status	Count	%
Yes	149	8%
No	1587	86%
Prefer not to say	108	6%

Use of Spare Time

When asked what respondents like to do in their space time outside of education/training, a majority of respondents said they stay at home (71%) and a majority also said they hang out with friends (52%) (**See Figure 4**).
Organised clubs (either in school or outside of school) and taking part in physical activity were also mentioned by large minorities of respondents.

These results are very similar to those from the November 2022 Youth Survey. One interesting difference is that this year a higher percentage of respondents reported that they take part in either paid or voluntary work (18% in 2023 compared to 10% in 2022).

Respondents were given the opportunity to specify other activities not listed and 11% (209) did so, with some young people listing more than one additional activity (**see Table 4** for more detailed breakdown).

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Figure 4: Respondent Use of Spare Time

Activity	Percentage
Attend organised clubs after classes at school	20%
Attend organised clubs after classes but not in school	28%
Hang out with friends where I live	52%
Stay at home	71%
Take part in physical activity indoors or outdoors	39%
Take part in cultural activities (theatre, concerts, museums, etc.)	10%
Work (paid or voluntary)	18%
Other	11%

32% of the types of activities young people described participating in during their free time as "other" would actually fall under two of the categories offered in Figure 4 – that being attending organised activities and hanging out with friends.
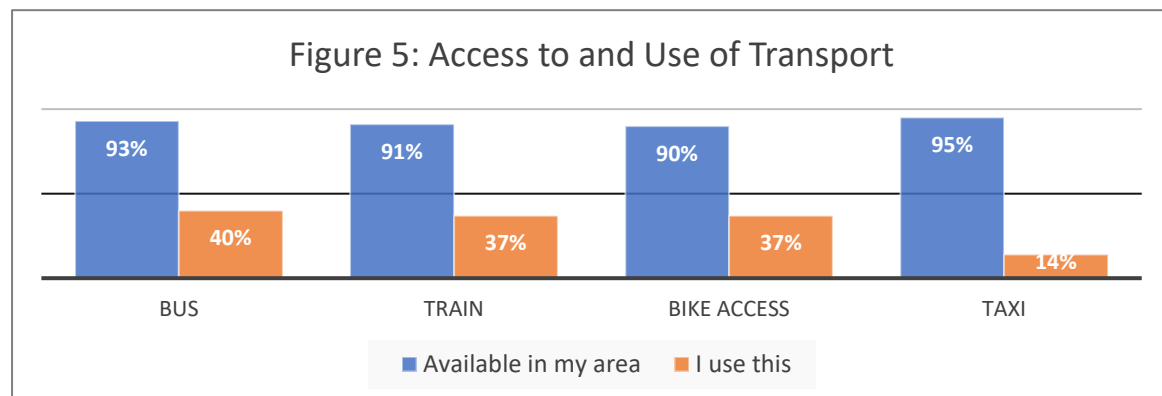
However, some other relevant information does stand out from **Table 4**. Notably, 16% of respondents specifically identified riding their bike, taking walks, or going to the park as what they enjoyed doing with their spare time. Additionally, 10% of respondents discussed helping or spending time with animals or working on a farm as how they spend their spare time. Both of these activities received higher response rates than going out of the area, watching television, or playing video games.

Table 4: Use of Spare Time – "Other"	Count	%
Play video games	17	7%
Watch TV	3	1%
Ride bikes/go to park/take walks/run	36	16%
Spend time with animals/pets/help with farm	23	10%
Go to a shop or shopping/restaurant	9	4%
Go out of area	22	9%
Organised groups or lessons (e.g. youth clubs/cadets/church/guides/young farmers/instrument lesson/dance, etc.)	47	20%
Work with cars/race cars/car meets	8	3%
Go to friend/or bf/gf/family	28	12%
Go to gym	9	4%
Pub	2	1%
Music/art/reading/other solo hobbies	11	5%
Snooker	2	1%
Other	15	6%

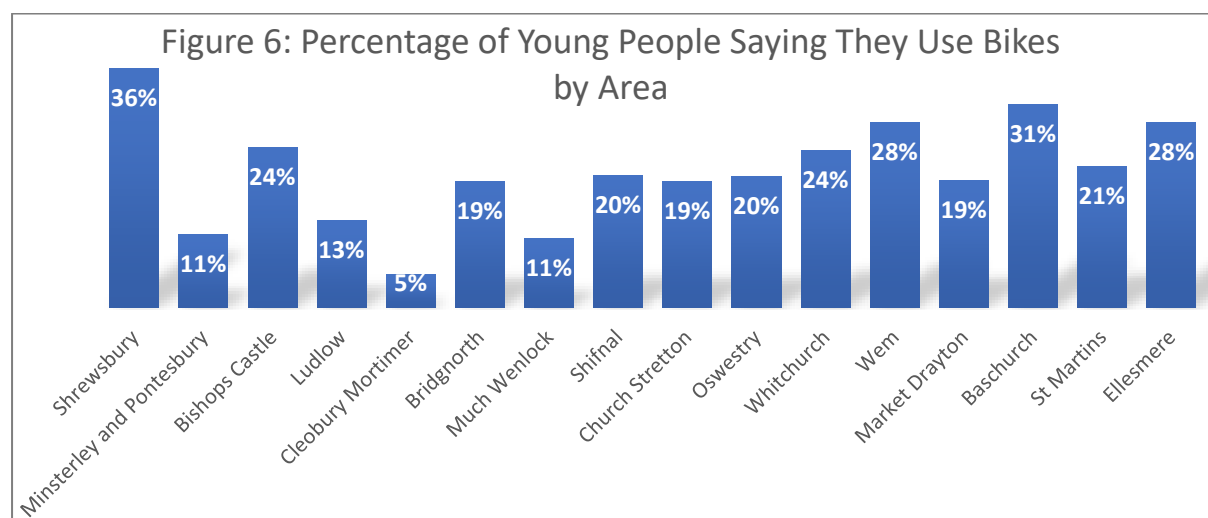# 3   Use of Transport and Services

Transport Availability and Use
Respondents were asked whether various types of transport are available in their area and whether or not they use it (**see Figure 5**).

Figure 5: Access to and Use of Transport

	BUS	TRAIN	BIKE ACCESS	TAXI
Available in my area	93%	91%	90%	95%
I use this	40%	37%	37%	14%

