



**Your next generation are talking,
are you listening?**



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Last but not least, our funder:



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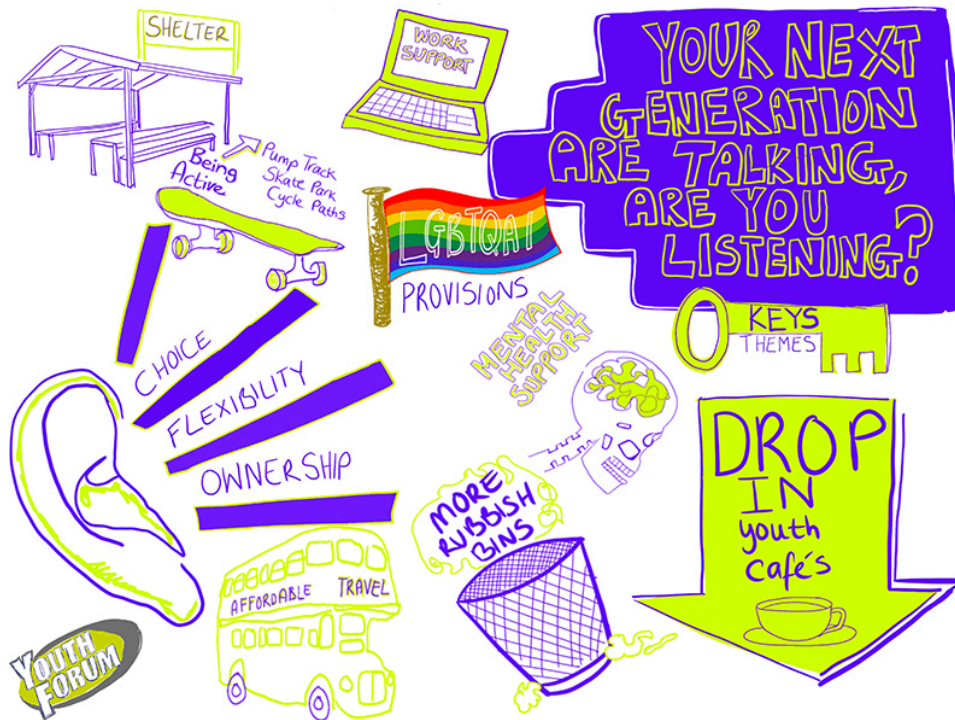
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Executive Summary

Between May and June 2021 South Shropshire Youth Network ran a consultation with young people aged 8 to 25 years. This report is meant to help voice young people's ideas about what they feel they need in their locality. We hope it will inform both youth work and youth activities. Organisations, Town and Parish Councils are welcome to contact SSYN to request the results for their specific catchment area.

This graphic recording and the results video sum it all up: www.ssyfn.net/ssyf



The biggest ask from young people was for somewhere to hang out outdoors or indoors. It's easy to forget for adults that young people quite often don't have anywhere to hang out with friends other than at home where they might be in the way. They are not allowed in pubs. They don't necessarily have the money to go to a cafe. You're not supposed to talk much in a library. When it rains there's more often than not no shelter. Friends don't always live in the vicinity and without frequent affordable buses, good cycling paths or access to a car, you might not see anyone outside school if you go to school.

During holidays and during a pandemic this can become problematic. Young people talk openly about needing support with their mental health and not just in a crisis. Youth work, including detached youth work, is ideally placed to do just that. A drop-in or youth café would also give older young people the ability to meet up with friends and meet new people independently, whereas youth clubs with organised activities suit the younger age range better.

Young people are worried about climate change, about having to move or get a car in order to find a job as there aren't enough local (part time) jobs for young people. Just as there is not enough local affordable and suitable housing for young people.

Young people ask for something to do where they live rurally: (informally) organised sports, open access to facilities, a skate park or pump track, maybe some outdoor gym equipment, cycling paths, craft & natter groups, an LGBTQI group outside of school and so on.

It may not be possible to have all these things available in every little village, but a well linked public transport system opens up opportunities in terms of social contact, activities, education, work placements and jobs. Public transport doesn't support young people's gaining their independence well enough. It means young people in rural areas are left behind, they don't have the same opportunities and are at a disadvantage.



Young people have many ideas for change, often very local solutions, sometimes connected to wider societal issues such as global warming. But they often feel helpless, they don't have the money or the power to change things. They are regularly seen as an annoyance, suspects or asking for too much.

Whereas young people are up for helping out with maintenance or improving of facilities, fundraising, litter picking and so on. There needs to be more dialogue; proper listening; giving young people a real say in what happens around them - taking them seriously, giving them agency.

If you're ready to look for solutions and not barriers, contact SSYN or SSYF.

Introduction

This report is meant to help voice young people's ideas about what they feel they need in their locality and to get commitment from organisations, Town and Parish councils to pick up on it and implement some (or all!) of what young people want, need, like. We hope it will inform commissioning of both youth work and youth activities and to that purpose we have included a short chapter on commissioning.

In this report, we pull together different strands of consultation - surveys, focus groups, interviews, detached conversations - that were run by SSYF, Hereford Diocese and The Bridge Youth Centre in Bridgnorth over a period of more than a year. Some of these consultations have been reported on in the localities before, but we felt that drawing them together gives quite a rounded picture of what is important to young people aged 8 to 25 years in south Shropshire.

The consultation was part of a project plan that had been written before the longer term effects of the Covid19 pandemic became clear. Even though we changed our plans, we were still hampered to a degree along the way by Covid and bad weather impacting on detached conversations. Nonetheless we're pleased with the results we did get.

The results were presented at two online conference events in July 2021. Young people were part of these events, live and by pre-recorded video. Some of what was said at the events has been integrated into this report. Since then, we had another bunch of surveys come in, so the numbers quoted in this report are slightly different from those quoted at the conference and in the results video (www.ssyf.net/ssyn). The main messages remain the same.

Nationally there have been quite a few surveys of young people recently, but as far as we are aware none of those put out data at local south Shropshire level - ours does. Towns that had quite a lot of results, we give particular attention to. Town or Parish Councils and other organisations are welcome to contact SSYN to request the results for their specific catchment area.

Mind that this consultation was not meant as a scientific study¹. It's meant to get a feel of what young people would like, need, want in their locality - seeing what they find important. It's about starting a conversation, finding out why these things are important to young people. In this report, you can find direct quotes from them in purple, in screen grabs, drawings and a word cloud.

Paraphrasing Tony Morris-Eyton, High Sheriff of Shropshire, at our conference:

**Not all of this is new, but if it's not new...why hasn't it happened yet?
Start a dialogue, listen, look for solutions, not problems.**

¹ We didn't set out to have a representative sample of respondents for the whole of south Shropshire. Using online sample calculators and very roughly estimating the population of young people between the ages of 8-25 in south Shropshire between 14-19k we would have needed at least double the number of returned surveys. So please, don't extrapolate to the whole young population of south Shropshire.

1 Running the consultation & conference

There were several strands to the consultation: surveys, focus groups, detached conversations and even some interviews. To maximise young people's input from early on, young people were involved in the first draft of the marketing materials and the actual survey questions.



We decided on a simple **survey** with not too many questions to be attractive and accessible for all ages between 8 to 25 years old. We didn't have the resources to put out multiple surveys for different age brackets. The survey was available online as a Google form and in Pdf to print (see Appendix A). We sent the survey out via the South Shropshire Youth Network members, newsletters, social and printed media. We also contacted some schools, but most were too busy dealing with ever changing Covid restrictions to engage. We found that it took someone locally with close contacts to get a school to engage. Which is exactly what happened with Bishop's Castle Community College which returned many surveys.

Concurrently, we asked SSYN members to run **focus groups**. We ran 4 focus groups in total. We did less than we had hoped for. It would seem that organisations are reluctant to organise them. Organisations that did organise focus groups were enthusiastic about the results.

