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Barriers and Enablers to Participation in Youth Activities Research

Final Report

SQW

UK YOUTH

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Executive Summary

1. Young people benefit from participation in activities, including groups and clubs, volunteering and social action. But not all young people do participate and this report summarises research findings that explored some of the barriers and enablers to help explain why. It considers the effect of a range of personal characteristics (such as age, gender, socio-economic and ethnic background) on patterns of participation, and the barriers and enablers that help explain this, and practices that can increase young people's participation and satisfaction.

2. The research was undertaken by SQW and UK Youth on behalf of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) between August 2024 and March 2025. A Youth Panel of six young people helped to refine the research and findings. The research was commissioned to contribute to the evidence base to inform DCMS's future policies and programmes around youth activities, notably the National Youth Strategy.

3. The research draws on four key sources of evidence:

   - Analysis of the Youth Participation Survey (YPS) pilot – a large, nationally representative survey of nearly 2,000 young people aged 10 to 19. The survey was undertaken in 2023 and its findings published online.[1] This research used survey findings and performed further regression analysis, a statistical method which enables us to test each personal characteristic in isolation (holding other characteristics constant) to understand their individual significance in explaining patterns of participation.

   - A rapid review of published evidence, which covered 26 different evidence sources spanning largescale representative surveys and research based on interviews or focus groups with young people.

   - Interviews with a broadly representative sample of 74 young people, most of whom had previously responded to the YPS, to further explore their experiences of youth provision.

   - Interviews with 16 youth sector representatives, covering a range of organisation types and areas of expertise, which had a particular focus on practical approaches to improving young people's participation and satisfaction.

How young people's characteristics affect participation

4. The regression analysis of YPS responses identified different patterns of participation in youth activities based on young people's characteristics, including age, sexuality and gender identity, deprivation, ethnicity, disability and health, being LGBTQ+ and geography. Findings include:

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[1] DCMS (2024) DCMS (2024) Youth Participation Pilot Survey findings.

- Young people are less likely to participate in youth groups and clubs as they grow older, but more likely to participate in volunteering.

- Females, young people living in more deprived areas, and those receiving free school meals are less likely to participate in groups and clubs.

- Males are less likely to participate in social action and volunteering.

5. Each young person may have several characteristics that, in combination, affect their likelihood of participation or their experience of barriers to participation. The analysis also produced a series of 'risk profiles' that consider the effect of several personal characteristics on a young person's participation. These show a clear gap in levels of participation. Only 26% of females aged 16-19, who live in a deprived area and are in receipt of free school meals, participate in a youth group or club. This compares to around 90% of males and females aged 10-12 in the least deprived areas who are not in receipt of free school meals.

6. Other household characteristics not included in the YPS analysis that may influence participation include being in lone parent families, those with separated parents, single or multiple child households, young people with caring responsibilities, young people who are frequently absent from school or not in mainstream education, and young people from different religious and cultural beliefs. All of these factors affect whether a young person participates in youth activities.

Awareness of local provision

7. Young people become aware of youth activities through a range of sources, including school, friends, family, social media, online, physical marketing and community presence. The YPS analysis found different sources are more important to young people with certain characteristics. For example, females are more likely to hear through schools, males through friends, and ethnic minorities through faith groups.

8. The young people we spoke with frequently suggested a lack of awareness of youth provision was preventing them from participating in youth activities as much as they would like. Young people said they wanted more information and opportunities to learn about youth provision, particularly through schools, outreach and marketing.

Motivations for participating

9. In order to understand how to increase young people's participation and satisfaction in youth activities it is vital to understand what motivates them to engage. Young people are motivated to participate for a range of reasons. Enjoyment is particularly important, but young people also spoke about developing skills and keeping fit. Young people who were motivated by these factors were also more likely to participate more frequently, and in multiple activities.

10. Other motivations included benefitting their future prospects, spending time with their friends, having a community, feeling of belonging or safety, wanting benefits to mental and physical wellbeing, and valuing relationships with staff or support.

11. Young people's priorities appear to change with age, with older groups more likely to prioritise developmental opportunities, activities that improve their future prospects and a place to relax over organised activities.

12. The motivations of parents/carers matter too, because parents/carers can play a key role in identifying and making young people aware of activities that might be worthwhile, and in encouraging or supporting them to try something out or keep attending. However, parents/carers' motivations did not always align with young people's motivations. For example, some parents placed a greater priority on studies or other commitments.

Barriers and enablers to participation

13. We identified a number of different types of barriers to participation in youth activities, which can be categorised as:

- 'Practical' – which include availability, time and other commitments, cost and affordability, access and transport, physical accessibility, parental permission, and information accessibility.

- 'Attitudinal, psychological and relational' – which include alignment with interests and preferences, confidence and apprehension, when environments feel inclusive, welcome and accessible, and wellbeing and safety.

14. These barriers may reflect demand side issues (e.g. a young person and their parents being unable to afford provision due to their disposable income) or supply side issues (e.g. an expensive activity), or the availability of provision.

15. The most frequently cited factors that prevented participation were lack of interest, being too busy with other commitments and a preference to do other things.

Why young people stop participating

16. Participation in youth activities decreases with age. The YPS analysis found length of participation is lower for females, those on free school meals, ethnic minorities and those with a limiting disability. The reasons that young people stop participating in youth activities fall into six broad categories: issues with an activity; changes to an activity; the impact of the pandemic; life changes; transition points; and age-related factors.

Practices to increase youth participation and satisfaction

17. Interviews with sector representatives provided a wide range of insights about the good practices they adopt to help overcome barriers to participation. They:

- Were unanimous on the importance of youth voice, agency and empowerment for increasing participation and satisfaction.
- Emphasised the importance of community presence, visibility and brand recognition for supporting awareness, particularly for harder to reach groups.
- Recognised the importance of trust, familiarity and information to improve initial engagement.
- Emphasised the need for variety and tailoring their approach to ensure their offer remains appealing and high quality, especially for older groups.
- Emphasised the importance of their provision being free or as affordable as possible.
- Talked about the importance of trust, familiarity and safety for young people to feel comfortable in a space.

18. However, the youth sector interviewees cautioned their ability to enact all aspects of good practice due to the structural issues they face. Most notably, limited and reducing funding, workforce challenges, and poor or misinformed perceptions of the sector, and challenges related to coordination and partnership working.

19. This research has produced detailed information about individual and combined characteristics that shape whether, and how, young people participate in youth activities. Each young person's experience is unique to them, but there are characteristics that in combination are associated with greater or lower levels of participation. Some of the barriers young people face can be addressed by individual providers changing or adapting their practices. Other challenges are more structural and require joined up working locally (e.g. between schools and youth activity providers) or nationally, to strengthen the sector's capacity to reach young people and make youth activities relevant, attractive, safe and enjoyable for all.

1. Introduction

Background to the research

1.1 In 2023 the Youth Participation Survey (YPS) Pilot was conducted on behalf of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).[2] The YPS aimed to provide nationally representative estimates of young people's participation in and demand for youth activities, including volunteering opportunities. The survey also included questions related to young people's motivations, and barriers and enablers of participation. Nearly 2,000 young people aged 10 to 19 responded to the survey. The characteristics of respondents were collected to help identify any variation in experiences between different types of young people.

1.2 In 2024 DCMS commissioned SQW (an independent research organisation) in partnership with UK Youth (the UK's leading youth work charity) to deliver supplementary research exploring barriers and enablers of participation in youth activities.[3] This research undertook further analysis of the YPS dataset and additional primary research. The primary research included a rapid evidence review and interviews with young people and youth sector representatives.

1.3 The study ran for eight months between August 2024 and March 2025. A Youth Panel of six young people was recruited via UK Youth's network to ensure that youth voices were at the heart of the research. The group met three times during the study, and helped to refine the scope of the research and the research tools, and subsequently to reflect on findings and key messages.

1.4 The purpose of this research was to help DCMS's Youth Team to understand the patterns of participation within different groups of young people, and what factors or practices can increase young people's levels of participation. It was intended that this research would help DCMS to design future policy and programmes and may also inform government thinking about the National Youth Strategy.

Defining 'youth provision'

1.5 The research used a broad definition of 'youth provision' – encompassing out of school activities and services for young people growing up in England aged 11 to 18 years, and up to 25 years for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Figure 1-1 summarises the activities, modes of delivery and types of organisations that were within scope. Our interviews with young people and with sector professionals covered both youth worker led activities and voluntary sector led activities. While school-led provision did feature in the research because it

[2] DCMS (2024) Youth Participation Pilot Survey findings.
[3] Please note youth 'activities', 'services' and 'provision' are used interchangeably throughout this report.

was in scope for the YPS, this was not the primary focus.

Figure 1-1: Summary of activities, modes of delivery and types of organisations

Activities

- Youth clubs
- Residential and outdoor learning
- Sports, arts and cultural learning
- Mental health and wellbeing support, outside of a clinical setting
- Mentoring and employability support
- Social action and volunteering

Modes of delivery

- Centre- or facility-based
- Detached and street-based youth work (not typically attached to a building or hub)
- Outreach youth work (typically an 'extension' of building- and hub-based provision)
- Outdoor learning in parks, sports fields or residential facilities
- Digital youth-worker led provision

Types of organisations

- Local authority youth services
- National uniformed organisations (for example, the Scouts or Girlguiding)
- Voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations
- Provision delivered through faith groups
- Organisations with embedded youth workers, for example, some Housing Associations, schools, hospitals and private organisations

Source: UK Youth and SQW

Research questions

1.6 This study explored a series of seven research questions summarised below. While they refer to 'youth services' the wider definition of 'youth provision' adopted by the research means the findings in this report relate to participation in services and activities offered by the full range of organisations listed in Figure 1-1.