■ Available in my area   ■ I use this

The vast majority of respondents said that all forms of transport are available in their area. However, no majority of respondents said they used any of these methods of transport. **Bus was the most common form of transport used by respondents, with 40% reporting that they use this method**. Both train and bike use were also used by large minorities of respondents as well (37% each) with taxis being the least common form of transport used (14%).
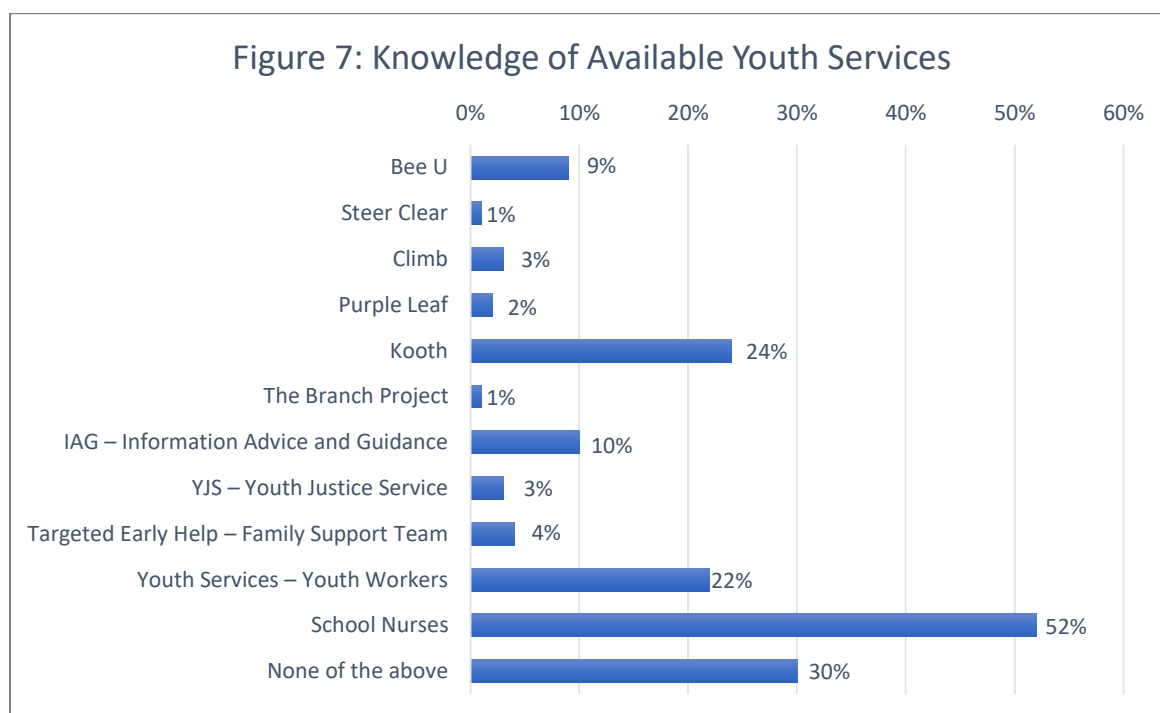
Bike access was high among respondents (90%) and 37% of respondents also said that they use their bikes for transport. However, understanding bike use by geographical area is important as well, since some areas of Shropshire may have more cycle lanes or bike paths that are accessible.

Figure 6 shows reported bike use by geographical area. Shrewsbury, Baschurch, Wem and Ellesmere were places where respondents were more likely to report using their bike as a form of transport. Cleobury Mortimer, Much Wenlock, Minsterley and Ponstesbury, and Ludlow, however, were places where smaller percentages of respondents reported using their bikes as a form of transport.

Figure 6: Percentage of Young People Saying They Use Bikes by Area

Area	Percentage
Shrewsbury	36%
Minsterley and Pontesbury	11%
Bishops Castle	24%
Ludlow	13%
Cleobury Mortimer	5%
Bridgnorth	19%
Much Wenlock	11%
Shifnal	20%
Church Stretton	19%
Oswestry	20%
Whitchurch	24%
Wem	28%
Market Drayton	19%
Baschurch	31%
St Martins	21%
Ellesmere	28%

Awareness of Services

The survey asked questions about services available for young people and whether or not respondents are aware if these services are available in their area. Respondents' knowledge of services was fairly low overall, with 30% of respondents saying "none of these" are services they are aware of being available in their area. School nurses (52%) were the only service a majority of respondents were aware of being available in their area. There was an awareness among a sizeable minority of Kooth (24%) and Youth Service Workers (22%) (**see Figure 7**). 30% of respondents said that they were not aware of any of the services listed as being available in their area.

Figure 7: Knowledge of Available Youth Services

Service	%
Bee U	9%
Steer Clear	1%
Climb	3%
Purple Leaf	2%
Kooth	24%
The Branch Project	1%
IAG – Information Advice and Guidance	10%
YJS – Youth Justice Service	3%
Targeted Early Help – Family Support Team	4%
Youth Services – Youth Workers	22%
School Nurses	52%
None of the above	30%

Respondents were also given the option of adding a comment to clarify their answer to this question about available youth services in their area and 92 did so. These responses were grouped into themes and are detailed in **Table 5**, below.

Table 5: Comments on Available Youth Services	Count	%
Don't think so/no/not in my area	11	12%
Don't know	54	58%
Childline	2	2%
The support is limited (e.g. only available irregularly, not enough) or not good	7	8%
Social prescriber/GP practices	3	3%
Other local charities/services	10	11%

In this space, 65 respondents reiterated that they either don't know whether these services are available, or that they are not available in their area. A few additional services emerged among these responses. Some young people mentioned charities or local services not listed in the question, such as SYA, Crossroads Together, Childline, social prescribers, GP practices and school counsellors.

Overall, however, the results from this question makes it clear that few respondents are aware of services available in their area for young people.

Interest in Using Youth Services
When respondents were asked whether they would use a support service for young people were it available in their area, a majority either said they did not know or that they would not use one. Only 21% of respondents said that they would use a support service for young people (**see Figure 7**).

Figure 7: Would Respondents Use a Youth Support Service
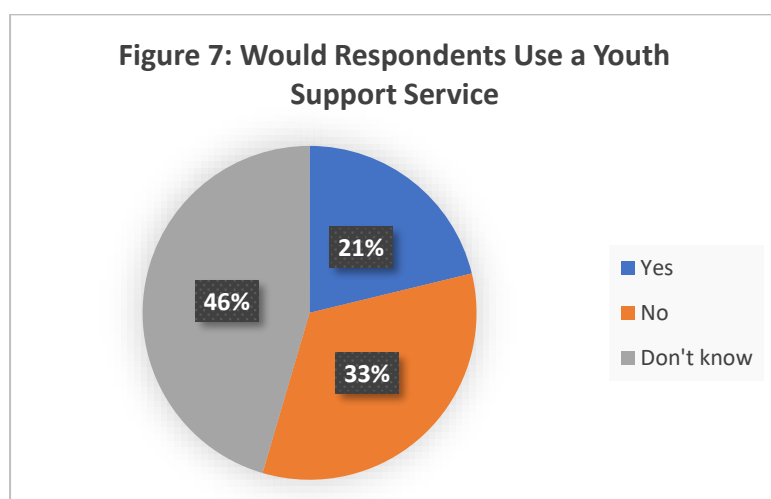
An additional survey question also asked young people to offer comments to explain their answers, and 425 did so. These responses were grouped into themes and are detailed in **Table 6**, below.

Table 6: Comments on Potential Use of Youth Services	Count	%
Don't need it/wouldn't go	123	27%
Too uncomfortable/awkward/don't trust/don't like talking to strangers	33	7%
Had bad previous experience with support service	17	4%
If needed/it depends	72	16%
Want support but it isn't available/appropriate for my situation/it's not available	20	4%
Would use if available/would be beneficial/already use what's here	74	16%
Don't know / not sure what a support service can do	84	19%
Prefer to talk to parents/family/friends	11	2%
Other	16	4%

Of the 425 respondents who offered further comment on this question, 27% said that they don't need youth support services, or they simply wouldn't use them. 7% said that they would likely not go because they would find it too uncomfortable or awkward to use such a service, and 2% said that they preferred to find their support from parents, family or friends. A further 19% said that they are not sure what a support service is or could offer them.

Examples of these kinds of comments include:
- "I don't really like talking to people about personal things."

- "We as teens feel unsecure conversing with adults as they often relay it to our parents."
- "I do not like opening up to people I don't know, I would only ever do that if I knew them beforehand."
- "I'm not sure what it is like."
- "I don't know a lot about youth workers."
- "I don't really know what a support service is?"