Hereford Diocese ran a pilot online focus group to test our crib sheet and organisation of safeguarding processes and consent forms. We'd anticipated that running a focus group with young people that hadn't met before, might not work and similarly a focus group containing disparate ages we thought might be a problem. The pilot proved us wrong. It worked even with young people that didn't know one another. The young people involved were interested in each other's opinions and discussion was sparked between ages. They all engaged, shared, and fed back that they had enjoyed it. They liked hearing other people's views and liked talking about these subjects. Perhaps not being in a peer group sparked more discussion as not everyone agreed all the time.

It seems Zoom works well for this kind of exercise. Young people said it was nice to meet people from other places as they don't necessarily get to do that normally. It was quite a supportive experience for them, and one person decided to join the online youth group

Hereford Diocese run - an instant positive outcome. The pilot went so well that the results are included in this report.

The Bridge Youth Centre ran two small face to face focus groups. Participants had passionate thoughts about the themes in the survey and they deliberated in their groups what were the most important topics. The Bridge also did a couple of short video recorded interviews.

We'd hoped to have the groups focus in on particular themes that came out of the survey, but when we started it seemed more important for the young people to first work through the survey itself. So, in the end we had only one session focusing on a particular theme: Racism. More sessions are planned that couldn't fit in our time frame. There's one in the pipeline for young people interested in LGBTQI issues and one in Church Stretton.

South Shropshire Youth Forum took on the **detached conversations** strand of the consultation using the survey to start conversations in streets and squares in several towns. They went to Ludlow for several weeks in May-June 2021 talking to about 25 young people. As part of a commission by Bishop's Castle Town Council, they ran a detached consultation there between April-July 2021. Not all the results were available to include in this report yet.

SSYF had also planned to pick up on work previously done - at the end of 2019 and beginning of 2020 with the Craven Arms Muslim Youth group - during the consultation period. Due to the Covid pandemic this piece of work went differently from planned. We have included some of the results of the earlier work in the body of this report, see also Appendix B.

Other earlier work by SSYF that we've included are:

- the 8 weeks detached consultation between November 2020 and March 2021 in Cleobury Mortimer talking to 42 young people.
- a detached consultation early December 2020 in Craven Arms using a very simple Covid survey. The results of the last one are in such a different format, we haven't included them in the main body of this report, but you can find them in Appendix C.



The **Youth Conference** was an integral part of the consultation, not only to put the message out about what young people would like / want / need, but also to hear more from them in their own words. Young people were part of these events live and by pre-recorded video.

We decided to take the conference online only, considering rurality (time & cost of travel), accessibility, youth engagement (happy & easy to engage online), not reliant on the Covid roadmap or people feeling safe to come. It also gave us the ability to have more than one event and use a different format and reach different audiences on different times of day.

The first event was aimed at organisations, Town & Parish Councils and was held in the early evening so that young people could join in. Out of 30 signed up, 17 attended of which two were under 25. It had the format of a zoom meeting with break out rooms. We showed clips of the results video that was in the making and participants engaged in discussions.



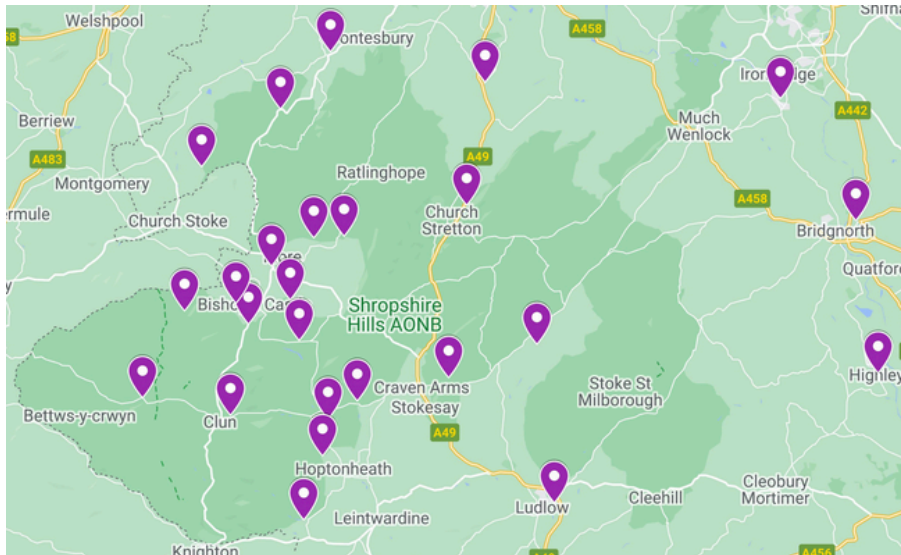
Of the 29 registered for the second event, 24 attended of which 3 were under 25 – 4 young people let us know they had to give it a miss due to (Covid) circumstances). It was interesting to see that the format we chose for our second conference event had quite an impact on the audience. We had made it into a Zoom webinar where the audience could see and hear the panel with young people, but they could only interact by putting messages into the chat. We'd put that barrier in place partly for safeguarding purposes and partly because we didn't want adults hogging the speaking time. Some audience members said they had to get used to the format. Others described feeling quite helpless and felt they couldn't get their point across. As we shall see further on in this report, that's exactly what a lot of young people experience: it's not easy for them to make themselves heard; they don't get answers to questions; they're not important enough. Adults are so used to being listened to and taking centre stage that we felt this format was an eye opener that should be repeated. As well as the results video, an edited recording of the second conference event will be available online (www.ssyf.net/ssyn) soon.

At the second event, we showed the whole results video in clips to spark conversation, which worked well and gave the panel some breathing time. For both events we had one person there solely for the technical support and we ran a practice session to make sure all the organisers were on the same page. Consequently, we've had positive feedback on the organisation of the events.

Young people's input during the consultation and conference was celebrated at the second conference event and all young people that had done more than just fill out the survey were presented with a voucher to say thank you.

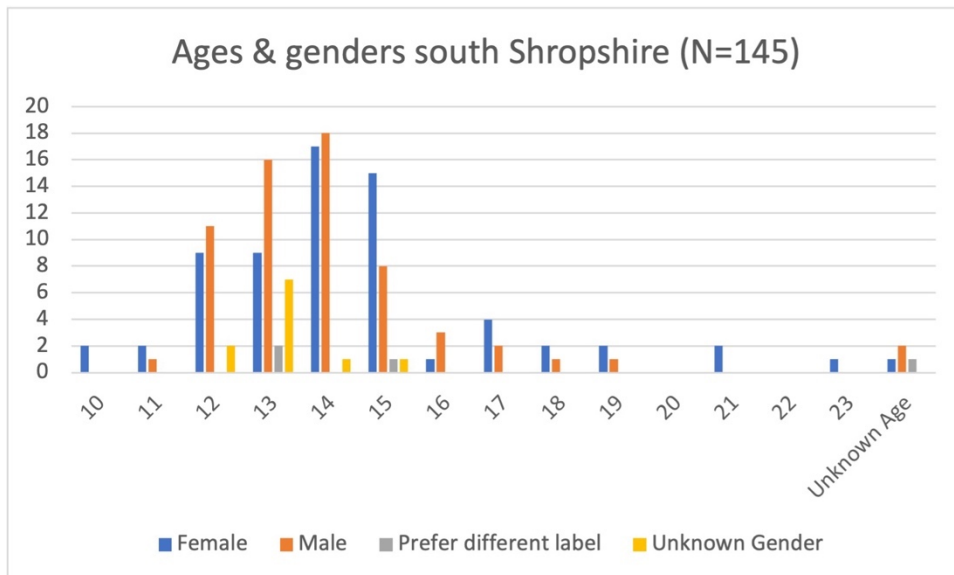
1.1 Respondents

We had 214 filled out and usable surveys – 69 of which came from young people that don't live in south Shropshire², but almost all of them do go to school there. We have a relatively good spread over the area, but clearly have more respondents in the southwest:



200 young people filled out their gender, which showed a good balance: 97 identify as female, 90 as male. Thirteen people filled out that they are Trans / non-Binary / preferred a different description of gender. Fourteen didn't fill out their gender.

Their ages range between 10 and 23, but the majority (184) are 12 to 15 years old.



² We chose to take a broad view on the geographical location of south Shropshire – including all communities up to the A458 and the A5 barriers including the sliver of Shropshire just over the M54 up past Shifnal.