Research Questions

Q1. Which groups of young people are most at risk of experiencing barriers to:

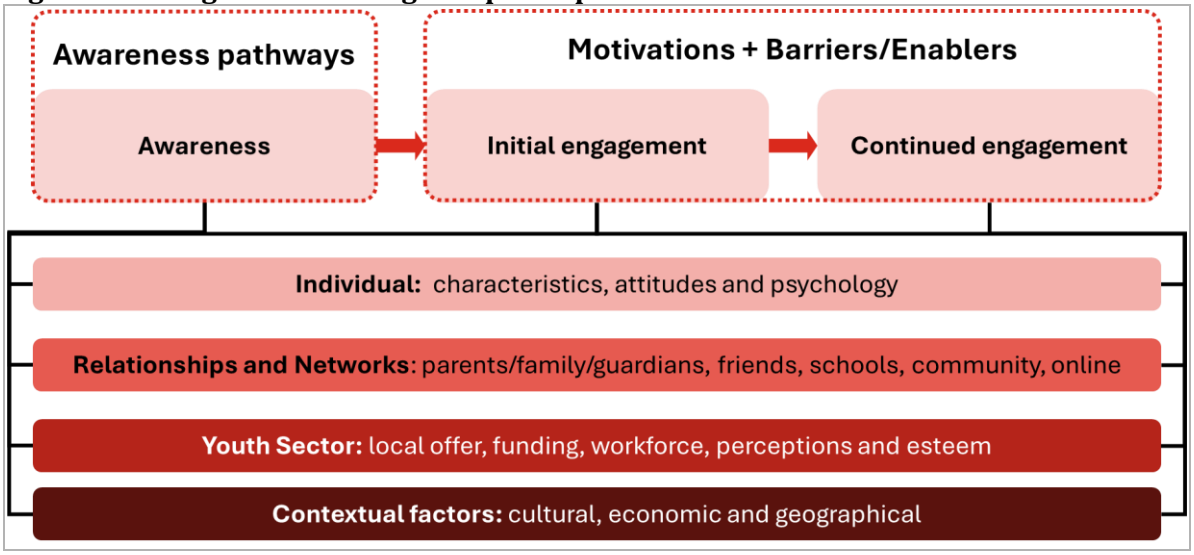
a. Any participation in youth services

Research Questions
b. Longer periods of participation in youth services c. Increased frequency of participation in youth services d. Engaging in multiple experiences of youth services
Q2. What barriers/enablers do young people experience accessing youth services?
Q3. Do different demographic groups experience barriers to participation in youth services?
Q4. What do young people think is the best way to reduce these barriers?
Q5. Why do young people stop participating in youth services?
Q6. What factors have to be in place for young people to be satisfied with the youth services in their local area?
Q7. Are there examples of youth services working with young people who have effectively reduced these barriers to participation/have a diverse range of young people attending?

Report structure

1.7 The factors that affect whether a young person participates in one or several youth activities are varied and complex, and change throughout adolescence. Figure 1-2 provides a visual representation of the stages of participation, and the different connecting factors that influence participation. These factors are grouped into categories that reflect a young person's individual characteristics, their social networks, local youth sector offer and broader contextual factors. Many of the chapters in this report consider a specific component of this diagram: individual characteristics (Chapter 3), awareness (Chapter 4), motivations (Chapter 5) and barriers and enablers that affect initial and continued engagement (Chapter 6). One of the chapters focuses specifically on why young people stop participating (Chapter 7).

Figure 1-2: Diagram of the stages of participation and factors that influence this



Source: SQW and UK Youth

1.8 The other factors in the diagram appear throughout this report, because of how they influence all the different stages of participation. For example, a young person's parents influence their awareness and motivations, and can act as both a barrier or enabler in a multitude of ways. Similarly, their wider social networks, the local youth offer and structural youth sector issues, and cultural, economic and geographical factors all matter throughout too.

1.9 The penultimate chapter considers sector practices and suggestions around increasing participation and satisfaction (Chapter 8) to understand how to make the different stages of participation work better – to make more young people aware, to increase initial engagement, and to increase levels of continued engagement.

1.10 Annexes provide further elaboration of underpinning data and include:

- The reference list from the rapid evidence review
- Additional detail on methods and analytical approach
- Profile of research participants (young people and organisations)
- Survey analysis

Acknowledgements

1.11 This report has been written by Dr Jo Hutchinson, Luke Williams, Izzy Hampton, and Paulina Szymczak from SQW, and Jacob Diggle and Somia Nasim from UK Youth. Our research team members include Juraj Briskar, Carolyn Hindle, Izabela Zawartka, Angela Stockman, Harriet Shaw, Luna Wang, Lena Andersen, Emily Atkins and Sergei Plekhanov who provided interview, survey and analysis support.

1.12 We are indebted to all the young people who took part in this research, and to our youth panellists Evangeline Roe, Jess Evans, Mia Meggiolaro, Molly Taylor, Pelumi Fatayo and Shaun Horne for their insights. We would also like to thank the youth sector professionals who gave up their time to participate in the sector interviews.

2. Methodology

Introduction

2.1 The study used both quantitative and qualitative research strands to develop a rich understanding of the nature of participation and non-participation in youth activities. These drew on four main sources of evidence:

- Analysis of the Youth Participation Survey (YPS) pilot
- A rapid review of existing evidence
- Interviews with 74 young people
- Interviews with 16 sector representatives

2.2 This chapter provides an overview of the methods used, and key limitations and challenges. The YPS analysis and rapid evidence review ran in parallel, followed by the interviews with young people and finally the sector representatives.

2.3 In addition, three Youth Panel sessions were used to shape the research and test findings: one in the early phases of the research, one after the YPS analysis and rapid evidence review were completed, and one after completion of all interviews with young people and some of the sector interviews. The Youth Panel helped with the refinement of research tools and with challenging, strengthening and contextualising the findings from the research.

2.4 SQW led on all primary and secondary research. UK Youth provided expert input throughout by reviewing research tools, reviewing outputs and participating in findings workshops. UK Youth led on convening and liaising with the Youth Panel. UK Youth also drew on its extensive youth network to source evidence for the evidence review, disseminate the interview sign-up invitation to young people, and identify sector representatives for interviews.

Quantitative research strand

2.5 The **quantitative research strand consisted of analysis of data from the YPS pilot**. The survey was conducted prior to this study, in Summer 2023, by Verian (formerly Kantar Public) on behalf of DCMS. Of relevance to this research, its questions explored young people's participation in and demand for youth groups and clubs, volunteering and social action, as well as investigating barriers and enablers of participation. The YPS obtained responses from a nationally representative group of approximately 2,000 young people in England, covering ages 10 to 19 years, using the Department for Education's National Pupil Database (NPD) as a sampling frame. The data was shared with SQW in a pseudonymised format, with respondents' names replaced with unique identifiers.

2.6 The YPS had already been subject to descriptive analysis by DCMS[4] but this **new research primarily made use of regression analysis to further interrogate the data** with a narrower focus on youth participation. Descriptive and regression analysis of the YPS was undertaken in R (software used for statistical data analysis) to identify predictors of participation and of barriers and enablers to participation. The analysis used 1%, 5% and 10% statistical significance levels, and where results were only significant at the 10% level this is indicated.[5] This analysis was undertaken between August and October 2024.

2.7 A detailed description of the quantitative analysis can be found in Annex B; results tables can be found in Annex D.

Qualitative research strand

2.8 The qualitative research strand comprised a rapid evidence review, interviews with young people, and interviews with youth sector representatives. A brief overview of each is below. More detail on each can be found in Annex B, and a breakdown of research participant characteristics can be found in Annex C.

- The **rapid evidence review** was undertaken alongside the quantitative analysis (between August and October 2024) with two main objectives: (1) to inform research design for the later phases of the study and (2) to contextualise and triangulate the study findings. The rapid evidence review focused on evidence about open access youth provision in England or comparable jurisdictions (e.g. Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and countries in the EU) involving young people aged 11 to 18, and up to age 25 for young people with SEND. It made use of existing evidence suggested by DCMS and UK Youth, and additional evidence identified through an online search. The evidence included largescale representative surveys and research based on interviews or focus groups with young people. In total, 26 documents were incorporated into the review and coded in the qualitative analysis software MaxQDA. The coding framework was structured around the high-level research questions and evolved as common themes were identified. The report references additional published evidence where it elaborates key points

- **Semi-structured interviews** were undertaken with a sample of 74 young people, who predominantly had completed the YPS survey (68 of the 74). The YPS respondents were targeted because: (i) this provided a representative pool of young people who had indicated a willingness to be re-contacted for further research and (ii) to explore the YPS analysis findings in greater detail. Quotas were used to secure a broad spread of the population and capture a range of perspectives. Young people were invited to participate via a sign-up survey which re-captured characteristics to enable sampling. A small number of additional

[4] Please see: DCMS (2024) Youth Participation Pilot Survey findings.
[5] The 10% significance level provides the weakest evidence that the results are not due to chance. Such findings are included with small sample sizes to provide an indication of a relationship but this should be treated with caution.

'top up' recruitment was carried out via UK Youth's networks who disseminated the sign-up survey (these accounted for 6 of the 74 interviewees). A £15 high street voucher was offered to young people to recognise their contribution to the research. The interviews took place between January and March 2025 by phone or video call depending on the young person's preference. The interviews explored: the types of youth activities the young person was involved in and the reasons they got involved; their satisfaction with the youth activities in their local area; barriers and enablers to participation; and their ideas for improvements and changes. All interviews were thematically analysed in MaxQDA.

- **Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with 16 professionals from the youth sector.** Sector interviewees were identified through nominations from young people interviewees as well as by DCMS and UK Youth, with some co-nomination. These covered a range of organisations, including general and specialist youth provision, which deliver a wide range of services and activity types. Many had a particular expertise in working with groups identified as more likely to face barriers to participation, for example due to issues related to deprivation, mental health, ethnicity, SEND or LGBTQ+ young people. The interviews took place between February and March 2025 by video call or, in person. The interviews explored their perspectives of barriers and enablers to participation, effective approaches to youth engagement, and what support or changes could be of benefit to their organisation and the wider sector. All interviews were thematically analysed in MaxQDA.

Study limitations and challenges

2.9 The research findings should be interpreted with the following limitations and challenges in mind. Further elaboration is provided in Annex B.

- **Broad definitions of youth activities used in the YPS:** The YPS asked young people to consider *any* activities 'outside of a school lesson' meaning that participation in school-led and school-based activities such as before/after school clubs and lunchtime groups were within the survey's scope. Similarly, secondary evidence used in this report frequently uses a broad definition. This will have resulted in higher levels of participation in the YPS than a narrower definition would have done, and possibly different findings around the factors affecting participation. The sector interviews were more focussed on youth worker led youth activities.