Some respondents indicated that they might be interested in using a support service. 16% said that they think it would be beneficial to have youth support services available for people in their area and/or that they are already using such services. A further 16% said that they would do so if they needed it, or depending on their circumstances, or the type of support offered. Examples of comments such as these include:
- "I would as sometimes you need someone to talk to."
- "Most people would benefit."
- "Depends on what's happening in my life."
- "It depends what support and how accessible."

4% of respondents commenting said that they would like to use a service, but that one is not available in their area that is appropriate for them. A further 4% said that they had already used services, but that these services were not appropriate, or they had had bad experiences with them. Examples of comments such as these include:
- "There is no support for young people who have disabilities."
- "I reached out for support with Kooth but help was not provided well and other support services I tried to use I wasn't old enough."
- "Because I was recently involved with Bee U and I found my worker very rude."
- "I have used CAMHS (before it was BeeU) but did not have a positive experience."

4   Opportunities, Activities, and Facilities

Opportunities
Young people were asked whether they felt there are enough opportunities in their area for young people. While a majority **(57%) of respondents said that yes, there are enough opportunities, 43% do not feel that there are enough opportunities**.

In order to better understand whether there are particular areas where young people feel that opportunities are greater than others in Shropshire, this question was cross-analysed with the "nearest town" data provided by respondents (**see Table 7**).[1]

While not entirely falling into an even divide between more rural and more built-up areas, it was generally the most rural areas of the county where a majority of respondents were more likely to say that there are not enough opportunities for

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[1] Although "nearest town" may not be the most accurate for many of the young people answering the survey, as many young people may not be aware of which town is geographically closest to them, this measure may be a still be a good indication of what opportunities young people perceive are nearby.

young people where they live. Cleobury Mortimer, Craven Arms, Ludlow, Market Drayton, Much Wenlock and Whitchurch all had majorities of respondents saying that there are not enough opportunities for young people in their area.

Table 7: Respondent Perception of Opportunities by Nearest Town

Bishops Castle		Bridgnorth		Broseley		Church Stretton	
No	37%	No	48%	No	50%	No	42%
Yes	63%	Yes	52%	Yes	50%	Yes	58%

Cleobury Mortimer		Craven Arms		Clun		Ellesmere	
No	70%	No	57%	No	27%	No	36%
Yes	30%	Yes	43%	Yes	73%	Yes	64%

Ludlow		Market Drayton		Much Wenlock		Oswestry	
No	72%	No	55%	No	75%	No	50%
Yes	28%	Yes	45%	Yes	25%	Yes	50%

Shifnal		Shrewsbury		Wem		Whitchurch	
No	43%	No	36%	No	40%	No	58%
Yes	57%	Yes	64%	Yes	60%	Yes	42%

Interestingly, though, some more rural areas such as Bishops Castle and Ellesmere also had a majority of respondents saying that there are enough opportunities in their area. It is possible that young people do not perceive their opportunities to be limited by their geographical location because many work or educational opportunities are largely a future consideration of a majority of the respondents.

Interestingly, when analysed by age, the perception of opportunities for young people decreases considerably with an increase in respondent age. **See Figure 8**. While the total number of respondents is much lower among older young people in the sample, a comparison by percentage of respondents in that age group allows for a clear picture that, as young people get older, they are less likely to perceive that there are enough opportunities for them in the area.

Figure 8: "Yes" There are Enough Opportunities for Young People - by Age

Years 7-9 (Key Stage 3)	Years 10-11 (GCSE)	A-level / T-levels / Apprenticeship etc	Not in education employment or training	Finished school and now employed
63%	49%	42%	14%	22%
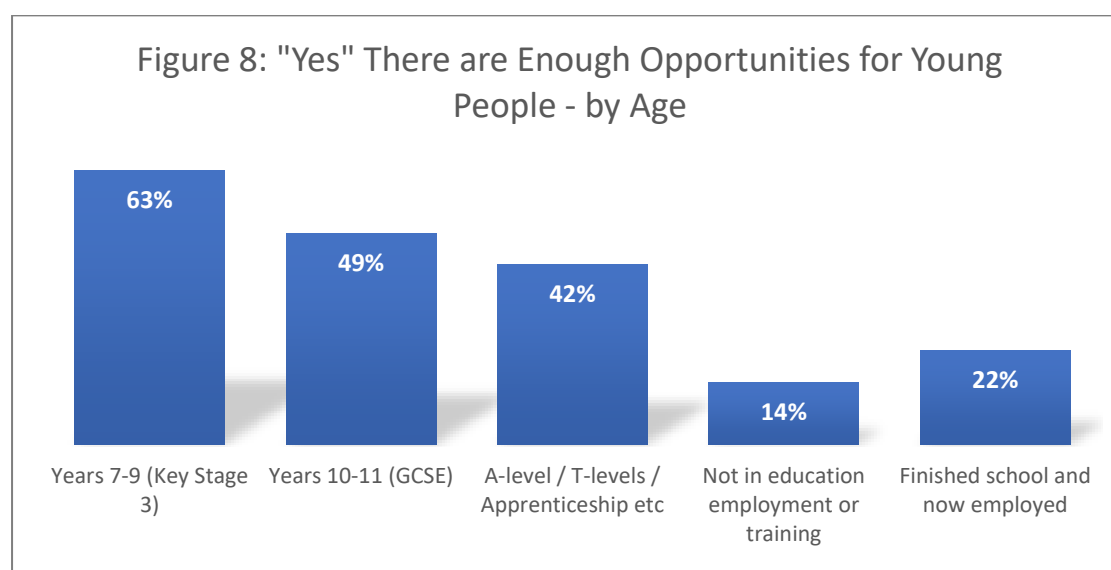
Once again, respondents were given the opportunity to comment on their responses to the question, and 470 young people did so. Their comments were grouped into themes, and these are presented below in **Table 8.**

Table 8: Opportunities for Young People - Comments	Count	%
Need more job/apprenticeship/volunteer opportunities	68	12%
Not enough higher education/colleges nearby	17	3%
Need more age-appropriate activities/facilities/restaurants	165	30%
Nothing to do/boring	160	29%
Anti-social behaviour/not nice people/being told off	3	1%
Not enough public transport	19	3%
Too far from everything/rural	50	9%
Not a lot of other young people nearby	7	1%
Not enough affordable/free/costs too high	34	6%
Other	27	5%

Table 8 clarifies that respondents interpreted "opportunities for young people" in different ways. Some respondents (15%) talked about opportunity in terms of access to jobs or education. Examples of comments like this include:
- "Job opportunities for young people are low, entry level but skilled positions very hard to find. Seems to be either hospitality/retail or positions that young people don't have the skills and experience for. Graduate schemes in Shropshire could be beneficial."
- "I feel that there is not enough jobs available and guidance for our age."
- "Nothing here, we have to travel 1hr to an agricultural college."
- "Educational options aren't great because only a hand full of people from round here make it to higher education such as university."
- "There aren't many career paths after school that are local like apprenticeships."

However, a higher percentage of respondents (30%) talked about opportunity in terms of activities or facilities available to them, and 29% of respondents commenting on this question simply talked about it in terms of "things to do". Examples of comments such as these include:
- "The area is mostly based for people who are older and there is not much to entertain younger children and teens."
- "Things are either aimed at adults or young kids and restricts us from getting places."
- ""If there were enough, I would assume that kids would be busy doing those things rather than destroying our area and disturbing the peace."
- "No organised youth clubs for 11-12 year olds."
- "Not much to do other than hang around. not really encouraged to participate in local community events."
- "As it is a small village there isn't much to do."