We didn't keep a record of the location, age or gender of young people that participated in all the detached conversations or focus groups, but we do know there is quite some overlap between the respondents of the survey and the detached conversations, and between the focus groups and the survey.

2 Results per theme

In the survey, young people were asked to pick the five topics that most interested them out of 29 topics. Not everyone kept to the total of 5, but no one chose an inordinate number. Mind that if young people haven't chosen a topic, that doesn't necessarily mean it's not interesting to them. Some of the surveys showed quite some deliberation with ticking and crossing out and re-ticking. In addition, young people might find something very important, but it's already available in their locality, so there wasn't any need to choose it. They were also given the opportunity to come up with their own ideas.

The theme most picked overall was *Space*. In the table below you can see that out of 145 young people from south Shropshire, 118 picked one or more topics within the theme *Space*. Amongst female respondents the themes *Living, working & studying* and *Space* are almost equally important.

South Shropshire N=145	Number of respondents picking a theme	Number of topics picked within a theme
Environment	58	72
Space	118	209
Clubs / Groups	53	54
Having your say	57	63
Travel	70	81
Living, Working & Studying	86	117
Body & Mind	67	69

2.1 Space

Within this theme *Somewhere to hang out outdoors* is the most popular with both female and male young people. Often in the *own ideas section* - which will come to later - a **youth shelter** is mentioned.

**“Better youth shelter
(there is only one place to go)”**

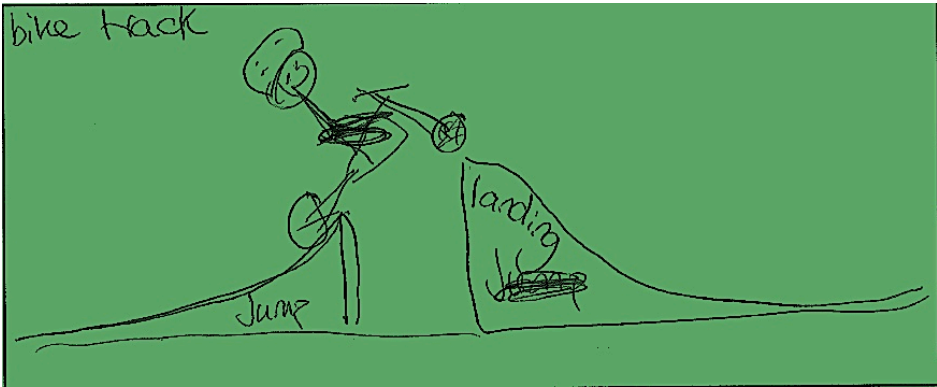
Skate parks and *Bicycle (stunt) tracks* are also popular. 18 times young people chose both a skate park and a bicycle (stunt) track. Pump tracks³ are mentioned 10 times by young people

³ Definition from Wikipedia: ‘A **pump track** is a circuit of rollers, banked turns and features designed to be ridden completely by riders "pumping"—generating momentum by up and down body movements, instead of pedaling or pushing. It was originally designed for the mountain bike and BMX scene, and now, due to concrete constructions, is also used by skateboard, and accessible to wheelchairs. Pump tracks are relatively simple to use and cheap to construct, and cater to a wide variety of rider skill levels.’

in their *own ideas*. Although there are some young women that find these different facilities important, the huge majority are male.

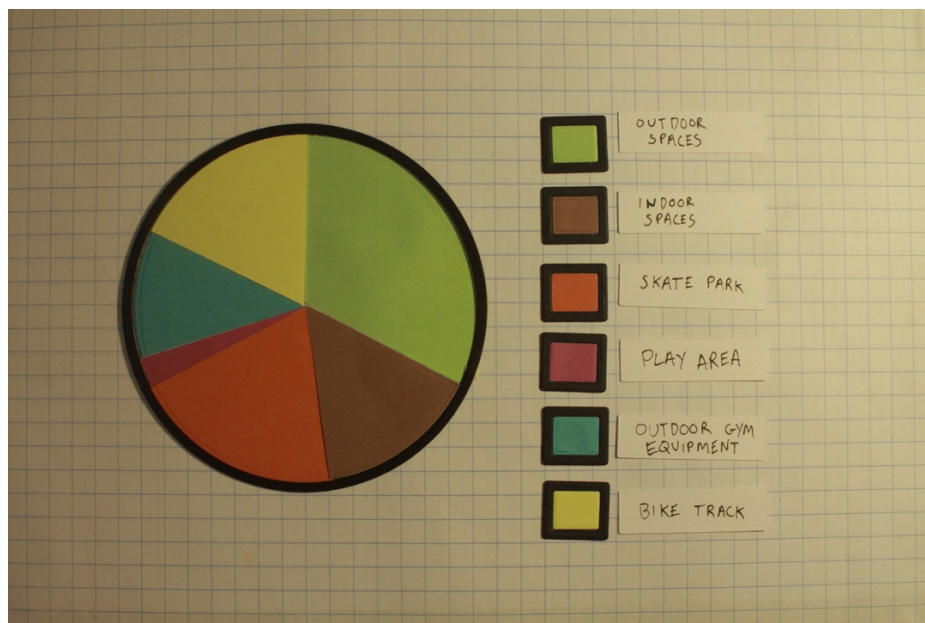
	Number of times chosen
South Shropshire N=118	
Somewhere to hang out outdoors	65
Somewhere to hang out indoors	29
Skate park	42
Bicycle (stunt) tracks	36
Play area	9
Outdoor gym equipment	28
Total	209

If your organisation, Town or Parish Council is thinking about trying to put something in place, do work out with young people in your locality whether you're talking about the same thing – definitions of tracks matter and you might find a pump track satisfies more people although it might not be their first choice.



Quite often young people make comments about repairing existing facilities such as skate parks or pump tracks, improving them by installing lights, bins, new ramps. They also talk about maintenance, they offer help; they ask for a broom and a bin to keep the place tidy.

During detached conversations in Bishop's Castle young people were keen to see the skatepark improved and seemed to have some good ideas on what they'd like. We found ourselves that the shelter in the skate park under the balcony is not very waterproof. They would be pleased to have lighting in the skate park, and we talked about options. They were very keen to work with us to look at improving the skate park. We gave them some idea of costs. There was a lot of interest in accessing a space where young people could DJ and maybe put on events to raise money for the skate park. They seemed to be interested in working with someone to get a plan organised and were interested in talking to the Town Council.



Outdoor gym equipment although less popular than the other facilities, might at least be a compromise for those young people that are asking for indoor Youth Gyms (for instance 4 young males from Craven Arms) and there's more of a balance in interest from the different genders. Twelve people asked for outdoor gym equipment in Bishop's Castle and 8 in Clun.

Somewhere to hang indoors Picked 29 times is also of equal interest to both female and male young people. In their *own ideas* section, a drop in or youth café is specifically mentioned 7 times. In Bishop's Castle 12 people and in Craven Arms 8 people asked for somewhere to hang indoors. From detached conversations in Cleobury Mortimer, we learned that young people there quite liked the idea of a youth cafe and they thought that the Social Club would be an ideal location.



~

Youth Clubs don't necessarily have the same function as a drop in or Youth Cafe. Youth Clubs often run a session at a particular time and that doesn't necessarily fit with what young people would like or need. Our assumption is that when young people picked *Somewhere to*

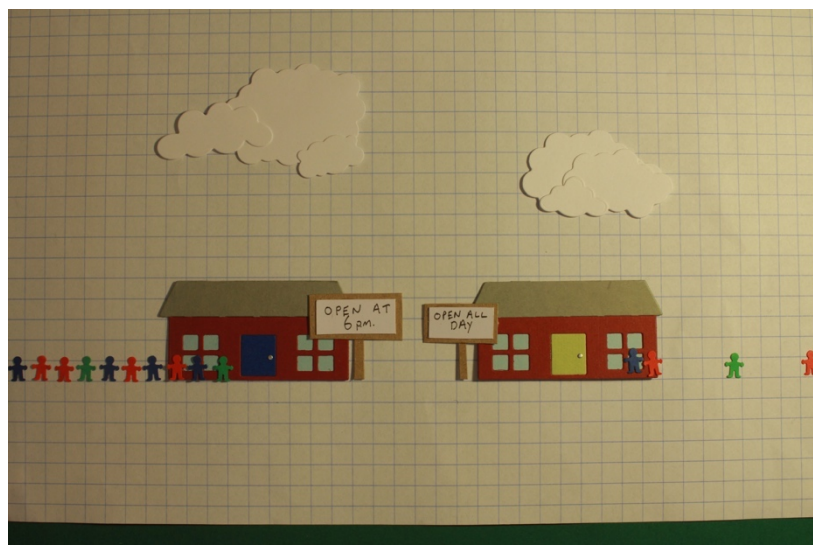
hang out indoors, they meant something more like a drop-in or youth café. A Youth Club was only mentioned once in the *Own ideas* section.