- **Broad definition of 'volunteering'**. The YPS also used a broad definition of volunteering, with 'helping' or 'taking care of' someone outside the family unpaid in scope. This likewise will have resulted in higher levels of participation reported in the YPS than a narrower definition would have done, and possibly different findings around the factors affecting participation.

- **Gaps in YPS coverage.** The YPS sample frame did not include young people who were not attending a state-funded school or college in 2021/22 which it estimated to account for 9% of young people within the target population..

- **Sampling of young people for interviews**. The achieved sample was broadly representative of YPS respondents, but with skews towards older groups, young people with a limiting disability or health condition, and young people who did not participate in groups, clubs or social action. These skews were intentional in order to engage a greater number of young people with characteristics identified as influencing participation negatively. Nevertheless we do not anticipate their experiences to necessarily be representative of the experiences of all young people and there may be self-selection bias.

- **Sampling of youth sector interviewees.** Similarly, given there are approximately 8,500 youth organisations operating in over 28,000 locations across England[6] it was not possible, nor was it intended, for our youth sector interviewees to be representative of youth organisations across the country.

[6] National Youth Agency (2024) *National Youth Sector Census Snapshot.*

3. Characteristics and participation

Chapter summary

Young people show different patterns of participation in youth activities based on their characteristics. Our analysis of YPS data shows different patterns based on age, gender, deprivation, ethnicity, disability and health, sexuality and gender identity, and geography. These include:

- Young people are less likely to participate in youth groups and clubs as they grow older, but more likely to participate in volunteering.
- Females, young people living in more deprived areas, and those receiving free school meals are less likely to participate in groups and clubs.
- Males are less likely to participate in social action and volunteering.

Young people with different characteristics also experience different barriers to participation. Those barriers include knowledge or interest, practical factors (such as cost) or psychosocial issues such as confidence, friends attending or competing priorities.

Other barriers are associated with household factors such as lone parent families, those with separated parents, single or multiple child households, young people with caring responsibilities, young people who are frequently absent from school or not in mainstream education, and young people from different religious and cultural beliefs.

Each young person may have several characteristics that, in combination, affect their likelihood of participation or their experience of barriers to participation.

Analysis of a combination of some of these characteristics shows clear gaps in participation. For example only 26% of females aged 16-19, who live in a deprived area and are in receipt of free school meals, participate in a youth group or club. This compares to around 90% of males and females aged 10-12 in the least deprived areas who are not in receipt of free school meals.

Introduction

3.1 This chapter considers the variations in young people's participation in youth activities based on their personal characteristics. It draws primarily on the YPS analysis but also highlights

relevant findings from the rapid evidence review and fieldwork where they help to explain findings or identified other characteristics not captured by the survey.

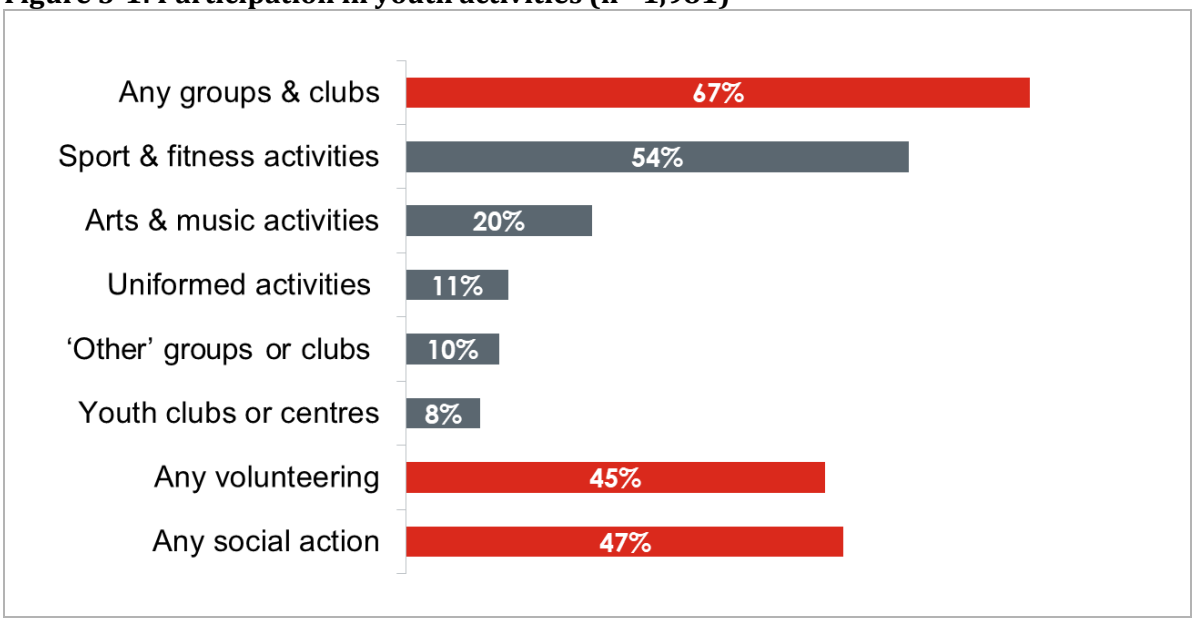
3.2 The focus of this chapter is therefore on 'who' participates in youth activities complemented by some consideration of factors that explain 'why'. The remainder of the report then considers the factors that explain 'why' in greater detail. This is because – despite certain young people being more likely to experience particular barriers or enablers based on characteristics – individual participation is not determined by such characteristics alone. In addition, many of the barriers highlighted are commonly experienced by young people with other characteristics too.

Variance by activity categories and types

3.3 The YPS captured young people's participation in: (1) groups and clubs, (2) volunteering and (3) social action. In the rest of this chapter we refer to these three as activity 'categories'. Within the groups and clubs 'category' there is a further distinction between: (a) sports, (b) arts and music, (c) youth clubs or youth centres, (d) uniformed groups and (e) other clubs or groups. These are henceforth referred to as five activity 'types'. A detailed breakdown of the activity types associated with volunteering and social action can be found in Annex B.

3.4 Figure 3-1 shows the proportion of YPS respondents participating in the various activity categories and types. Over **two-thirds of the sample reported participating in at least one group and club in the last 12 months**. Within the group and club category, sports activities were by far the most popular activity type, with over half of the sample having participated. This was followed by arts and music, uniformed activities and 'other' activities (such as cooking or science clubs). At 8%, youth clubs had the lowest participation rate in the sample.

Figure 3-1: Participation in youth activities (n= 1,981)



Source: SQW analysis of YPS data. Red shading indicates the three activity categories whilst grey shading indicates activity types. Please note respondents could select more than one response

3.5 Compared to groups and clubs, **fewer young people participated in volunteering and social action**, although rates of participation were still notable with just under half the sample participating in each (45% and 47% respectively).

Variance by characteristics

3.6 Our regression analysis explored whether all types of young people participated equally in all types of activity. It considered **each type of characteristic in turn, looking at age, gender, free school meals (FSM), ethnicity, disability and health, LGBTQ+ and geography**. Regression analysis was used because it enables us to test each characteristic in isolation (holding other characteristics constant) to understand their individual significance.[7] For the full results see Annex D. This also includes Table D-3 which contains the predicted probabilities of participation for individual characteristics, which are not included in this chapter for simplicity.

3.7 It is, however, important to recognise that each young person has a multitude of characteristics which in combination may augment or multiply the barriers or enablers they face. This is commonly described as 'intersectionality' which the adopted approach is less well suited to testing. That said, the chapter concludes with a series of 'risk profiles' that consider the effect of a combination of the characteristics found to individually have a statistically significant effect on participation. The analysis was not intended to test the effect of every different combination of characteristic captured by YPS.

3.8 For each characteristic listed in the following section we have included a table of key, statistically significant findings from the YPS regression analysis.

Age

3.9 Table 3-1 summarises regression analysis findings based on age, considering:

- Differences in participation between the three 'categories' of activities and five 'types' of activities
- Differences in the reasons for not participating in any activities or in more activities (groups and clubs only)
- Differences in the routes through which the young person became aware of an activity they participated in (groups and clubs only).

[7] The analysis used a 1%, 5% and 10% statistical significance level. The 10% significance level provides the weakest evidence that the results are not due to chance. Such findings are included with small sample sizes to provide an indication of a relationship but this should be treated with caution. Any findings that were only significant at 10% are clearly indicated.

3.10 Table 3-1 shows that **young people are less likely to participate in groups and clubs as they get older**. In the table 'Less likely to participate in: volunteering (r. 13-15 and 16-19)' means a 10-12 year old is less likely to participate in volunteering relative to both 13-15 year olds and 16-19 year olds. The survey analysis found those aged 16-19 had the lowest predicted probability of participation, followed by 13-15, and then those aged 10-12.[8] This pattern held true across most different types of activities (sports, arts and music, uniformed groups, and 'other' - though the latter only at the 10% significance level and for 16-19 only). With regards to volunteering, those aged 10-12 are less likely to participate than older age groups.[9]

3.11 Although older groups are generally less likely to participate in activities, the survey analysis indicated that they are more likely to engage very frequently (more than weekly) in the groups and clubs activities they do participate in. The evidence review found that activity specialisation, particularly in sports, is a factor that causes young people to stop participating in multiple youth activities as they grow older to instead focus on one.[10]

3.12 The **reasons given for non-participation also differ by age**. Reasons more likely to be given for non-participation by those aged 10-12 relate to cost and their awareness of activities.[11] For older age groups, they include lacking interest in activities, the activities not being age appropriate, or issues around confidence or fitting in. A relevant finding from the evidence review was that barriers to participation become less 'practical' with age, and more intrapersonal (related to attitudes and beliefs) or social environmental (related to factors such as relationships, culture and society, which can manifest as 'not fitting in').[12] During the interviews, young people emphasised the influence of changing interests, additional commitments (such as exams and part-time work) and transition phases (such as leaving school or college) on declining participation, as well as the perception of being 'too old' for a new activity, or actually being 'too old' due to age restrictions in place. The issues relating to age are returned to throughout this report.