Finally, a total of 12% of the comments that respondents made to this question also had to do with the way that isolation or a lack of good transport options limited their opportunities. Examples of comments like this included:
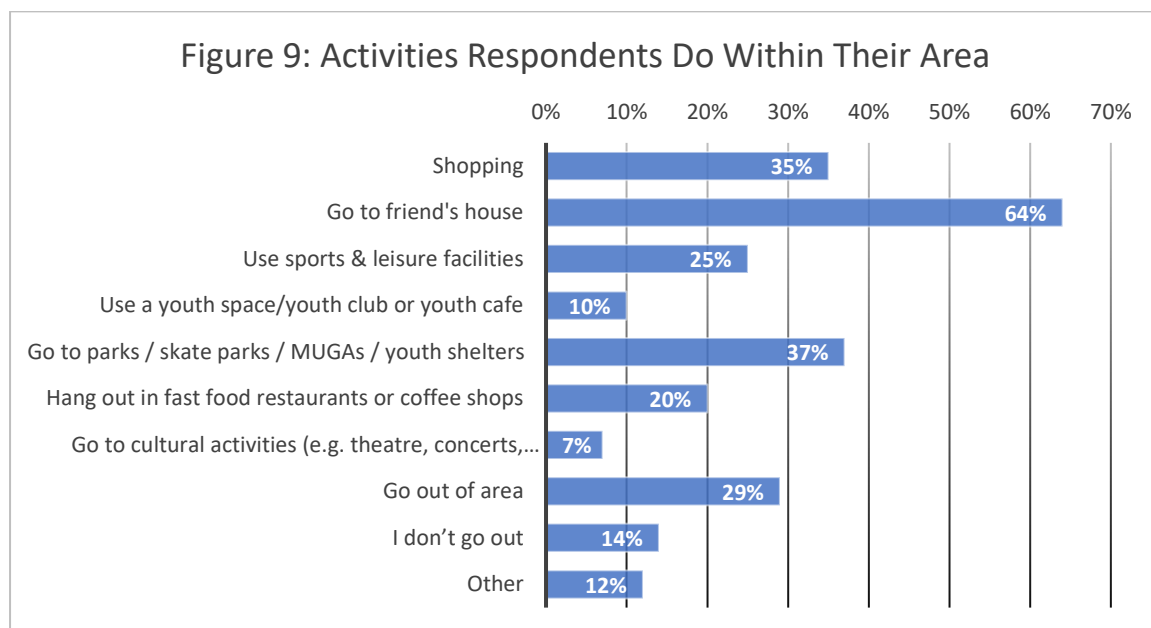
- "Very isolating. Not able to travel unless parents willing to drive."
- "Opportunities are offered outside the area, but that may require transport that some young people do not have the ability to access & afford."
- "There is nothing where I live. I need to go into town or out of area to access everything."
- "Trapped into only a few jobs unless you want to travel away but it's expensive."

Activities in the Area

When asked whether there is enough for young people to do where they live, respondents were most likely to say "no" (49%) or that they "don't know" (18%). **Only 33% of survey respondents feel that there is enough to do for young people where they live.**
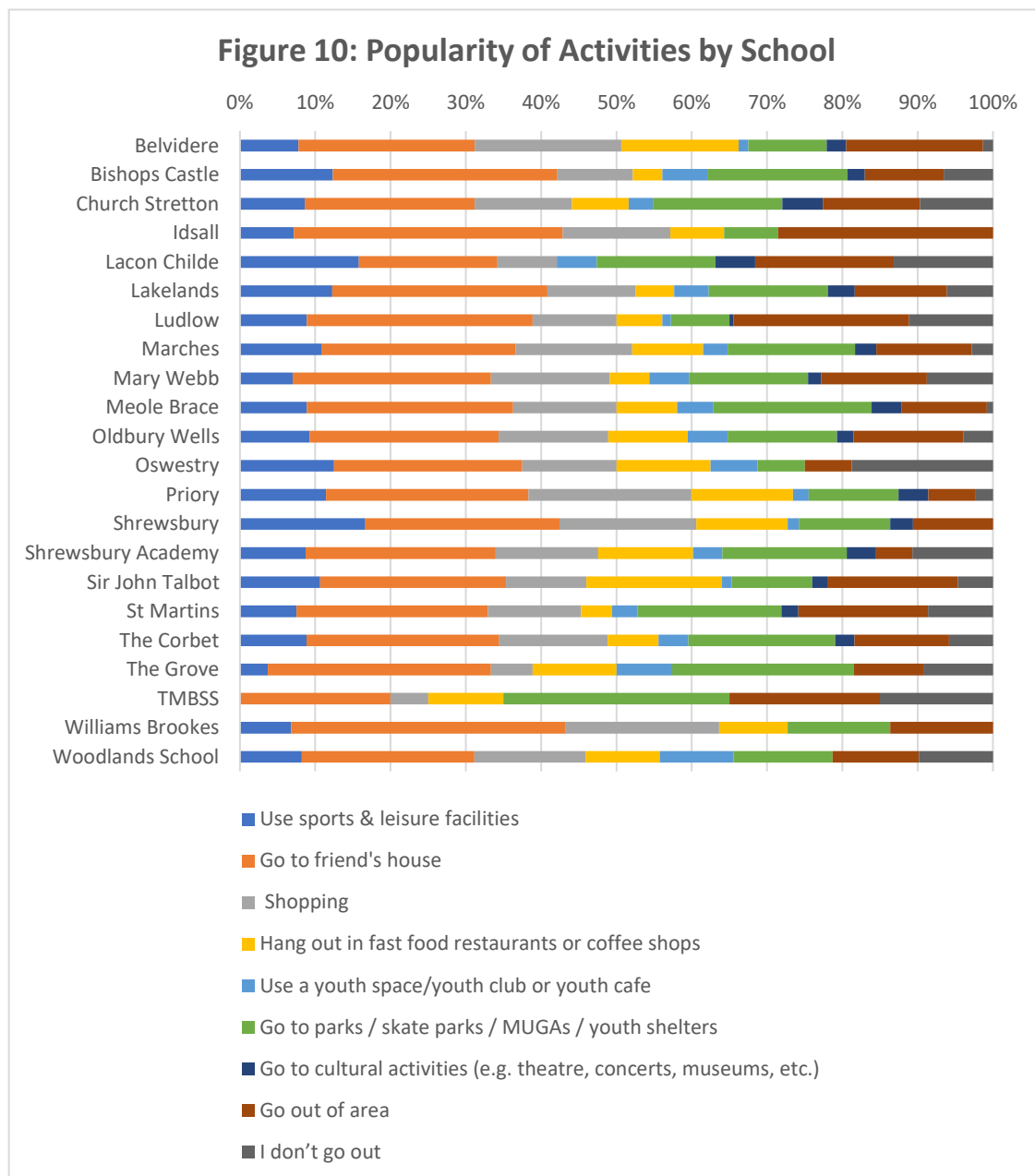
Respondents were further asked what activities they and their friends take part in within the area they live (**see Figure 9**).

Going to a friend's house was the most popular response, with a majority of 64% saying that they do this. While no other activity received a majority of responses, large minorities of respondents also said that they go to parks/skate parks/MUGAs or youth shelters (37%) or go shopping (35%). 29% of respondents said that they go out of the area when they go out.