“Place to play in a band”



Youth clubs with set activities are more suitable for the younger age groups (up to 13ish), whereas drop-ins appeal more to the older young people. At a youth club, activities are organised, as well as the specific timing there are many rules and there’s often a crowd of young people. A drop-in has more potential for one-to-one conversations with a youth worker.

Young people commented that youth clubs helped boost their confidence and gave them the opportunity to meet new people when they were younger. For the older young people, it’s important to have somewhere indoors to hang out with friends, somewhere that is flexible that they can use as when they want or need it.



From SSYF’s experience, informal youth drop-in facilities have worked extremely well in both Ludlow and Craven Arms. Young people helped to plan, organise and maintain them. As part of their detached youth work, football sessions used to be delivered in Craven Arms before the weekly opening of the youth café. Unfortunately, SSYF can’t run a drop in over the winter period in Ludlow, but they are hoping to have an outside drop-in. In Craven Arms, SSYF is looking at options.

If your organisation, Town or Parish Council is considering setting up an indoor space, note that the costs of running a youth club are often higher than those of a drop-in and a drop-in can cater for a wider age range. You might well want to use drop-in facilities yourself to stay in touch with young people in your locale. Other services might want to do the same, but be careful the drop-in isn’t overrun by staff from services.

Here are the *Space* results of the localities that returned a larger number of surveys:

	Bishop’s Castle	Bridgnorth	Clun	Craven Arms	Ludlow
Surveys per locale	48	8	22	13	14
Somewhere to hang out outdoors	38%	38%	41%	46%	93%
Somewhere to hang out indoors	25%	13%	9%	62%	7%
Skate park	38%	13%	41%	46%	21%
Bicycle (stunt) tracks	35%	13%	18%	23%	29%
Play area	4%	0%	5%	15%	0%
Outdoor gym equipment	25%	13%	36%	0%	7%

In this table you can see that 62% of the 22 respondents from Craven Arms picked the topic *Somewhere to hang out indoors*.

The score for *Somewhere to hang out outdoors* in Ludlow is most likely related to the mobile youth shelter that was damaged over time and got taken down during lockdown without being replaced. As part of their detached youth work SSYF is working with local young people who have put together a petition to approach the Town Council to reinstate a youth shelter. In Craven Arms the ramps of the skate park were inspected for repair a while ago and were taken down and scrapped. From detached conversations it is very clear that these are hot topics for local young people in Ludlow and Craven Arms. The Craven Arms pump track is now tarmacked and will officially be opening in October 2021.

As a result of our online conference, Bishop’s Castle Town Council have already reserved money towards a youth shelter and a local resident is donating a bench to the skate park. They are also looking into setting up a youth forum for their Council.

The topic *play area* is least picked - probably because we didn’t reach many children under the age of 12. In one of the focus groups, peaceful places were asked for and parks for different ages. In the *Own ideas section*, parks were mentioned too.

2.2 Clubs / Groups

The survey asked specifically what young people would like where they *live*, but it might well be that they would be keen to join *clubs / groups* where they go to school or even in school. Sometimes that fits better in the day, or they might be more likely to meet their school friends there. So, the following figures are for all the respondents not just those from south Shropshire.

	Number of times chosen (south Shropshire N=53)	Number of times chosen (Including Elsewhere)
Guides / Beavers / Scout group	3	5
Craft club where you get to make things	15	20
LGBTQI group	8	23
Organised sports	28	39
Total	54	87

Organised sports are most popular within this theme and ties in with the quest to become more fit (more about this later). These are the sports mentioned most: Basketball (5x), Badminton (3x), Football (10x including Girls Football 2x), Rounders (3x), Netball (3x). During detached conversations in Bishop's Castle young people said it would be good if there were sports like volleyball or basketball organised in the Sparc leisure centre, so they could access the space.

In Cleobury Mortimer, the most obvious need expressed by young people was for somewhere to go. In the past, some of them had accessed St Mary's Youth group, but some had been excluded from sessions or weren't interested in going anymore. SSYF engaged with a very visible and quite large group of young males in Cleobury. This group often met up to play football and to go on mountain bike rides. They were very interested in informal/open access supervised football sessions. They were also interested in opportunities to find out and try different places and trails for mountain biking and down hilling.

In Craven Arms, the Muslim Youth Group made activities for girls (at the Craven Arms Community Centre) one of their priorities because there weren't many opportunities for girls to play sports.

Just as in the detached sessions, young people asked for open access to facilities in the focus groups and at the conference. On the other hand, someone commented that for instance open access to tennis courts is of no use if there's no-one of your age to play with. Which is where *organised sports* come into play. However, the cost of organised sports (membership, kit) could be a barrier for some. Informally organised sports might be a solution. Some young people already ask for that in the *Own ideas section*, for instance the opportunity to access football fields for free or an occasional game of rounders. As said, SSYF has organised informal Friday night games of football in Craven Arms, and it has worked well. Sometimes it's only a question of a small amount of funding needed to access a football ground. So, there's organisation needed, but the actual team can be quite informal with young people dropping in and out. Informally organised sports where you're not expected to pay a fee or have certain kit.

Here's a screen grab of a white board used during a focus group when they were talking about *Clubs and groups*:

LGBTQI Groups needed around
Shrewsbury - needed locally.

Groups on how to stop racism

Craft and natter

Farmers/equestrians to meet
up

Riding for the blind/disabled
people

In that focus group the comment was made that there are craft groups around, but that those are mainly for older people. Younger people don't feel welcome. A *Craft Club* is another activity that should be quite easy to organise and has benefits beyond opening doors to new interests and learning a craft skill. One older young person mentioned how important – especially because of the pandemic – it is to see one another face to face and to have a (safe) space for a natter.

“Craft and chat group”

With craft clubs, it's important to know which age group you are catering for and talking to young people to hear what they would like. With older young people, it doesn't really seem to matter which crafts are concentrated on. It's about there not being any rules, or strict arrival time. You just turn up with your own craft project. It's about being creative, having a natter and physically gathering with people your own age (and potentially older people) when there aren't many around where you live rurally. This could combine well with a Youth Drop-in. Craft Clubs might be more popular with female young people than male.

There would seem to be some scope for an *LGBTQI group* in south Shropshire either online or face to face outside of school. At the moment, XYZ – a Shropshire Youth Association run LGBTQI group – only has sessions in Shrewsbury and Telford. Schools quite often have an LGBTQI group, but not all and there are drawbacks. In Bishop's Castle for instance there was less or no activity for quite a while because of the pandemic.



For some young people, school is not the most comfortable place to explore these topics. Sometimes it's easier to first come out away from home or school or people that already know you. The number of young people in a school that are out can also be low and someone may not want to be involved in the school group for whatever reason. It's less limiting if there's also an LGBTQI group to join outside of school which could include those not in school at all.

2.3 Travel

The biggest ask within this theme was for *more buses to town* wherever that town maybe. Of the places that returned larger numbers of surveys this was specifically mentioned relatively often in Bishop's Castle (14x) and Clun (10x).



How to get around was a topic that was explored quite in-depth during focus groups and the second conference events. Young people commented on the infrequency of bus services to and from their rural locations. There wasn't much flexibility about when to go or where to go. If you wanted to go to town to meet friends, you might have to go in the morning and wait around for them. They commented on having to change buses to go for longer distances, which sometimes made travel nigh on impossible. In urban areas buses go every 10 minutes, but if you miss the bus in a rural location you may have to wait one or two hours if not more.