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[8] I.e. predicted probability that a person in a given age group participates in youth activities, under the assumption that their remaining characteristics are set at the sample mean values.
[9] Please note the result for volunteering was only statistically significant at the 10% level.
[10] Pandya, N. (2021) Disparities in Youth Sports and Barriers to Participation. *Current Reviews in Musculoskeletal Medicine*, 14(1).
[11] Please note these results were relative to those aged 13-15 only, i.e. no statistically significant difference was found for the probability of reporting these reasons between those aged 10-12 and those aged 16-19.
[12] Basterfield, L. et al (2016) Can't play, won't play: longitudinal changes in perceived barriers to participation in sports clubs across the child–adolescent transition. *BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine,* 2(1)

Table 3-1: Patterns in participation and reasons for non-participation by age

	Activities	Reasons for not participating (in any/more groups/clubs)	Awareness routes (groups/clubs)
Age 10-12	Less likely to participate in: • Volunteering (r. 13-15* and 16-19*)	More likely to say: • Cost (r. 13-15 only) • I don't know what activities are going on in my area (r. 13-15 only)	More likely to hear about activities via: • School/college (r. 16-19) • Social media (r. 13-15) • Online search (r. 13-15), • Leaflet/posters (r. 13-15* and 16-19)
Age 13-15 Age 16-19	Less likely to participate in (r. 10-12): • Any groups and clubs (13-15, 16-19) • Sports and fitness (13-15, 16-19) • Arts and music (13-15, 16-19) • Uniformed groups (13-15, 16-19) • 'Other' groups and clubs (16-19 only)	Less likely to agree there are enough groups/clubs in local area (16-19 only; r. 10-12) More likely to say (r. 10-12): • I'm not interested in going (13-15, 16-19) • I'm too shy/lack confidence (13-15, 16-19) • The activities are not aimed at people my age (13-15, 16-19*) • Too busy with other commitments (16-19 only) • The activities aren't very good (13-15 only) • I don't have any one to go with (13-15 only*)	More likely to hear about activities via (r. 10-12): • Family (13-15, 16-19)

*Source: SQW analysis of YPS data. r = relative to. * Indicates results only statistically significant at the 10% level*

Gender

3.13 Table 3-2 summarises the differences between the three categories and five types of activities participated in by gender, and contrasts the responses of young people who said they were female with those who were male.[13] It shows that **females are less likely to participate in any**

[13] Please note the survey option included 'identify in another way' for gender. Due to the small number of observations for this group it was not possible to include as a separate category in the analysis of gender. Therefore we recoded gender into a binary variable where 'males' were compared against 'females/those identifying in another way' with females accounting for 97% of this group. In addition, it those who selected 'identify in another way' for gender were included in the LGBTQ+ category considered later in this chapter.

groups and clubs[14], sports, uniform groups and 'other' groups, and males are less likely to participate in arts and music, volunteering and social action. The evidence review pointed towards the gendered attitudes of young people and their parents/carers towards certain activities (e.g. sports, arts and culture) as contributing to these differences in participation.[15]

3.14 The **reasons given for non-participation also differ by gender**. Reasons more likely to be given for non-participation by females, included not having enough time, the activities not being age appropriate, lacking awareness or someone to go with, and issues around confidence or fitting in. Fieldwork also suggested that body image was a potential barrier to participation in sport. For males reasons or non-participation related to their interest in the activities.

Table 3-2: Patterns in participation and reasons for non-participation by gender

	Activities	Reasons for not participating (in any/more groups/clubs)	Awareness routes (groups/clubs)
Females	Less likely to participate in: • Any groups and clubs* • Sports and fitness • Uniform groups • 'Other' groups and clubs	Less likely to agree there are enough groups and clubs in local area More likely to say: • Too busy with other commitments • The activities not aimed at people my age • I don't have anyone to go with • I don't know what activities are going on in my area • I'm too shy/lack confidence • I won't fit in • My mental health	More likely to hear about activities via: • School/college
Males	Less likely to participate in: • Arts and music • Volunteering • Social action	More likely to say: • I'm not interested in going	More likely to hear about activities via: • Friends

*Source: SQW analysis of YPS data. * Indicates results only statistically significant at the 10% level*

[14] The result for participation in any groups and clubs was only statistically significant at the 10% level.
[15] Arts Council England (2016) *Every Child: equality and diversity in arts and culture with, by and for children and young people*.

Free school meals and area deprivation

3.15 The survey analysis looked at two measures of deprivation: receipt of FSM and Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) area deprivation quintiles.

3.16 Table 3-3 summarises the differences between the categories and types of activities participated in by young people who receive FSM compared to those who don't. It shows that **young people who receive FSM are less likely to participate in any groups or clubs, such as sports, uniformed groups, or do social action**. The survey analysis also identified a negative association between the receipt of FSM and participation in multiple activity types, and the duration and frequency of participation in groups and clubs. **Those receiving FSM are more likely to attend youth clubs**.

3.17 Young people who receive FSM are more likely to point to cost, not having someone to go with, and issues around confidence and mental health as reasons for non-participation. The impact that poverty can have on a young person's mental health and wellbeing was repeatedly highlighted during the fieldwork. Conversely, young people who don't receive FSM are more likely to say they don't have enough time[16] or prefer to do other things. During the fieldwork, it was noted that young people facing deprivation were more likely to be in temporary or insecure housing which can present a further barrier if regularly moving location.

Table 3-3: Patterns in participation and reasons for non-participation by FSM

	Activities	Reasons for not participating (in any/more groups/clubs)	Awareness routes (groups/clubs)
FSM	Less likely to participate in: • Any groups and clubs • Sports and fitness • Uniformed groups • Social action	More likely to say: • Cost • I don't have any one to go with • I'm too shy/lack confidence • My mental health	More likely to hear about activities via: • Leaflet/posters
Non-FSM	Less likely to participate in: • Youth clubs/centres	More likely to say: • Too busy with other commitments* • I prefer to do other things in my spare time	More likely to hear about activities via: • Family • Friends*

[16] Please note the result for this reason was only statistically significant at the 10% level.

*Source: SQW analysis of YPS data. * Indicates results only statistically significant at the 10% level*

3.18 With regards to IDACI area deprivation (Table 3-4), the survey analysis revealed that young people living in more deprived areas are less likely to participate in groups and clubs overall, as well as sports, arts and music, uniformed groups and volunteering. The survey analysis also identified a negative association between the level of deprivation and participation in multiple groups and clubs activities and activity types.

3.19 Reasons for non-participation more likely to be given by young people from IDACI 1 areas (the most deprived areas) include cost[17], difficulty getting to activities[18], the activities not being age appropriate[19], and a preference to do other things[20]. Young people from the most deprived areas are also less likely to agree there are enough groups and clubs in their local area.[21] Conversely, those in less deprived areas highlighted reasons for non-participation relating to their interest in the activities[22], not having enough time[23], not having someone to go with[24], their mental health[25] or not being allowed to go[26].

3.20 Cost was a reason for non-participation more likely to be experienced by both young people receiving FSM and young people in deprived areas. A distinction can be made between direct and indirect, upfront and ongoing costs, and the evidence review highlighted the impact of the increased cost of living on this issue.[27] Cost is considered in greater detail later in Chapter 6.

Table 3-4: Patterns in participation and reasons for non-participation by deprivation

	Activities	Reasons for not participating (in any/more groups/clubs)	Awareness routes (groups/clubs)
IDACI 1 decile (most deprived)	Less likely to participate in: • Any groups and clubs (r. 3, 4, 5)	Less likely to agree there are enough groups and clubs in local area (r. 4, 5) More likely to say:	-

[17] This result was relative to those in IDACI 5 areas only, i.e. no statistically significant difference was found for the probability of reporting this reason between those in IDACI 1 areas and those in IDACI 2-4 areas. The result was also only statistically significant at the 10% level.
[18] This result was relative to those in IDACI 5 areas only.
[19] This result was relative to those in IDACI 2 areas only.
[20] This result was relative to those in IDACI 2 areas only. The result was also only statistically significant at the 10% level.
[21] This result was relative to those in IDACI 4 and 5 areas.
[22] This result was statistically significant for young people in IDACI 5 areas only, relative to those in IDACI 1 areas.
[23] As above
[24] As above
[25] As above
[26] Please note this result was statistically significant for young people in IDACI 3 areas only, relative to those in IDACI 1 areas.
[27] OnSide (2023) *Generation Isolation. Onside's annual study into young people's lives outside school.*

	Activities	Reasons for not participating (in any/more groups/clubs)	Awareness routes (groups/clubs)
	• Sports and fitness (r. 3*, 4, 5) • Arts and music (r. 3, 4, 5) • Uniformed groups (r. 4) • Social action (r. 4,5)	• Difficulty getting there (r. 5) • Cost (r. 5*) • The activities are not aimed at people my age (r. 2) • I prefer to do other things in my spare time (r. 2*)	
IDACI 2-5 deciles	-	More likely to say (r. 1): • I'm not interested in going (5 only) • Too busy with other commitments (5 only) • I don't have any one to go with (5 only) • My mental health (5 only) • I'm not allowed to go (3 only*)	More likely to hear about activities via (r. 1): • Leaflet/posters (3 only*)

*Source: SQW analysis of YPS data. r = relative to. * Indicates results only statistically significant at the 10% level*

Ethnicity

3.21 Table 3-5 summarises the differences between the three categories and five types of activities participated in by ethnicity.[28] The survey analysis **found no effect on rates of participation vs non-participation in groups and clubs as well as with volunteering. However, analysis found that ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities) are less likely to participate in groups and clubs for as long, and are less likely to participate in uniformed groups**. Conversely, white young people are less likely to participate in 'other' groups and clubs and social action.

3.22 The survey analysis found that ethnic minorities are more likely to cite difficulty accessing activities and not being allowed to go as reasons for non-participation. A lack of diversity (of those participating in the activities and of staff) was another barrier identified through the

[28] Please note the regression analysis looked at differences between 'White' respondents (including white minorities) and all other ethnicities rather than differences between more granular ethnicity categories. The small number of observations in certain ethnicity categories was not suited to logistic regression modelling. A more granular ethnicity categorisation was considered in the evidence review.

evidence review.[29,30] Issues around discrimination and racism were also identified.[31] In contrast, white young people are more likely to cite a preference for other activities[32] and concerns related to their mental health.