Figure 9: Activities Respondents Do Within Their Area

Activity	Percentage
Shopping	35%
Go to friend's house	64%
Use sports & leisure facilities	25%
Use a youth space/youth club or youth cafe	10%
Go to parks / skate parks / MUGAs / youth shelters	37%
Hang out in fast food restaurants or coffee shops	20%
Go to cultural activities (e.g. theatre, concerts,…	7%
Go out of area	29%
I don't go out	14%
Other	12%

Some additional analysis of activities by school was also performed in order to better understand which types of activities were more popular in which areas of the county.[2] The results of this analysis are presented in **Figure 10**.

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[2] In this question, school was used as a more accurate gauge of locality as opposed to nearest town, due to activities often being very local in nature and going "out of area" for some respondents may mean going to their nearest town.

Figure 10: Popularity of Activities by School

Legend:
- Use sports & leisure facilities
- Go to friend's house
- Shopping
- Hang out in fast food restaurants or coffee shops
- Use a youth space/youth club or youth cafe
- Go to parks / skate parks / MUGAs / youth shelters
- Go to cultural activities (e.g. theatre, concerts, museums, etc.)
- Go out of area
- I don't go out

This analysis is fairly revealing about what kinds of activities are popular in more rural areas versus areas closer to greater population density, such as Shrewsbury and Oswestry-based schools. For example, Shrewsbury, Priory and Belvidere respondents are more likely than those attending Lacon Childe, The Grove, or Woodlands School to say they go shopping.

Perhaps more interesting might be the students who make more use of parks, youth cafes and sport and leisure facilities. For example, relatively fewer respondents attending Belvidere take part in these activities than students in Church Stretton.

Additionally, either going out of their area to participate in activities or not going out at all seems to be higher among respondents attending more rural schools such as Ludlow, Church Stretton and Idsall.

Other relationships between the school locations and the types of activities respondents participate in may occur to specialists in the Youth Services Team upon analysis of these data.

Respondents were given the opportunity to identify other activities and 177 respondents did so. Additional activities identified are detailed in **Table 9**, below.

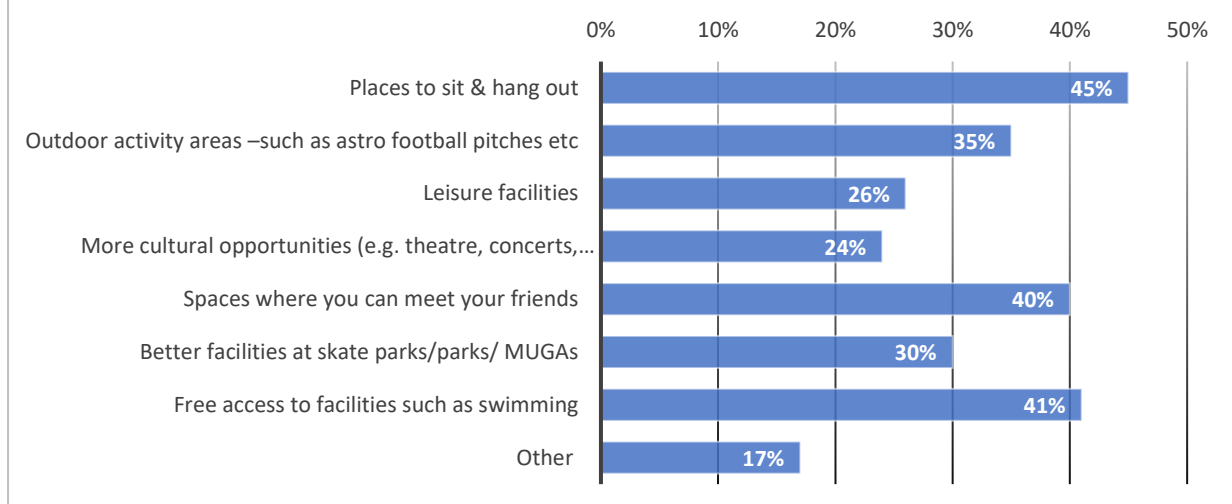| Table 9: "Other" Activities	Count	%
Play video games	11	6%
Ride bikes/go to park/take walks/run	52	27%
Spend time with animals/pets/help with farm	8	4%
Go to a shop/town or restaurant/café	14	7%
Football	11	6%
Organised groups or lessons (e.g. youth clubs/cadets/church/guides/young farmers/instrument lesson/dance, etc.)	28	14%
Work with cars/race cars/car meets/hang out in cars	3	2%
Hang out with friends/family	10	5%
Go to gym/leisure centre/swimming/library/bowling/snooker	6	3%
Pub	3	2%
No activities/don't have friends in area	27	14%
Other	23	12%

The largest theme to emerge under "other" activities was that 27% of respondents said that they enjoy spending time outdoors riding bikes, taking walks and hanging out in their local park. Another large theme was taking part in organised clubs, lessons or other groups such as cadets, young farmers, or playing musical instruments.

Unfortunately, another big theme was that respondents do not participate in any activities with their friends and/or don't have any friends in their area (14%).

Facilities

Respondents were asked what types of facilities might make where they live better for them and their friends. Respondents were given a range of possible options, and while no one option garnered majority interest, a few were popular among large minorities of young people responding to the survey (**see Figure 10**).

Figure 10: Facilities Respondents Would Like in their Area

Facility	Percentage
Places to sit & hang out	45%
Outdoor activity areas –such as astro football pitches etc	35%
Leisure facilities	26%
More cultural opportunities (e.g. theatre, concerts,…)	24%
Spaces where you can meet your friends	40%
Better facilities at skate parks/parks/ MUGAs	30%
Free access to facilities such as swimming	41%
Other	17%

For example, places to sit and hang out, as well as spaces where you can meet your friends were popular with 45% and 40% of respondents respectively. Free access to facilities such as swimming was also popular with 41% of respondents.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to identify other types of facilities that might make where they live better for them and their friends and 200 did so. These were grouped into themes and are presented in **Table 10**, below.

Table 10: Facilities Respondents Would Like – "Other"	Count	%
More shops/better shops	59	26%
Fast food/café	24	11%
Parks/improved parks (e.g. mountain bike trails, skate park, more for teens, etc)/better lighting in parks	47	21%
Safe places to hang out indoors	6	3%
More activities (leisure facilities/pool/mini golf/bowling/cinema)	41	18%
Better public transport/cycle paths/improved roads	14	6%
More affordable activities (e.g. cheaper gigs, affordable transport)	3	1%
Clubs/social events/places to meet other young people	12	5%
Nicer people/safer area/less anti-social behaviour	8	4%
Other	12	5%

More shops (including any shop at all for some), as well as improved shopping that was of more interest for young people was a popular theme among respondents, with 26% of respondents saying something similar to this. Relatedly, 11% of respondents commenting in the "other" field said that they would like a fast food restaurant (specific preferences included McDonald's, KFC and Greggs) or a café near them.

Another large portion of respondents (18%) wanted some sort of facilities for activities they enjoy. There were a wide variety of facilities for activities that respondents mentioned, for instance bowling alleys, leisure centres, swimming pools, mini golf, and cinemas, to name just a few.

Some respondents had very strong ideas about what facilities should be brought into their area – so much so that they used multiple comment spaces to talk about their wishes for these facilities to be introduced. One respondent, for example, used every comment box to write "a basketball court in Baschurch." Another wrote something about wanting a Greggs near them in just about every comment box as well. Additionally, a few respondents said they want a "pump track" in more than one comment box. While they represent only a tiny number, it is worth noting the persistence of these respondents in trying to get across their particular interests.