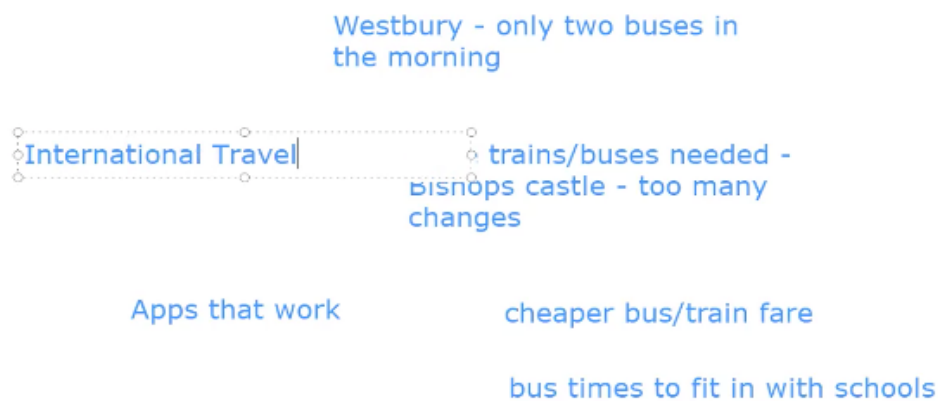
“Affordable transport - affordable buses & more buses (like every 2 hours)”

South Shropshire N=70	Number of times chosen
More buses to town	35
Trains in the evening	8
Cycling paths	27
International exchange trips	11
Total	81

In one focus group young people were quite clear on how there’s a divide between those who have access to a car and those who don’t - mostly because of age, but money can be an issue too. Rural places don’t always have many young people of the same age. Sometimes there are no friends from school in the vicinity. At the second conference, we talked about how young people are dependent on adults to take them places and that it limits them in their growing up and becoming independent. You get to an age where you don’t want your parents to drop you off. Meeting up with friends that are further away becomes far easier when you have access to a car or a frequent bus. Young people in focus groups and at the conference also commented on the cost of public transport which is much lower in urban areas.

“If you miss the bus to school, it’s way too expensive to take the train.”

Here’s a screen grab of a whiteboard used during a zoom focus group:



“Places to go on our bikes”

Quite a number of young people in south Shropshire chose *Cycling paths* as important. In focus groups they were mentioned as an independent way to visit friends a bit further away. We think this is of interest to leisure organisations and groups working on Climate Action plans. And of course, – especially combined with the already mentioned quest to become more fit – for Public Health. It’s a win-win situation: young people get something they like,

freedom of movement, and at the same time they get more exercise which will be good for their health and mental health. It might even be an idea to link cycling paths up with mountain bike trails.

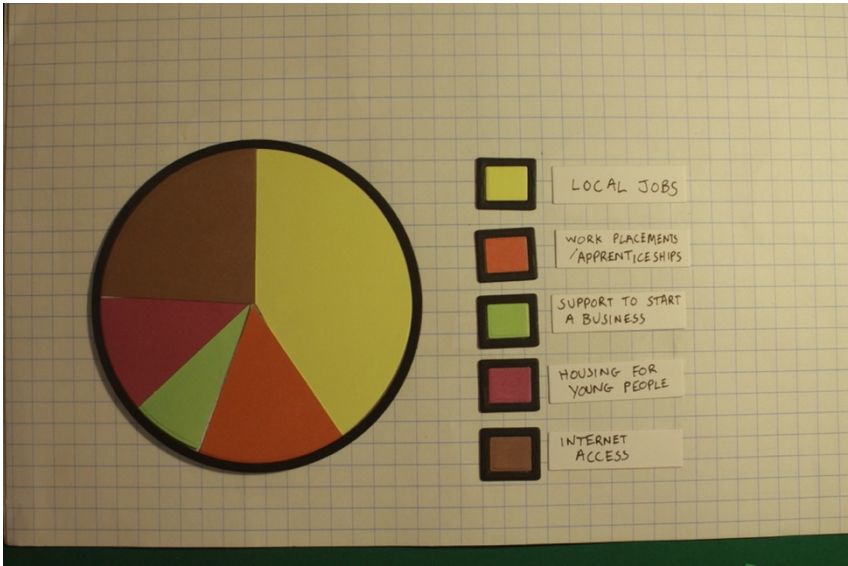
The attention for *Cycling paths* perhaps has connotations for the new Shropshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan which in south Shropshire focuses on Bridgnorth and Ludlow as well as the 'key urban connections' between areas and neighbouring districts. In our survey 8 young people from Bishop's Castle and another 5 from Clun asked for cycling paths. Five young people from Bridgnorth asked for them too, but no-one from Ludlow mentioned them. In Bishop's Castle there was a request for a place to repair bikes. We've been told Enterprise House is following this up already.



In focus groups *Travel* was quite often mentioned in conjunction with getting a job which brings us to the next theme.

2.4 Living, working & studying

Although *Space* was the theme picked most often, this one does have a total of 117 hits from 86 young people living in south Shropshire - well over half the respondents.



“Local part time jobs for young people”

Local jobs for young people is the most picked (52x) by young people in south Shropshire. If you put that together with *Work placements / Apprenticeships* (17x), and *Support to set up my own business* (7x) than work is a major theme for 61 young people⁴, almost half of the respondents. Interestingly, it’s already deemed important at a young age: 39% of young people between the ages of 12-14 have ticked this. Going up to 55% 15 and 23 years old.

“Jobs for younger people - getting to places is difficult (no trains)”

Of the places that returned larger numbers of surveys *Local jobs for young people* was specifically mentioned relatively often in Bishop’s Castle (13x), Clun (9x) and Ludlow (10x). In focus groups and at the conference the issue was around part time jobs and having to travel or move away to find a job.

“More training opportunities”



Housing for young people seemed more of a topic during focus groups than in the survey – probably because of the most reached age group. The cost of housing in combination with low wages and there not being enough houses suitable for single households were mentioned. During a detached conversation with 4 young people in Bishop’s Castle SSYF talked about their views on what should be the priorities for young people in the town. The boys talked about housing and employment, and both seemed keen to stay in the town but were worried they may have to move away. One was soon to move to Church Stretton as it was cheaper to rent places over there.

“New houses aren't affordable”

⁴ Remember: they could choose more than 1 item within a topic.

Better internet access (28 respondents chose this) could mean better mobile signal, wifi or higher speeds, but it could also mean access to free internet in libraries, cafes and so on. It is a subject most mentioned in Bishop’s Castle (10x) and Clun (7x). From our detached work, we know there are pockets of young people that don’t have access to the internet. Either because they don’t have data / subscription or because they don’t have a device. SSYF has helped several young people from Craven Arms to access devices so they could join in Church Stretton school during the pandemic.

2.5 Environment

In the survey this topic was chosen less times than one might have expected. However, in focus groups, interviews and during the conference young people talked about their appreciation of the natural environment in Shropshire. They enthused about the fresh air, wildlife, space, and unpolluted nature of the countryside. On the other hand, they talked about how sometimes not enough is done with the available space. A village hall with just some grass around it, where there could have been hedges and wildflowers.

South Shropshire N=58	Number of times chosen
Working together against climate change	23
Doing a litter pick	20
Looking after the environment	20
Help in growing my own fruit & veg	9
Total	72

“More bins in skate park”

In focus groups and at the second conference event it became quite clear that climate change is on young people’s minds. When talking about the difficulty of finding a job where they live and the feeling that they will not be able to do without a car, they bring up the negative environmental aspect. They say public transport is so expensive that it’s cheaper and more flexible to run your own car, but that car ownership has a negative effect on global warming. In a way, they display ‘climate guilt’.



In one focus group young people also felt that older people around them weren't necessarily doing much about climate change or towards the environment. A lot more could be done locally; it needs teamwork.

“I know how we would stop climate change, but we don't do it in our community.”