Table 3-5: Patterns in participation and reasons for non-participation by ethnicity

	Activities	Reasons for not participating (in any/more groups/clubs)	Awareness routes (groups/clubs)
White ethnicities	Less likely to participate in: • 'Other' groups and clubs • Social action*	More likely to say: • My mental health • I prefer to do other things in my spare time*	More likely to hear about activities via: • Family
Ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities)	Less likely to participate in: • Uniformed groups	More likely to say: • Difficulty getting there • I'm not allowed to go	More likely to hear about activities via: • School/college • Religious/faith groups

*Source: SQW analysis of YPS data. * Indicates results only statistically significant at the 10% level*

3.23 The evidence review identified other studies with larger sample sizes or different methodologies that found further differences in participation by ethnicity to those captured in the survey analysis. For example:

- A 2019 Social Mobility Commission study that analysed Understanding Society (a large-scale, longitudinal cohort study) found a mixed picture of participation by ethnicity, with differing levels of participation in different types of activity for different ethnic groups. For example, it found the highest rates of non-participation was amongst 'Other Black' young people (50%), compared to White British young people at 25% and 'Other White' young people at 12%.[33]

[29] NCS (2024) *Understanding Young People*
[30] Department of Culture Media and Sport (2021) *Youth Evidence: Deep dive focus group findings*
[31] Department of Culture Media and Sport (2021) Youth Evidence: Deep dive focus group findings.
[32] Please note the result for this reason was only statistically significant at the 10% level.
[33] Social Mobility Commission (2019) *An unequal playing field: extra-curricular activities, soft skills and social mobility.* The ethnicity categories come from the longitudinal Understanding Society survey. The 'Other Black' group covers young people from ethnicities other than 'Black Caribbean' or 'Black African' while the 'Other White' group covers young people from ethnicities other than 'White British'. Note that the study reported large standard errors for some groups, reducing certainty in the findings.

- Research commissioned in 2023 by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) into the provision of opportunities that support young people's engagement with nature outside of school time reported that young people from minority ethnic backgrounds were at risk of exclusion from nature-based activity (which encompasses outdoor learning and social action projects focused on improving the natural environment). They were often invisible in the promotion of these activities.[34]

SEND and health

3.24 Table 3-6 summarises the differences between the three categories and five types of activities participated in by young people who have a limiting disability or health condition, compared to those without. The survey analysis found **that young people with a limiting disability or health condition are less likely to participate in sports and attend groups and clubs for longer and more frequently, but are more likely to participate in 'other' groups and clubs and attend more activity types**[35]. They are also less likely to agree that there are enough groups and clubs in their local area. The survey did not capture the types or severity of young people's conditions, so did not offer any insight into these effects of different conditions.

3.25 The evidence review found that young people with SEND face barriers to participation across a spectrum of youth activities:

- The aforementioned DEFRA study found limited opportunities for young people with additional needs to take part in nature-based activities outside of school time.[36]
- A study commissioned by the Arts Council of Ireland in 2016 found that young people with SEND were less likely to take part in arts and cultural activities.[37]
- Two studies stated that young people with disabilities (including physical or visual impairment, intellectual disabilities, and autism) are often excluded from participation in youth sports.[38,39]

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[34] Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2023) 'It's not for people like (them)': structural and cultural barriers to children and young people engaging with nature outside schooling. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 23(1), 54–73

[35] Please note the result for the probability of attending multiple activity types was only statistically significant at the 10% level.

[36] Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2023) 'It's not for people like (them)': structural and cultural barriers to children and young people engaging with nature outside schooling. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 23(1), 54–73

[37] Arts Council of Ireland (2016) *Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and Young People: Insights from Growing Up in Ireland study*.

[38] Geidne, S., and Jerlinder, K. (2016) How sports clubs include children and adolescents with disabilities in their activities. A systematic search of peer-reviewed articles. *Sports Science Review,* vol. XXV, no. 1-2, pp 29-52

[39] Moran, T., and Block, M. (2010) Barriers to Participation of Children with Disabilities in Youth Sports. *Teaching Exceptional Children Plus.* 6(1)

- The #BeeWell survey of over 62,000 young people in Greater Manchester and Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton[40] found lower participation in activities for those with SEND (76%) relative to those without SEND (81%) which reflected lower participation in sport and exercise.[41] It also found considerable variation in participation in different activities between young people with different types of conditions. For example, young people with a hearing impairment had a relatively high likelihood of participating in youth clubs (36%) and those with a visual impairment have a relatively low likelihood (21%). This points to the variation in access issues that young people with different conditions experience.

3.26 Unsurprisingly, the YPS survey analysis found that young people with a limiting disability or health condition are more likely to cite their physical health or a disability as a reason for non-participation. Other reasons include difficulty getting to activities, their mental health, and issues around confidence or fitting in.

Table 3-6: Patterns in participation and reasons for non-participation by limiting disability or health condition

	Activities	Reasons for not participating (in any/more groups/clubs)	Awareness routes (groups/clubs)
Limiting disability	Less likely to participate in: • Sports and fitness	Less likely to agree there are enough groups/clubs in local area More likely to say: • Difficulty getting there • I'm too shy/lack confidence • I won't fit in • My physical health or a disability • My mental health	-
No limiting disability	Less likely to participate in: • 'Other' groups/clubs	-	-

*Source: SQW analysis of YPS data. * Indicates results only statistically significant at the 10% level*

LGBTQ+

3.27 Table 3-7 summarises the differences between the categories and types of activities participated in by sexuality and gender identity. It should be noted that the sample used in this analysis was

[40] So not necessarily representative of England given the geographical focus.
[41] #BeeWell (2023) Unpublished datacut provided to DCMS

smaller as the LGBTQ+ status data was only available for people aged 16+ and therefore fewer significant observations could be made.

3.28 The survey analysis found that LGBTQ+ young people are less likely to participate in sports. LGBTQ+ young people are also more likely to cite not having anyone to go with, a lack of awareness of activities in their area[42], their physical or mental health, and issues around confidence as reasons for non-participation.

Table 3-7: Patterns in participation and reasons for non-participation by sexuality and gender identity (16+ only)

	Activities	Reasons for not participating (in any/more groups/clubs)	Awareness routes (groups/clubs)
LGBTQ+	Less likely to participate in: • Sports and fitness	More likely to say: • I don't have any one to go with • I'm too shy/lack confidence • My physical health or a disability • My mental health • I don't know what activities are going on in my area*	-
Non-LGBTQ+	-	-	More likely to hear about activities via: • Friends

*Source: SQW analysis of YPS data. * Indicates results only statistically significant at the 10% level*

Geography

3.29 The survey analysis revealed some differences in participation between regions for two of the activity categories – volunteering and social action – but not for participation in any groups and clubs. For example, relative to the East of England[43], young people in London and in the North West, North East[44] and South West of England are more likely to take part in volunteering, whilst young people in the North West are more likely to take part in other forms of social action. Some of the literature covered in the evidence review did find regional differences. For example, the aforementioned Social Mobility Commission study found that young people in the North East of England are less likely to take part in music classes compared to young people in the South East.[45]

[42] Please note the result for this reason was only statistically significant at the 10% level.
[43] Please note the regional variable was selected as a control rather than a variable of special interest.
[44] Please note the statistic for the North East was only statistically significant at the 10% level.
[45] Social Mobility Commission (2019) *An unequal playing field: extra-curricular activities, soft skills and social mobility*

3.30 The survey analysis found no statistically significant differences in the rates of participation in groups and clubs, volunteering and social action, nor reasons for non-participation in groups and clubs, for young people in urban areas compared to those in rural areas. It did, however, find that young people from urban areas are more likely to participate in volunteering more frequently. However, the evidence review suggested more evidence of an urban/rural divide in rates of participation. For example, the Social Mobility Commission study found that young people in urban areas participate less in sport, youth clubs and uniformed groups, and voluntary work, in comparison to young people in rural areas.[46] Issues around availability, access and transport are considered more in Chapter 6 later.

Other characteristics

3.31 The evidence review and fieldwork identified additional characteristics not included in YPS that can (or might) affect rates of participation. These include:

- **Young people from lone parent families or with separated parents** – which may have implications for disposable income and parental availability to support attendance. Young people with separated parents may split their time between different households making regular attendance difficult.
- **First or second-generation immigrants** – who may face language barriers, be less aware of what youth provision exists, or how to find that information
- **Single child households or those with siblings** – either situation was suggested by young people as potentially influencing participation. For example, in single child households a young person will not have siblings to attend activities with or discover activities through. Whereas those with siblings, may be negatively impacted by parental availability to support attendance
- **Young people with caring responsibilities** – who may lack time or flexibility to participate
- **Young people who are frequently absent from school or not in mainstream education** – who may benefit less from school as a key enabler of participation, or because it may reflect social, emotional or mental health challenges
- **Young people's religious and cultural beliefs –** which may create access requirements relating to dietary needs, activity location and gender mix, issues around discrimination (experienced or anticipated), feelings of inclusion, or limited time due to time spent practising their religion

[46] Social Mobility Commission (2019) *An unequal playing field: extra-curricular activities, soft skills and social mobility*

- **Young people who are care experienced –** who may have a more limited support network, may mistrust services or adults, or may have a more transient housing situation

- **Young people with transient housing situations** – regularly moving between areas might disrupt access and limit local knowledge. This may be linked to deprivation or parental occupations.

Risk profiles

3.32 Based on the results of the regression analysis we were able to build '**non-participation risk profiles' that combine the characteristics found to matter for participation**. For each profile we have calculated associated predicted participation probabilities.[47] This was done at the category level i.e. for groups and clubs overall, volunteering and social action.

3.33 As established in this chapter, the characteristics that have a significant effect on the probability of participation in groups and clubs were age, gender and two measures of deprivation (free school meals and IDACI area deprivation). There are 60 possible combinations of these four characteristics – so we calculated the **participation probabilities for 60 'risk profiles'**.

3.34 Figure 3-2 shows the four profiles with the lowest **predicted probabilities of participation in groups and clubs** versus the four with the highest predicted probabilities. **Overall, there is massive variation in predicted probabilities across the profiles.** The lowest is just 26% compared to the highest at 92%. All four of the profiles with the lowest predicted probabilities consist of young people who are aged 16-19, on free school meals and live in relatively deprived areas (IDACI quintile of 1 or 2). Gender seems to be less of a factor, with a mix of females and males. Conversely, those living in less deprived areas, not on free school meals and in the youngest age group (10-12) have the highest predicted probability of participation.