5   Young People Evaluating Where They Live

What Respondents Like
Respondents were given the opportunity to discuss what specifically they like about where they live. 1,476 young people responded to this question with a comment, and their responses have been grouped thematically and presented in **Table 11**, below.

Table 11: What Young People Like About Where They Live	Count	%
Access to the great outdoors / outdoor activities /animals (e.g., walking, horse riding, etc)	94	6%
Rural, quiet, and beautiful location	618	40%
Facilities for young people (e.g., cinema, skate park, football stadium)	141	9%
Restaurants, shops and shopping	164	11%
Being able to see my friends and family	111	7%
The community /where I live / feel safe	207	13%
Close to school	24	2%
Able to get to places easily / good transport	62	4%
Nothing / don't know	65	4%
Local history/architecture	19	1%
Other	45	3%

A large minority of respondents (40%) liked their location precisely because it is rural, citing the quiet or the beauty of where they live as positives. 13% also noted that their community is a positive aspect of where they live, and 11% said that they like living near friends and family. 11% of respondents (likely those in more built up areas) said that they like the restaurants and shops available nearby and 9% said they think there are good facilities for young people where they live.

Examples of positive comments from young people about their area included:
- "Being close to lots of places to explore."
- "It's quite rural and calm but there's still enough things to do."
- "Good park for mountain biking."
- "The shops that are available in town."
- "It's a nice place to be to hang out with friends, and it's a nice place to walk around and do activities."
- "Living in Clun, it's quiet, small, peaceful, wouldn't have it any other way."
- "I'm close to school and my friends."
- "It's in walking distance to town centre."

In spite of these many positive comments, 4% of respondents (65) answering this question about what they **like** about where they live chose to say there is nothing that they like, or that they don't know what they like.

What Respondents Don't Like
Respondents were also given a separate opportunity to comment on what they don't like about where they live. 1,423 young people offered comments on this, which were grouped thematically, and these themes are presented in **Table 12**, below.

Table 12: What Young People Don't Like About Where They Live	Count	%
Nothing to do / boring / everything	174	13%
Crime / antisocial behaviour / litter / not feeling safe	181	13%
Live far away from my friends / family / feel lonely / isolated	128	9%
Other people / other children / neighbours, etc	107	8%
No shops/ restaurants near to where I live	109	8%
Not enough facilities / things for young people to do	144	10%
Poor transport / reliance on the car / can't get to where I want to go	87	6%
Weather / flooding / cold	63	5%
Nothing/ don't know / I'm happy	149	11%
State of the roads / traffic issues	102	7%
Don't like the nature/farms/history/architecture nearby	35	3%
Internet/phone limitations	12	1%
Too small/lack of diversity	14	1%
Noisy/crowded	17	1%
Lack of job/educational opportunities	7	1%
Other	48	3%

While there was no theme that stood out as prominently in this question as the rural/beautiful/quiet theme did in the positive comments, there were several themes where over 100 young people agreed. Moreover, some of these themes overlap into larger issues. For instance, 13% of respondents (174) said that what they don't like about where they live is that there is generally nothing to do or that it's boring. Similarly, 10% of respondents said more specifically that there are not things or facilities for young people where they live, and 9% said that what they don't like is that they live far away from people they want to be around such as friends or family, or that they feel isolated. 6% said that poor transport is an issue, and 8% said that there are not enough shops or restaurants where they live. All of these themes might be related to the rural nature of the county, over which young people have little control.

Another 13% of respondents said that they don't like that their area has crime or antisocial behaviour. Similarly, 8% had negative comments about people where they live, such as neighbours or other young people. A small number of respondents (14) also commented on the lack of diversity in their area being a problem. These themes seem to relate to discontent with the community (rather than the physical environment) that young people are living in.

Finally, it's worth noting that 11% of respondents commenting on this question said that there is nothing that they don't like about their community.

Things to Improve
About half of survey respondents (51%) said that there are things they would like to improve about where they live. 49% said there is nothing to improve about where they live.

When asked to provide comments on their responses, 855 young people did so. Their responses were grouped thematically, and these themes are presented in **Table 13**, below**.**

Table 13: Things to Improve	Count	%
Shops	160	19%
Parks and outdoor spaces (for young people)	97	11%
Sports, leisure and exercise facilities	97	11%
Places to hang out, spaces inside and outside (e.g. with seats)	94	11%
Things to do, activities to reduce boredom	192	23%
Safe and better public space (bins, toilets, lighting, crime reduction measures)	113	13%
Road crossings, safe paths, cycle routes and safer roads	44	5%
Too many new houses and building sites	6	1%
Cinema, bowling and other similar facilities	6	1%
Skate park, cycle track and mountain bike routes	38	4%
Places to eat out, fast food outlets and cafes	39	5%
Don't know	10	1%
Buses, trains, other public transport and car parking	60	7%
Other	92	11%

There was a very wide variety of suggestions for improvements to the area from young people. However, more shops and activities were some of the suggestions with the most support (19% and 23% respectively). Improvements to public areas such as lighting/toilets (13%), as well as parks (11%) and transportation (7%) were also popular suggestions.

Worries About Safety
Young people were asked about whether they agreed with the statement that "young people do not feel safe in their community" (**see Figure 11**).

A majority of young people (63%) either agreed with this statement or said that they "sometimes" agreed. **Only 37% of young people disagreed, indicating that they always feel safe in their community.**

Figure 11: Young People Don't Feel Safe - Do You Agree?

- Yes 21%
- No 37%
- Sometimes 42%
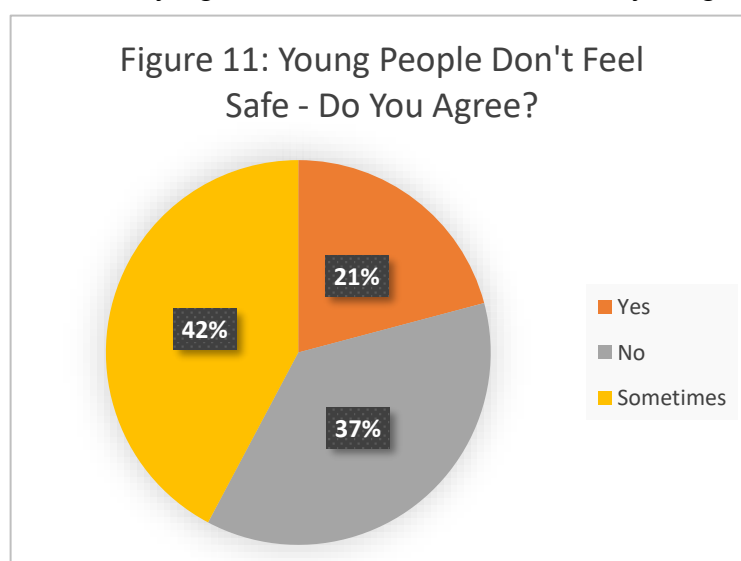
The survey then asked young people to identify what specific concerns they have about going out in their community. The results of this question are summarised in **Figure 12**.
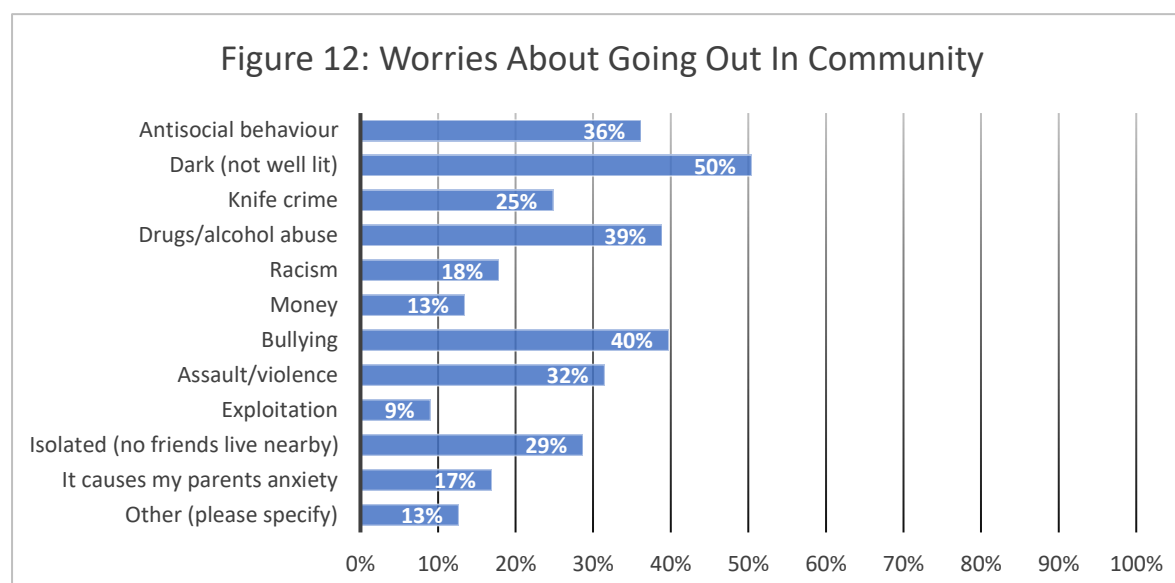
Figure 12: Worries About Going Out In Community