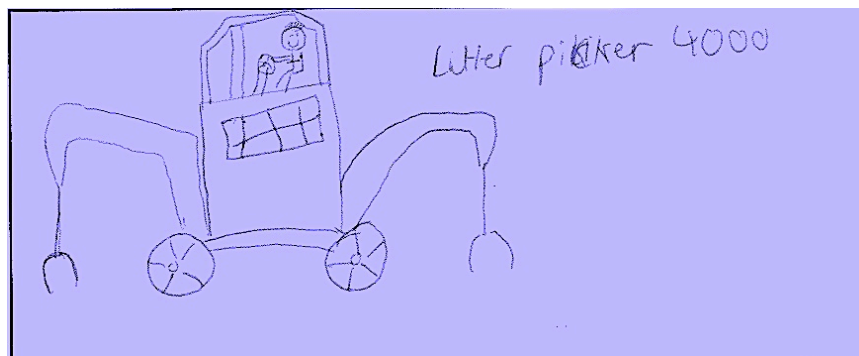
Here's a screen grab of the whiteboard used during a zoom focus group showing several the activities mentioned:



Litter picking came up a several times in detached conversations too. Apart from obvious outcomes such as combatting plastic pollution, helping wildlife, and changing attitudes around single use plastic, *Litter picking* can be good for mental and physical health, making new friends and connections within peer groups and across age boundaries.

“Littering is a problem”

For the Muslim Youth Group in Craven Arms littering was linked to smoking (cigarette butts) and they were asking for more bins and less littering.



During detached conversations in Bishop's Castle young people said that they struggled to find something to do in town, that they just wandered around a lot. They specifically mentioned they didn't feel welcome around the Wintles woodland and the allotments that

had taken over the space of the old bike trails. They gave the impression that they would have helped to maintain the bike trails if they had still existed. There might be an opportunity in getting young people from the wider area involved in the management of the woodland and allotments. This is something that would benefit the residents and would also help young people to understand how the land is being managed and it would provide a link between the two, potentially improving relations.

Shropshire Wildlife Trust in particular the Ludlow branch, Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Grow Cook Learn and South Shropshire Climate Action Group are all keen to engage with young people on environment and climate change issues.

2.6 Body & Mind

This theme is picked by 67 respondents from south Shropshire. With all items picked between 20 and 27 times.



Support with my mental health is mentioned 12 times by young women and 5 times by young men, but there are 5 young people of which we don't know the gender so there may not be a gender difference there. In focus groups young people talked openly about needing support with their mental health and not just in a crisis. They were concerned that it can take months to access the services they needed.

“More accessible mental health services for young people”

The comment was made that sometimes young people are scared to access national services like the Samaritans because they think it's only for crisis moments. They were asking for something that is sort of smaller scale, more local, available to everyone and not branded as a crisis service. Something that is accessible when you're not in a crisis. They suggested making more use of online resources and chat groups.

In the focus group on Racism, the participants unanimously felt that the world and their communities were getting worse, with the death of George Floyd, stabbings and Covid being examples of this. This is echoed by The Bridge youth worker who says: ‘Kids are coming out of the pandemic feeling that the world is a frightening place.’ Although they expressed concern and fear about the future, yet they felt there was hope if people worked to change things. The local neighborhood could be better if we change the way we act and make the right decisions on what we want to do and get support. They talked about the importance of access to counselling and support services.

These are not young people in crisis, but they could do with some support with these feelings; support in how to handle issues that are hot in the media and how to translate them to things one can do oneself (and together), might help with their fears for the future. The Muslim Youth Group in Craven Arms seems to echo this – making ‘wider global issues’ one of their priorities and to show that they care by raising money and making links to people or groups in need.

“Support with my mental health outside of school”

During the detached consultation in Bishop’s Castle, there was an in-depth discussion about mental health support. Confidentiality was young people’s biggest concern: confiding in adults (teachers) only for them to tell their parents. In one focus group there was interest in meeting up with other young people with the same (mental) health problems, maybe going on a day trip together. There was also a request to be more inclusive of young people with health issues when organising activities, for instance to make sure that if there was a high intensity activity there was also something to do for individuals with breathing issues.



Getting more fit is more of a thing with young men (17 out of 27 that ticked this issue) whereas there’s not much gender difference on the topic *Learning to cook / eat healthy*. With both these last topics we need to bear in mind that a focus on them can turn out both positive and negative for mental health. Too much of a focus on keeping fit or eating in a certain way can lead to excess, to comparing oneself to others and finding yourself lacking. Some support along the way might be beneficial. In one focus group there was some interest in joining clubs where you get to cook together.

2.7 Having your say

84 out of 214 respondents chose one or more of the items in this theme. What spoke most loudly was their call *to be taken seriously by older people* (42x), followed by *Having more say in what happens where I live* (30x).



Here are the results for south Shropshire:

South Shropshire N=57	Number of times chosen
To be taken seriously by older people	25
More say in what happens where I live	27
Doing something about racism	11
Total	63

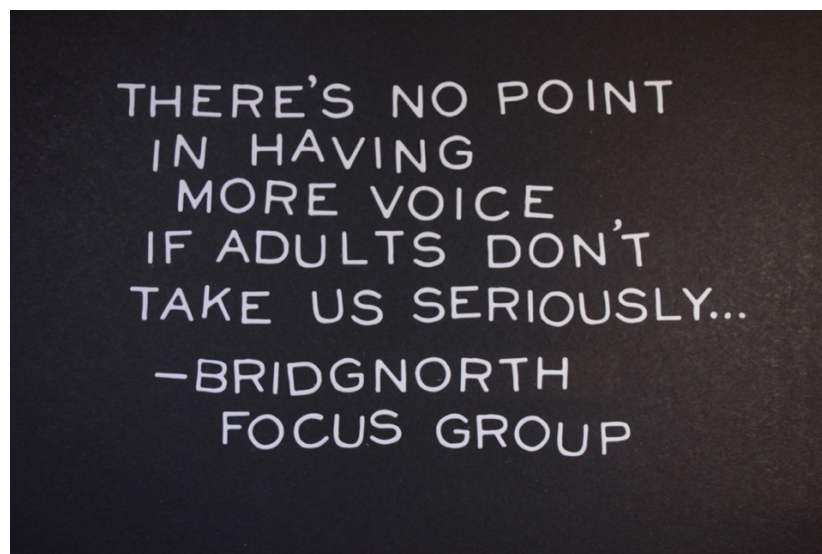
Doing something about racism was important enough for 20 young people out of 214 to choose. When asked to score the most negative influences in their life, the Muslim Youth Group in Craven Arms, ranked racism as the highest followed by bullying. Beginning of 2020 they made Community Cohesion one of their priorities and actioned it by organising an event bringing people together involving Asian street food, fundraising for people in need. It was a big success, but unfortunately Covid meant the process stalled after that.

In our pilot focus group, young people said we should *do something about racism*. At the time, this wasn't included the *Having your say* section of the survey – we amended the survey accordingly and organised a focus group around racism with the same respondents. Potentially due to the makeup of that group, the focus at the event shifted very quickly towards bullying in general, with which they seemed to have more experience. However,

they did share how important it was not be ignorant and to learn more about issues such as racism and bullying.

In the *Own ideas section*, several people put comments such as: 'older people don't show us enough respect', 'older people stop kids having fun'. During detached conversations in Cleobury Mortimer, young people expressed they felt as if the wider community didn't care about their age group and that their opinions weren't listened to. During the period we were working in Cleobury, there were social media posts by members of the public who were photographing young people, accusing certain young people of anti-social behaviour and sharing those posts. Overall, young people in Cleobury we worked with felt that they were misunderstood or that the actions of one or two gave a bad impression of their age group.

In training by West Mercia Police on County Lines and adverse childhood experiences recently, it was mentioned how there doesn't seem to be as much tolerance of what young people do being young. They are seen as suspects or an annoyance. As one of the youth workers at the first conference event put it with reference to the current pandemic: 'Compare the worlds of adults and young people. Both have a need to meet up and mostly had to do so outdoors. Whereas it was seen as normal for adults to be sitting outside pubs and cafes, young people who gathered together outside were viewed with suspicion – yet they had an equal need to meet up.' The comments from young people vs the comments from older people seem to represent two sides of the same coin. Might some intergenerational work the solution to these issues?