3.35 Similarly, Figure 3-3 shows the **risk profiles for volunteering**, based on 30 possible combinations of characteristics found to matter for volunteering participation (age, gender and IDACI area deprivation).[48] As for groups and clubs, the volunteering profiles associated with the highest risk of non-participation refer to people living in the most deprived areas (and vice versa). However, in contrast to groups and clubs, gender seems to be more of a factor, with all four profiles with the lowest predicted probabilities being for males, and all those with the highest predicted probabilities being for females.

3.36 Finally, **social action non-participation risk profiles** are shown in Figure 3-4. There are eight possible combinations of the three characteristics found to matter for social action participation

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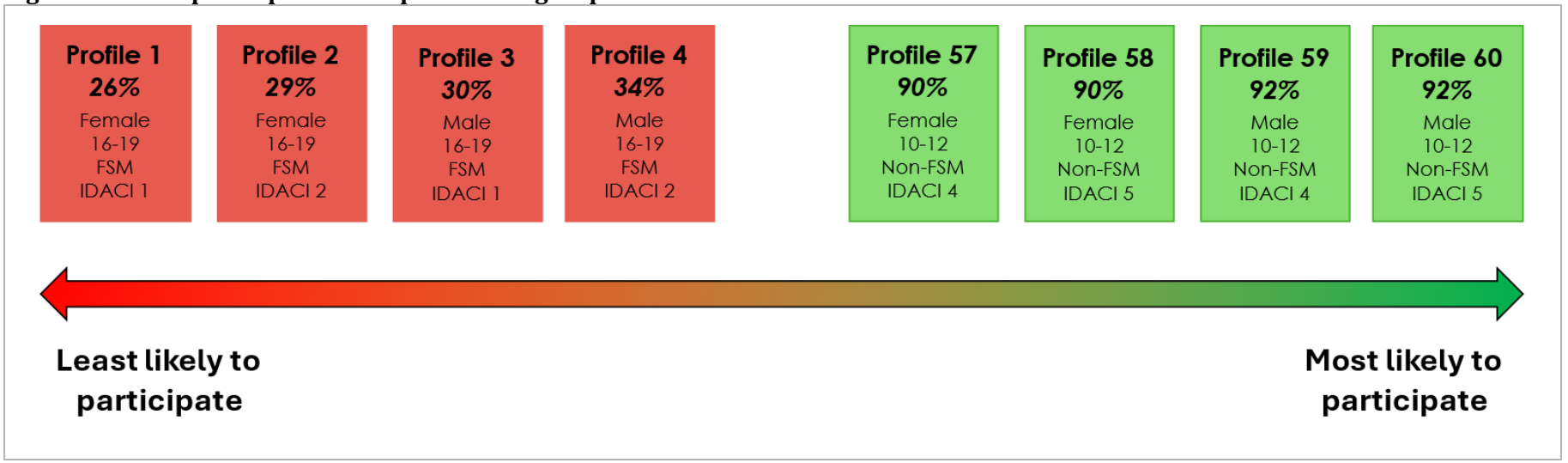
[47] I.e. predicted probability that a person with a given combination of characteristics participates in youth activities, under the assumption that their remaining characteristics are set at the sample mean values.
[48] Please note region was not included in the risk profiles.

(gender, FSM and ethnicity).[49] The profiles with the lowest predicted probabilities of social action participation are for young people on free school meals and mostly males. The opposite is true for the profiles with the highest predicted probabilities. In addition, most of the profiles with lower predicted probabilities are for white young people.

[49] As for volunteering, region was not included in the risk profiles.

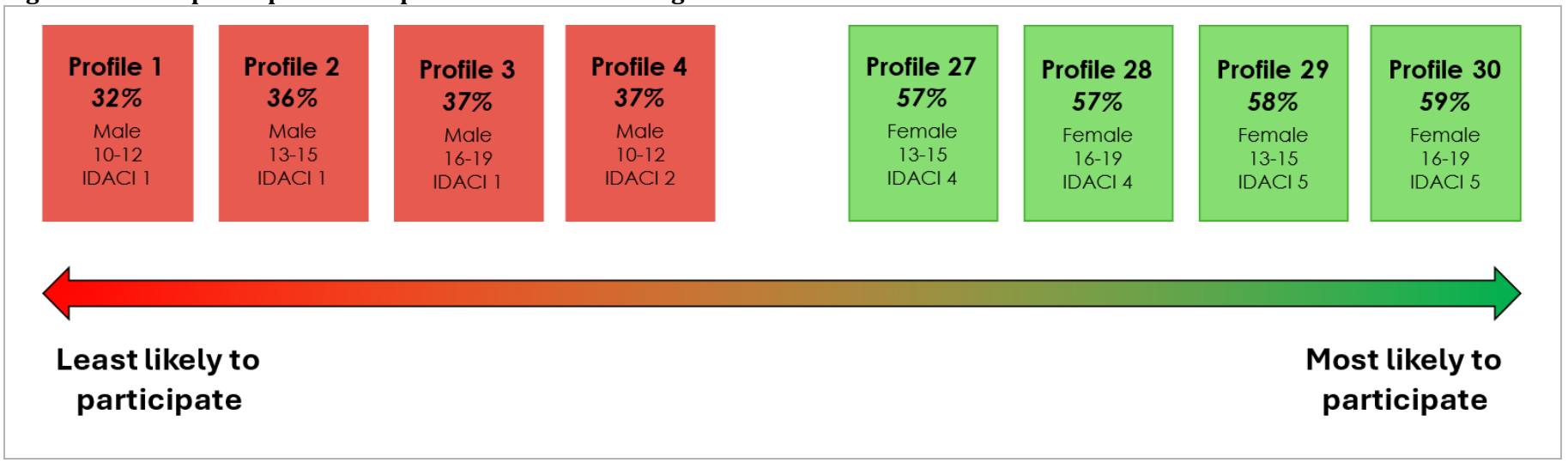
Figure 3-2: Non-participation risk profiles for groups and clubs



Source: SQW analysis of YPS data

Note: The predicted probability for each profile refers to the predicted probability for a given combination of the four characteristics, while holding the remaining characteristics at the sample mean values.

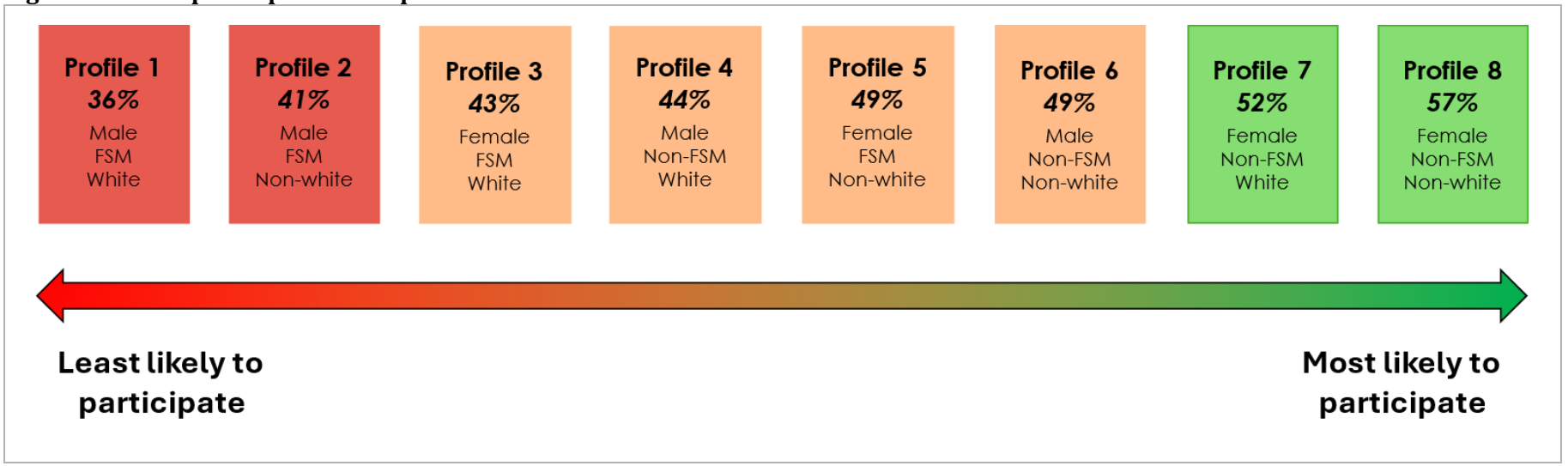
Figure 3-3: Non-participation risk profiles for volunteering



Source: SQW analysis of YPS data

Note: The predicted probability for each profile refers to the predicted probability for a given combination of the three characteristics, while holding the remaining characteristics at the sample mean values.

Figure 3-4: Non-participation risk profiles for social action



Source: SQW analysis of YPS data

Note: The predicted probability for each profile refers to the predicted probability for a given combination of the three characteristics, while holding the remaining characteristics at the sample mean value

4. Awareness of local provision

Chapter summary

Young people become aware of youth activities through school, friends, family, social media, online, physical marketing and community presence.

The YPS analysis found differences in the way young people with different characteristics hear about youth activities. For example, females are more likely to hear through schools, males through friends, and ethnic minorities through faith groups.

Half of all young people (51%) participating in an activity found out about it through school; 47% through a friend, and 35% through family. Fewer than one in five found out online.

Information about youth activities needs to use a range of different media, and different personal networks to reach young people and their families

The young people we spoke with frequently suggested a lack of awareness of youth provision was preventing them from participating in youth activities as much as they would like.

Young people said they wanted more information and opportunities to learn about youth provision, particularly through schools, outreach and marketing. Suggested approaches to raising awareness included 'open days' and a 'go to' resource.

Introduction

4.1 A young person's participation in an activity or service requires, in the first instance, for them to be aware it exists. The research explored the pathways through which young people became aware of a particular youth service or activity, their perceptions of those different pathways, and to the extent to which they felt they fully understood the opportunities open to them. This chapter considers these in turn, starting by considering the types of 'awareness pathways' and then considering their prevalence according to the YPS analysis.

Types of awareness pathways

4.2 In considering 'awareness pathways' through which young people become aware of youth services/activities, a distinction can be made between:

- **The type of information/encounter** – 'how' a young person encounters or learns about a service or activity e.g. word of mouth, marketing.
- **The source of that information or encounter** – the 'who, what or where' that shares the information with the young person, or makes that encounter happen.