Areas not being well lit, concerns about bullying, drug/alcohol use, and antisocial behaviour were the top areas for concern among young people about going out in their communities. Worryingly, nearly a third of respondents said they were concerned about assault and a quarter reported being concerned about knife crime.

Respondents answering "other" to the question of what worries they have about going out in their community were asked to clarify their response, and 82 respondents did so. Their answers were grouped thematically, and these themes are presented in **Table 14**.

Table 14: "Other" Worries About Going Out In Community	Count	%
Gangs/groups of unsavoury people hanging around/homeless people	13	14%
General anxiety	19	20%
Not enough lighting	8	8%
Worried because theft, assault or other crime has recently happened nearby	11	11%
Worried about harassment (e.g. catcalling, transphobia, etc.)	13	14%
Fear of kidnapping	4	4%
Older people telling them off	4	4%
People vaping/smoking nearby	5	5%
People taking/selling drugs or drinking/acting drunk nearby	9	9%
Other	10	10%

19 of the respondents answering "other" identified their worries as a general anxiety. Another 13 respondents talked about gangs or groups of people hanging around that made them worried – some included the homeless in this theme. Another 13 respondents were worried about harassment such as catcalling, homophobia or transphobia. 11 respondents indicated that they were worried because of actual

crime that had happened recently in their area. A handful of respondents, for instance, noted that there had been a shooting at a co-op near them recently.

It is helpful to break down some of the results from **Figure 12** along demographic lines to provide a clearer picture of what is driving some of these results. Perhaps unsurprisingly, for example, of those respondents who said going out in the community "causes my parents anxiety" a majority (51%) were the youngest age cohort in the sample (years 7-9).

Also perhaps unsurprising is the breakdown of feelings of safety in the community by gender identity (**see Figure 13**). A majority (55%) of respondents identifying as male said that they either felt unsafe or "sometimes" felt unsafe in their community. However, 69% respondents identifying as female reported these feelings, and respondents identifying as non-binary, transgender or gender variant were also more likely than those identifying as male to say that they felt unsafe or sometimes felt unsafe.

Figure 13: Feeling Safe In The Community - By Gender Identity
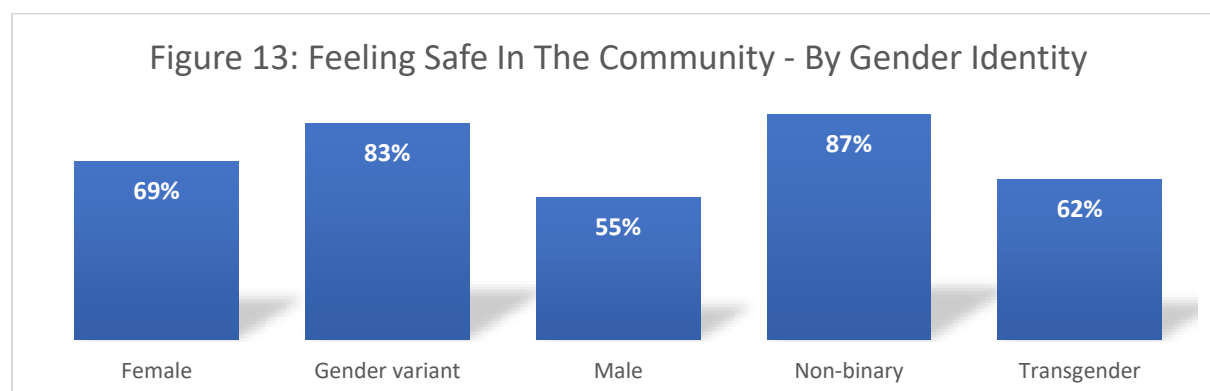
When broken down by ethnicity (**see Figure 14**), it is interesting to note that respondents identifying as Black are the least likely among self-identified ethnicities to report feeling unsafe or "sometimes" unsafe in their community, while "other ethnic groups" and "other white" ethnic groups report feeling unsafe or sometimes unsafe at higher percentages of their population than many other groups.

Figure 14: Feeling Safe In The Community - By Ethnic Identity
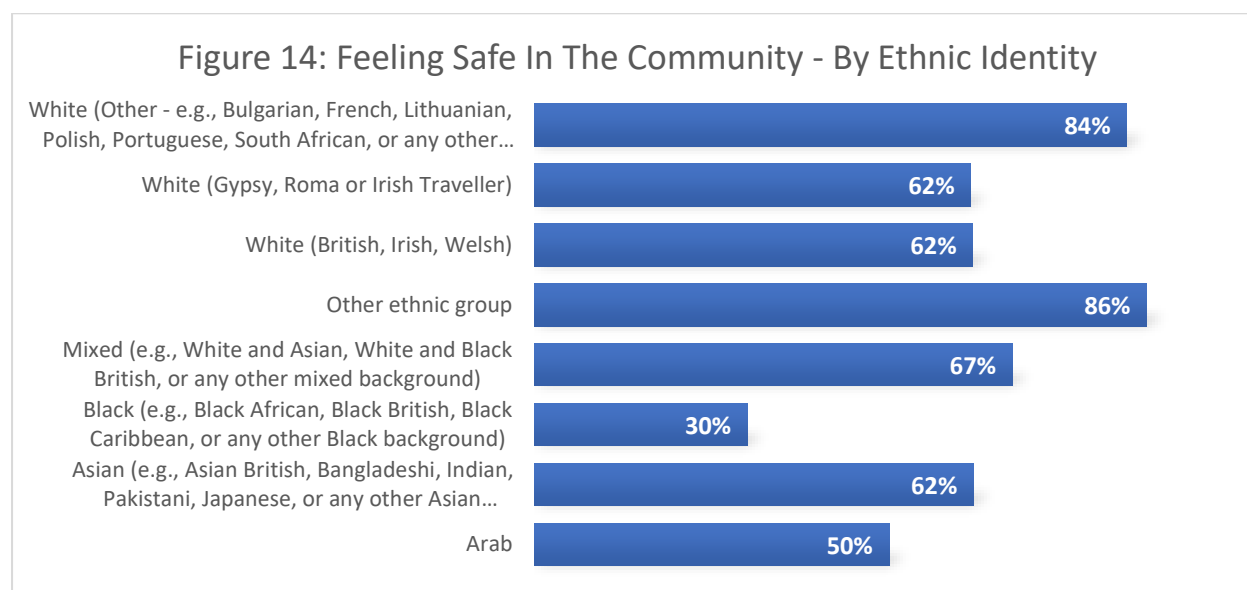
6   Summary and Conclusions