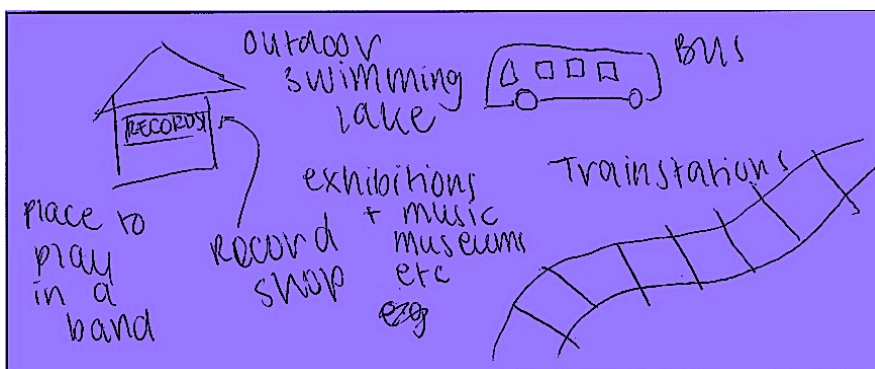
In the Bridgnorth focus groups, young people had quite a discussion about choosing between the topics of *Having more say in what happens where I live* and *Being taken seriously by older people*. They had the feeling that even if they could speak out, there was no point. How adults treated Greta Thunberg online and at some conferences was brought up as an example of this. They said very clearly that 'there's no point in having more voice if adult people don't take us seriously.'

“Young people feel helpless ... they have so many ideas to make the world a better place, but they don’t have a status, they can’t do anything about it. They don’t have the money or the power...”

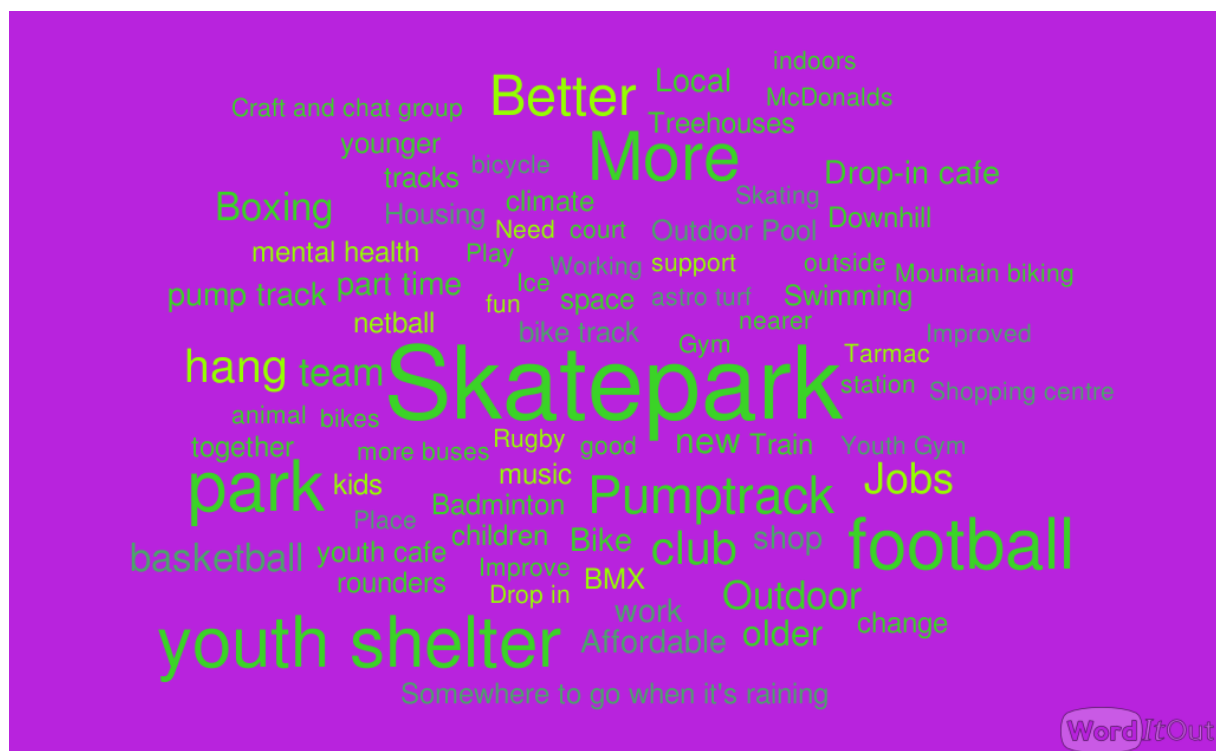
In Cleobury Mortimer, we met some young people who felt that youth’s opinions are underrepresented, some work could be done to help represent their views, especially with local decision makers maybe via a youth panel or forum. This could easily be incorporated into a drop-in facility and could give some structure and focus to sessions.

2.8 Own ideas

Out of 214 respondents 93 took the opportunity to jot some of their own ideas down in words or doodles.



We’ve included a lot of those ideas already in the text above, but to hit the point home this word cloud contains everything that was mentioned more than twice in *Own ideas*:



In *Own ideas section*, focus groups, detached conversations and with the Craven Arms Muslim Youth group, better shops or shopping centres and McDonalds came up several times. When presenting our preliminary results at a network meeting a first reaction to that was: 'but we can't do anything about that!' We think you can, for instance by improving access by improving travel options or transport links, subsidising bus travel and arranging cycling paths.

3 Commissioning Youth Work & Youth Activities

Not every activity organised for young people is youth work. However, as soon as for instance a sports organisation puts the wellbeing of their participants ahead of the sporting results and invest heavily in safeguarding and personal development, we feel it comes close to youth work.

Here's a definition of youth work: 'Youth work provides non-formal education that focuses on the personal and social development of participants. Uniquely, it does this through engagement with young people's culture and their community. Its asset-based approach develops the strengths of the individual and furthers the opportunities available to them. To provide a comprehensive eco-system of support and opportunity for young people, youth work needs to play a key role. Many young people engage in youth work because it feels different from school and is therefore capable of reaching individuals and communities who may not otherwise engage. Youth work is complementary to formal education, helping prevent the need for more costly intervention services for children and young people.' APPG on Youth Affairs, Youth Work Inquiry, Final Report, April 2019

Youth work taking place outside in streets & squares is called Detached Youth Work.

3.1 Detached youth work

SSYF has delivered detached youth work over the years in several places to engage young people in *their space* and *on their own terms*. It has been very successful in engaging young people, developing relationships and has achieved many outcomes in terms of reducing anti-social behaviour. Detached youth work operates without the use of a building or activity and takes place where young people "are at" both geographically and developmentally. It delivers informal and social education and addresses whatever needs are presented to or perceived by the youth worker. As detached youth workers have no physical building or specific activity over which they have power or control, the relationship between the young person and youth worker is entirely voluntary and constantly up for negotiation.

SSYF has found detached youth work works well as a preventative measure, supporting young people before they get to a crisis. It is also less costly than building based youth work.

3.2 Commissioning facilities

Earlier we wrote about the first reaction to young people's ask for a shopping centre. Another first reaction we got to preliminary results was: 'These things cost a lot of money and time. A pump track or skate park, it's all very difficult - we should concentrate on the small and easy things.' We would like to make a counter argument based on a personal experience of a small town of 1450 people in deep rural Wales where people got their heads together and organised a pump track within a year.

Originally, there was an ask of a group of young people for a pump track. Someone hooked them up with the Town Council. The Town Council then had some conversations, and a local landowner offered the lease of land. A group was set up of adults and young people to fundraise. The group were part of several community events to get donations and used that as match funding in a grant application. The grant was won, the pump track designed and built. The group organised a grand opening as a thank you to the community. Without meaning to, the young people's original ask and subsequent activity had an impact on community cohesion as well as achieving the facilities they wanted.

That social value makes it doubly worth putting effort into something that at first may seem daunting. Remember also, these things are not rocket science - they can be done. It's just that you need to make the decision that your young people are important enough to make that effort. Working together and a little help will get you there.