4.3 The different types and sources of information and encounters identified during the fieldwork is presented in Table 4-1. Often young people learnt about an activity due to a chain of multiple combinations e.g. parent tells child after finding out via a friend, who had seen something on social media.

Table 4-1: Key examples of methods and routes for awareness

Type of information/encounter	Source of information/encounter
• Word of mouth • Physical marketing or other hard-copy information • Online marketing or information • In-person encounters • Referrals and signposts	• Friends/peers • Parents/carers/family members • Schools/colleges • Youth sector • Community organisations and settings • Religious/faith groups and settings • Care and support services e.g. health, social care, youth justice • Online networks and social media • Independent online searching

Source: SQW and UK Youth

4.4 Comparing across these, there are three important observations worth making. Firstly, between **pathways that require young people to actively seek out information versus those that do not**. For example, a young person may be made aware of an activity through outreach, marketing or word of mouth. This is different to them proactively seeking to verify information, find out more or search for information. Whether a young person is proactive depends on them being motivated and/or having the knowledge or network to find that information.

4.5 Secondly, the different pathways differ in their propensity to either **perpetuate or disrupt cycles of non-participation**. During the fieldwork some young people and sector interviewees said that parents/carers liked to encourage their children to do things they themselves had enjoyed. An Arts Council England report noted the presence of a 'cultural

cycle' whereby the childhood experiences of parents/carers impact the experiences of their children[50] and analysis by the Education Policy Institute found young people with families and friends who regularly participate in sport were more likely to attend extra-curricular sports clubs at school.[51] These findings highlight the importance of alternative pathways (e.g. schools, youth sector) and active information sharing (e.g. marketing, outreach) to break cycles of non-participation – by reaching young people and parents/carers who may otherwise be unaware or motivated to seek opportunities.

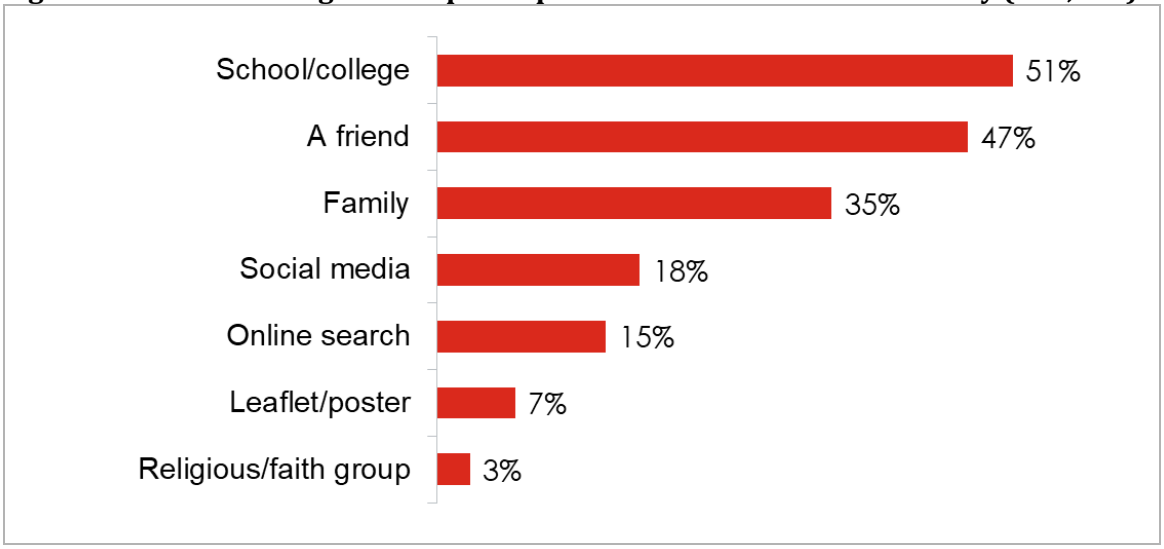
4.6 Thirdly, the **importance of trust** with information pathways. The more trust a young person (or their parent/carer) has in a particular information pathway the higher the likelihood the young people (or their parent/carer) will be receptive to the message. The subject of trust is returned to in Chapter 6 as a key enabler of participation.

Prevalence of awareness pathways in YPS

4.7 The YPS included a question on how young people involved in an activity or activities had heard about it. This did not fully distinguish between types and sources of information, and is not comprehensive in its coverage of pathways identified by young people and sector interviewees during the fieldwork e.g. it excludes in-person encounters from outreach activities. Nonetheless, Figure 4-1 provides a useful indication of the variety and prevalence of different pathways. In particular, it shows **the importance of school/colleges and word of mouth via social networks and family, as well as both physical and online material**. The prevalence of word of mouth sources does present a challenge though by obscuring the 'original' source of information e.g. a friend or parent may have originally discovered an activity via a leaflet or social media. The fieldwork faced a similar challenge, but was able to sometimes overcome this where the young people were aware of the original source.

[50] Arts Council England (2016) *Every Child: equality and diversity in arts and culture with, by and for children and young people*.
[51] Education Policy Institute (2024) *Access to extra-curricular provision and the association with outcomes*

Figure 4-1: Route through which participants had heard about the activity (n=1,294)



Source: SQW analysis of YPS data. Please note respondents could select more than one response.

4.8 There are a couple of caveats to highlight in interpreting these findings, however:

- This question was only asked for activities the young people had participated in, so it will reflect not just awareness pathways but also which pathways had been more successful in getting the young people to choose to engage.
- The survey considered any extra-curricular activities within school/college as in scope, so it does not provide an accurate indication of how important schools/colleges are for young people's engagement in activities outside of school.

4.9 As already set out in Chapter 3, the YPS regression analysis found that **the likelihood a young person had heard about an activity through each of the pathways sometimes varied by characteristics.** Those differences are collated below in Table 4-2 – and help to emphasise the importance of varied pathways in order to reach and engage all types of young people. The role of schools/colleges, marketing and religious/faith groups are notable for reaching ethnic minorities, those on FSM, females and/or younger people who are less likely to have heard about an activity via friends or family.

Table 4-2: Relationship between routes and characteristics

Heard about activities through…	More likely for young people with these characteristics
School/college	Female, younger, ethnic minorities
A friend	Male, non-LGBTQ+, non-FSM*
Family	Older, non-FSM, white ethnicity
Social media	10-12 year olds (r. to 13-15 year olds)
Online search	10-12 year olds (r. to 13-15 year olds)

Heard about activities through...	More likely for young people with these characteristics
Leaflet/poster	Younger, FSM, IDACI 3* (r. to IDACI 1)
Religious/faith group	Ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities)

*Source: SQW analysis of YPS data. r = relative to. * Indicates results only statistically significant at the 10% level*

4.10 It is notable that schools/colleges and religious/faith groups are both a potential information source and a potential provider of activities (either delivering activities themselves or hosting them on their premises). The YPS regression analysis also found younger groups and ethnic minorities are more likely to be participating in an activity organised by their school, college or university, further highlighting the importance of schools in facilitating participation in youth activities. There are often lower barriers to engaging with activities provided or hosted by known sources such as schools, which is returned to in Chapter 6.

What young people said about their awareness

4.11 A fundamental challenge for understanding a young person's awareness of their local offer is that a young person may be unaware of a particular activity either because (1) it does not exist locally or (2) it exists locally but they are unaware that it does. This meant there was a risk in the fieldwork of conflating lack of availability with lack of awareness. That said, many of the young people did suggest lack of awareness was a key reason they were not participating in youth activities: they felt they did not know what activities were available locally or where to search that information out. In support, in response to the YPS nearly a fifth of young people said lack of awareness was a reason for not participating in groups/clubs and over a quarter said it was a reason for not participating in volunteering. This section considers the reasons behind this, and how young people suggested they could be better supported with their awareness.

"[Why I'm not involved is] not knowing if these activities exist. If there are any youth activities available they are not advertised well." – ***Young Person***

"I don't know if it's just because there isn't any or because what's offered people aren't interested in. I'm not sure which it is." – ***Young Person***

4.12 It is first helpful to consider the differences between the young people who felt they had better awareness and those who felt they did not. **Those who felt they had better awareness during the fieldwork were generally**:

- **More likely to be participating in activities and satisfied with those activities**. The implication being they were sufficiently aware of their local offer for their needs to be met. This is somewhat reflected in the YPS regression analysis, which found young people who participate in youth activities were more likely to agree there is enough provision in their local area.

- **More likely to report a good flow of information sharing via their parents, friends and/or school** in particular. This was also reflected in the YPS regression analysis, which found all routes in Figure 4-1 had some positive effect on the number of activities participated in i.e. the more routes, the more likely a young person was to participate.

"I have really supportive parents and they have always tried to make lots of opportunities available to me – but I know not everyone has that and it's a big barrier." – ***Young Person***

- **More likely to have actively sought out information,** often in response to a desire to partake in a particular activity that aligned to their interests. This helps to highlight the importance of prior knowledge (knowing what to look for and where to look) and motivation (actively seeking out information) in enabling young people to find out what provision exists locally. Some of the wider literature included research with young people that also highlighted that lack of knowledge a type of activity exists means they will not be able to seek it out, with outdoor activities such as kayaking[52] and social action[53] specific examples of this. The YPS regression analysis found young people who were motivated to find out about an activity through online searching or social media were more likely to participate in more activities and more frequently.

4.13 Conversely**, the young people who felt they lacked awareness were less likely to be participating in activities already**, and less likely to feel they had sufficient knowledge or help to identify what was available to them.

4.14 These findings hint towards three factors that emerged from the fieldwork as critical in supporting young people's awareness of their local offer. The first, as already noted, is having **trusted and authoritative sources of information** (most commonly parents, schools and friends). Youth workers can play an important role in this respect too. The second factor relates to visibility and active information sharing.

"Nobody is really going round saying what is available – you would have to research yourself." – ***Young Person***

"Most people don't really make the effort … It needs to be more accessible so people who don't make an effort can still find out about it." – ***Young Person***

4.15 **Young people tended to have better awareness of activities that were 'visible' within their community**. One way an activity can have visibility is through where it takes place. For example, local football teams generally train or play outside and/or in public spaces so young people are more likely to be aware they exist locally. Conversely activities that tend to take

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[52] Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2023) 'It's not for people like (them)': structural and cultural barriers to children and young people engaging with nature outside schooling. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 23(1), 54–73

[53] Department of Culture Media and Sport (2020) *National Youth Social Action Survey 2019 Summary Report*

place indoors (e.g. art clubs) are less visible. Some young people therefore wondered whether activities of interest might be available locally but they were simply unaware.