Summary

The key findings in the above report can be summarised as follows:
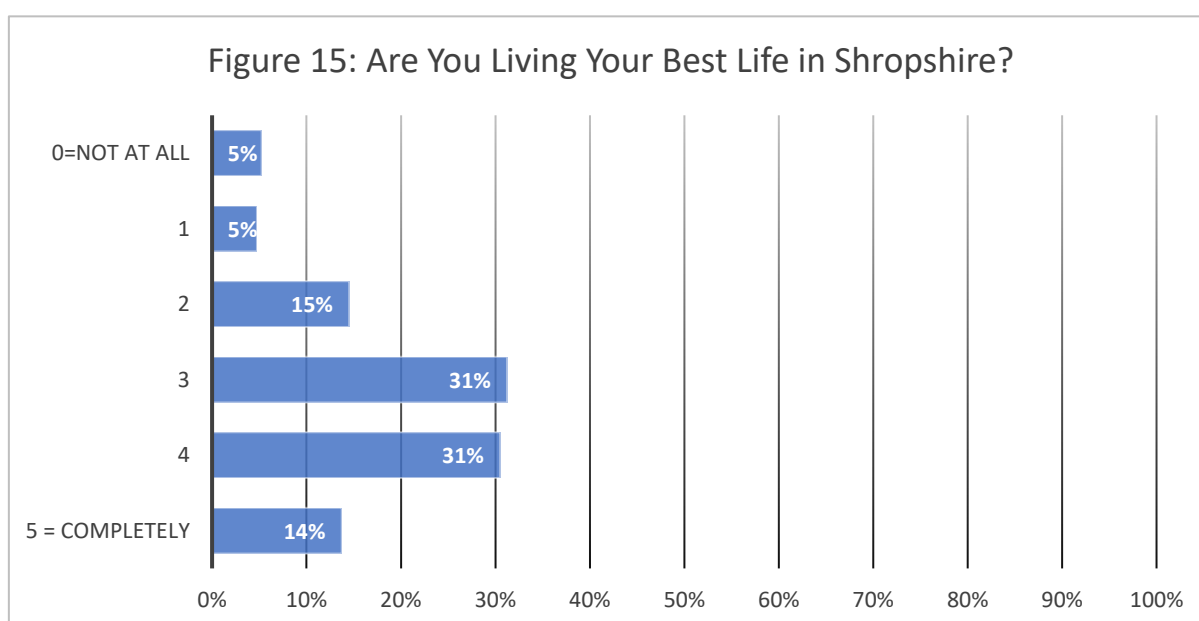
- Respondent Characteristics
    - 1,873 young people representing a good spread of locations across the county answered the survey.
    - A large majority (87%) of those responding to the survey identified as White (British, Irish, Welsh) and a majority of respondents were also in years 7-9 (59%) and identified as Female (52%).
    - 71% of respondents said they stay at home in their spare time, which is similar to the results of the November 2022 survey of young people in Shropshire.
        - One noteworthy statistic is that 18% of young people said that they spend their time taking part in paid or voluntary work in 2023, whereas in 2022 only 10% reported spending their time in this way.
- Use of Transport and Services
    - The vast majority of respondents said that all forms of transport are available in their area. However, no majority of respondents said they used any of these methods of transport. Bus was the most common form of transport used by respondents, with 40% reporting that they use this method.
    - School nurses were the only support service for young people that a majority (52%) of respondents said that they were aware of in their area.
    - A large minority of respondents (30%) said that they are not aware of any support services for young people in their area.
    - A majority of respondents (79%) said that they would not use a youth support service or "didn't know" if they would use a youth support service if it were available to them in their area.
- Opportunities, Activities, and Facilities
    - While a majority (57%) of respondents said that there are enough opportunities for young people in their area, 43% do not feel that there are enough opportunities.
        - The likelihood of responding "yes" to the question of whether there are enough opportunities for young people declines with the age of the young person responding.
    - Only 33% of survey respondents feel that there is enough for young people to do where they live.
    - The most popular activity for young people to engage in within their area if to go to a friend's house (64%).
    - Facilities that the most young people feel are needed in their area are places to sit and hang out (45%), free access to facilities such as swimming (41%) and spaces where they can meet their friends (40%).
- Young People Evaluating Where They Live
    - A large minority of respondents (40%) liked their location precisely because it is rural, citing the quiet or the beauty of where they live as positives.

- 13% of respondents said that what they don't like about where they live is that there is nothing to do, and 10% said that there are not enough facilities or things for young people to do in their area.
- About half of survey respondents (51%) said that there are things they would like to improve about where they live.
  - Improved or increased shops, activities and facilities for young people, as well as improved public spaces and services such as parks, outdoor lighting and transportation were all discussed as important improvements that could be made for young people.
- A majority of young people (63%) either agreed with the statement that they feel unsafe in their community or said that they "sometimes" agreed.
  - Areas not being well lit, concerns about bullying, drug/alcohol use, and antisocial behaviour were the top areas for concern among young people about going out in their communities.
  - Those respondents with a gender identity that is not male were most likely to respond that they feel unsafe or "sometimes" feel unsafe in their community.
  - "Other" ethnic groups and "Other White" ethnic groups were more likely than other self-identified ethnicities to feel unsafe or "sometimes" unsafe in their community.

Conclusion

At the end of the survey, young people were asked whether they are "living their best life in Shropshire". **Figure 15** shows that the majority of respondents think they are about a 3 or a 4 on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being "completely".

The response to this question makes sense in the context of the overall results of this survey. Young people in Shropshire overall seem to be happy with where they live, but they also have many things that they would like to see improve about where they live, and their responses offer some excellent and detailed ideas as to how the area might be improved to better suit the needs of young people.

Figure 15: Are You Living Your Best Life in Shropshire?

Scale	Percentage
0=NOT AT ALL	5%
1	5%
2	15%
3	31%
4	31%
5 = COMPLETELY	14%

Very many thanks are extended to the 1,873 young people who took part in the survey that produced this report, as well as to the Youth Support Team who worked tirelessly to ensure that the voices of as many young people as possible were heard as part of this research. Their extensive efforts to ensure survey uptake should be a model for other teams looking to achieve the kind of engagement that this survey yielded.

This report provides valuable insights into the needs and opinions of young people in the county. The survey results show that while a majority of respondents feel that there are enough opportunities in their area, a significant minority do not. Additionally, the survey highlights the need for better awareness of available youth services and the importance of providing accessible and affordable facilities and activities for young people.

By listening to the voices of young people and taking their feedback into account, the Youth Support Team can continue to improve their services and support the personal, social, and educational development of young people in the county.

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