3.3 Commissioning mental health services

If your Town or Parish Council is considering commissioning mental health services for young people. Do have a look at the National Youth Association *Guide to commissioning outcome for young people*. The NYA highlights the potential of youth work as a less expensive option with a lot of merits: "The opportunity to use relational youth work to help young people with depression and anxiety are considerable. Youth work is a less expensive commission option that complements alternative therapies and acute services. For example, by encouraging young people to attend appointments. Youth work has also been used with great success to address many psychologically based issues, such as obesity, substance misuse, self-harming, eating disorders and other body image issues."

3.4 Support in commissioning

There is support available locally from Shropshire Council Youth Support Team and the South Shropshire Youth Network (a project run by SSYF). SSYN is a peer network of individuals (paid / unpaid) and voluntary & community organisations working with young people or interested in working with them in the future. Membership is free, as it's Shropshire Council funded, and brings you free infrastructure support, exchange of good practice, networking opportunities, partnership working, joint funding bids, access to training and more. Why not become a member and access free commissioning support?

We also recommend you have a look at the earlier mentioned NYA *Guide to commissioning outcomes for young people* and the Local government Association publication *Bright Futures; Our vision for youth services*, Chapter 5 on commissioning.

In this consultation report, we used only a towns' *direct* results, but of course your catchment area might be bigger. Do get in touch if you'd like some combined results. If your locality isn't mentioned in this report, this does not mean we don't have any results for it. We could perhaps make a word cloud of the ideas in your locality. Please do contact us to ask.

Another option to get a clearer picture is for instance to ask your local schools to send the survey out to all their pupils and discuss with us the options for analysis. Or you could use

our crib sheet and run your own focus group and perhaps SSYF can do a detached consultation in your locale.

We have noticed a lot of organisations are trying to set up their own youth panels. There's almost a bit of competition for the young people that are interested. We hear organisations are struggling to get enough young people on their panels to make them useful or worthwhile. If organisations are willing to make compromises, there might be scope for a south Shropshire wide youth panel that different organisations can access for different topics. Again, contact SSYN if you're interested.

Appendix A Survey

This is the printed version – the online version was the same but looked ‘flashier’.



Under 25? What would you like where you live?

Fill this out yourself or ask an adult to help you. Don't forget to ask your friends to do it too!

We've made 7 groups of ideas.

Choose the ideas you want most, 5 in total.

Or tell us your own idea?

Deadline Monday 21 June, but the earlier – the better

Your idea:

Environment

- Working together against climate change
- Doing a litter pick
- Looking after the environment
- Help in growing my own fruit & veg

Space

- Somewhere to hang out outdoors
- Somewhere to hang out indoors
- Skate park
- Bicycle (stunt) tracks
- Play area
- Outdoor gym equipment

Remember tick only 5 options in total.

Why 5? Because we want to know what you want most 😊

<p>Clubs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guides / Beavers / Scout group - Craft club where you get to make things - LGBTQI group - Organised sports, tell us which: 	<p>Having your say</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be taken seriously by older people - More say in what happens where I live - Doing something about racism
<p>Travel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More buses to town - Trains in the evening - Cycling paths - International exchange trips 	<p>Living working & studying</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better internet access - Local jobs for young people - Housing for young people - Work placements / Apprenticeships - Support to set up my own business
<p>Body & mind</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support with my mental health - Getting more fit - Learning to cook / eat healthy 	

Where do you live? Just put the name of the nearest village or town:

How old are you?

(If you're an adult helping to fill this out, please put the young person's age.)

Are you (Fill out what you feel.)

Female **Trans** **Non-binary** **Male**

I like a different description **I don't want to say**

Thank you!

What happens now?

We'll add everyone's answers up.

Then we'll tell as many people as we can what you would all like most.

Together we will try to make some of it happen. We probably can't do it all. Some of it might take a while and we might need your help.

But if you would like to know what happens next, follow [@southshropsyouthforum](#) (South Shropshire Youth Forum) on Facebook. **Help us get the word out!**

Appendix B Results Muslim Youth Group Craven Arms

POSITIVES

RANK		SCORE (lowest is better)
1 st	Mosque	3
2 nd	Euro Quality Lambs – halal abattoir	8
3 rd =	School	12
3 rd =	Good Muslim Community	12
5 th	Feels safe	14
6 th	Friendly people	15
7 th	Good shops	23
8 th	Nice houses	26
9 th	CasCA	27
10 th =	Parks	29
10 th =	Gym	29

NEGATIVES

RANK		SCORE (lower scores are more negative)
1 st	Racism – threats of	4
2 nd	Bullying	10
3 rd	Smoking	12
4 th	Non-Halal food in the shops (incl chip shop)	14
5 th	Alcohol	15
6 th	Drugs	16
7 th	Swearing	19
7 th	People being rude	19
9 th	Litter	21
10 th	Noise at night	28

The resulting priorities and actions

WHAT ARE THE PRIORITIES?	WHY ADDRESS THIS?	HOW DO WE ADDRESS THESE ISSUES?
Community cohesion	Understand each other – see similarities	Make things to bring people together (e.g. – food)
Cigarettes/smoking	Saving people’s lives- litter – can cause fires	More bins/less litter
Wider global issues	Want to show that ‘we’ care	Raising money, making links to people/group in need
Craven Arms Community Centre (CasCA) – activities for girls	Little opportunities for girls to play sport	Ask Youth Forum/Halo about access/funding. See if there is enough interest.

Appendix C Covid 19 Survey results Craven Arms

Early December 2020 we did a detached consultation in Craven Arms using a very simple Covid survey (see below). We spoke to a group of 7 males aged 9-15. They all accessed regular weekly detached youth sessions and additional outdoor sessions in School Holiday periods and at weekends delivered by SSYF. These sessions were suspended for a while due to Covid.

Many of them come from complex backgrounds and struggle with relationships at home. They had generally coped with the Covid crisis over the year. However, one individual showed signs of not coping very well. Most of the respondents said they had not been able to do as many things as they'd have liked because of the restrictions. Most of the group also felt that they had found it hard to motivate themselves over the crisis and that young people were being blamed for the spread of the virus. On a positive note, only one young person felt that they had lost interest in just about everything while 6 had not and only one had felt sad and depressed more than usual. The majority also felt that they weren't anxious about going to school, that they hadn't lost contact with their friends, that their parents were no stricter than normal. A small majority said that they hadn't been struggling with relationships at home and that they hadn't stopped feeling like going out.

The young people felt the Youth sessions being delivered by SSYF had a positive impact on their well-being. All agreed the youth sessions helped them keep contact with their friends, and all agreed that they enjoyed getting out of the house because of the sessions. All respondents said their parents allowed them to attend because activities were organised for them. Most of the group said the sessions made them feel happier, the majority also said that their overall mood was better because the sessions and that they would miss the youth sessions if there was another lock down. These sessions help them keep in contact with friends and socialise. One said specifically they look forward to them and another said it made them behave better.

5 said they hadn't been able to access other activities. 1 person said there wasn't much space at home.

This is the questionnaire that was used: Covid Questionnaire

M/F:

Age:

Town:

Overall, how have you coped with the events of this year?

1-10 1= good 10=bad

How have you coped living at home during the lockdown?

Have you had to self-isolate at all?

If Yes how well did you cope?

How much did you miss the Youth Forum sessions?

1=not at all 10=Very much

Did the events of this year make you feel?

	YES	NO
I feel that I have lost interest in just about everything		
I've found it hard to motivate myself		
I've not felt like going out much		
I get anxiety about going to School		
I've lost contact with a lot of friends		
I've felt sad and depressed more than usual		
My parents have been stricter and I've not liked it		
I've not been able to do as many things as I'd liked		
I've been struggling with relationships at home		
I've not liked people blaming the younger generation for the spread of the virus		

Anything else?

Have you accessed activities outside of school and home?

If Yes, what were they?

What impact did the Youth Forum sessions have?

	YES	NO
Helped me to keep contact with friends and socialise		
It made me feel happier		
I enjoyed being able to get out the house		
My mood is better overall		
My parents have allowed me to come out for organised youth sessions		
I really missed the youth sessions when they weren't there		

Anything else?

How would you feel if we stopped the youth sessions again?

1=Not bothered 10=Really bad