"There are so many clubs in my local area that I would have no clue they were there unless someone told me about it. I used to walk past the Muay Thai club every day and not once did I notice it was there. I think that is a massive problem because there are probably other clubs that I would love to go to but I didn't even know they were a thing." – ***Young Person***

4.16 Another way youth provision can achieve visibility is through **outreach and community presence.** This might involve staff having a presence within neighbourhoods, within schools and key community locations, and at community events. Some organisations were able to achieve visibility through showcases or performances at a community event. This lends itself well to performing arts and music in particular.

4.17 Lastly, visibility within communities had been achieved through **marketing materials** (e.g. leaflets, posters) shared in community locations, via schools or via post. These approaches to visibility are all ways of actively sharing information with young people to overcome gaps in knowledge or a lack of motivation to seek things out. Chapter 8 includes more practical examples of how youth organisations have achieved this.

4.18 The third factor is active marketing. Young people said they wanted more information about their local offer. This included specific asks for:

- A **greater quantity and quality of marketing and outreach**. Views on social media were mixed, with some young people stating a preference for more social media advertising but others sceptical whether information would actually reach them via this route. Social media was more likely to be seen as a viable route for targeting parents/carers (through Facebook). Young people would use other social media platforms (e.g. TikTok, Instagram).

- **Physical marketing** was suggested including use of appropriate locations (e.g. bus stops, notice boards, schools, libraries),

- **Messaging should include information on who the activities were specifically targeted at,** visual and brightly coloured presentation, and testimonials from young people involved in the activities (although NCS's Youth Insights survey of young people found less positive reactions towards testimonials from previous participants[54]).

"I like how easy they are to find and to hear about, because as I said most things are now on social media. If there's anything new popping up, it's always put on the local Facebook group or the local Instagram, and that means that young people are always able to find new things to do." ***– Young Person***

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[54] NCS (2024) *Youth Insights survey data*

"I would like to say it is a lack of advertising and maybe [I'm] just a bit unlucky because I never see adverts for clubs online or on social media." – ***Young Person***

- **Information through schools** although views on the extent to which schools were already good at this were mixed – some young people said their school was very good, while others said their school was poor. Although it was not always clear whether 'good' schools were only advertising provision delivered by the school or on their premises, or whether they were also providing information on activities delivered independent of them.

"Maybe a little bit of push from schools to advertise clubs outside of school – that could actually be quite helpful. In my school, I've never really had any clubs outside of school suggested to me. It is not really a thing that happens. Maybe if there was a bit more information sent through the schools because that is an easy way for people of my age group to find out." – ***Young Person***

- **Use of various modes of communication** Ways in which young people were receiving or wanted to receive information included newsletters, emails and posters, or presentations in assemblies and classrooms, including by external staff/leaders.

- **A preference for information being actively shared with them**, to reduce the likelihood that they are unaware things exist and so they do not have to seek it out themselves. Again this included both outreach and marketing. A few young people suggested activity 'open days' as a good format, whereby all local provision would come to a school or community location to showcase what they offered.

- **Information from the local council** was suggested by a few young people who thought they could do more to help raise awareness about their local offer.

- Lastly, a couple of young people suggested **a 'go to' resource for young people** and their parents which collated what was available locally, such as a website or newsletter. It was emphasised that such a resource would need to be well advertised to ensure young people or their parents/carers know this resource exists.

"I think the majority of things we've been informed about have been through key workers or social services. But it would be nice not having to do that. It would be great to have a big database that people could look up things on. So much of it relies on word of mouth." – ***Young Person***

4.19 In Chapter 8 we return to awareness as one the main themes proposed as important for improving young people's participation and satisfaction with youth services, and draw out suggestions and examples of good practice from the sector interviews.

5. Motivations for participating

Chapter summary

Young people are motivated to participate for a range of reasons. Survey respondents showed that most young people who participate in activities do so because they enjoy it (82%). Other motivations include learning and skill development (73%), and keeping fit (59%).

Young people who were motivated by these factors were also more likely to participate more frequently, and in multiple activities.

Where young people were motivated to participate to build confidence and meet new people there was a negative association with duration of participation.

Young people who we spoke with also emphasised enjoyment. In addition they talked about developing skills, benefitting their future prospects, spending time with their friends, having a community, feeling of belonging or safety, wanting benefits to mental and physical wellbeing, and valuing relationships with staff or support.

The motivations of parents/carers matter too, but may not align with young people's motivations e.g. by placing a greater priority on studies or other commitments.

There is evidence that young people's priorities change with age, with older groups more likely to prioritise developmental opportunities, activities that improve their future prospects and a place to relax over organised activities.

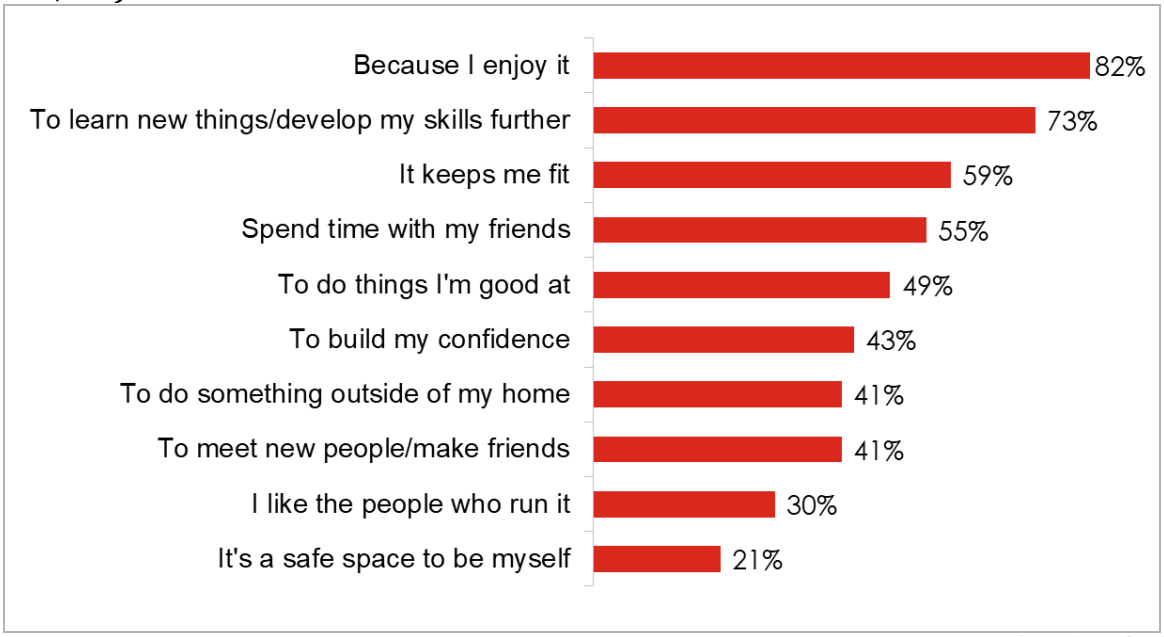
Introduction

5.1 In order to identify ways to increase young people's participation and satisfaction in youth provision it is vital to understand what motivates them to engage. If the youth offer and messaging around the offer aligns to a young person's motivations they will be more inclined to seek an activity and participate in the first place, and more likely to sustain participation. This chapter therefore considers the motivations identified through the YPS survey and the fieldwork. It starts with the YPS analysis findings on the prevalence of different motivations and their relationship with participation. It then considers what young people said about their motivations in more depth, supplemented by findings from the sector interviews and evidence review.

Prevalence and influence of motivations in YPS analysis

5.2 The **YPS asked all young people who participated in at least one group or club the reasons why they participated.**[55] The results in Figure 5-1 show the prevalence of different motivations, with the young people selecting an average of 5 each. The most common is enjoyment, while more than half of young people identified learning things or developing skills, keeping fit, and spending time with their friends.

Figure 5-1: Motivations for participating in activities (% of groups/clubs participants, n=1,323)



Source: SQW analysis of YPS data

5.3 The YPS regression analysis explored the relationship between motivations and levels of participation. The results are summarised in Table 5-1 (note that '+' indicates a positive effect, '-' indicates a negative effect and 'o' indicates no effect).[56] They show that in general each of the motivations has a positive effect on either the length or frequency of participation, or number of activities participated in, or on multiple of these measures. In just three instances the analysis found that a motivation had a negative effect on participation: 'to build my confidence' and 'to meet new people/make friends' had a negative impact on length of participation, while 'it's a safe space to be myself' had a negative impact on frequency of participation. These may point to the barrier effect that issues around confidence and fit can have. These are considered more in the next chapter which is focused on barriers and enablers.

[55] The YPS did not include an equivalent question on motivations for participating in social action and volunteering.
[56] Please see Tables D-9, D-12, D-15 in Annex D for the full results.

5.4 During the fieldwork, some **other common motivations were identified by young people that are less clearly captured by the survey options**: for a sense of belonging and community, to benefit their mental wellbeing, and to improve their future prospects. Also related but not strictly a motivation, was being encouraged or required to go to an activity by their parents. The next section considers what young people said about their motivations in greater detail.

Table 5-1: Motivation for participating and its effect on the length, frequency and volume of participation in groups/clubs

Motivations	Longer[57]	More frequent[58]	Multiple activities[59]
Because I enjoy it	o	+	+
To learn new things/develop my skills further	+*	+*	+
It keeps me fit	+	+	+
Spend time with my friends	o	o	+
To do things I'm good at	+	+	+
To do something outside of my home	o	o	o
To build my confidence	-*	o	o
To meet new people/make friends	-	+	+
I like the people who run it	+	o	o
It's a safe space to be myself	o	-*	-*

*Source: SQW analysis of YPS data * Indicates results only statistically significant at the 10% level*

What young people said about their motivations

5.5 The young people spoken to during the fieldwork frequently highlighted the **importance of youth provision aligning with their motivations and interests**, especially in response to being asked what could increase the number of young people participating in youth activities. They also emphasised the need to ensure young people understand the benefits they will get out of different activities, such as enjoyment, the benefits to mental and physical wellbeing, or a positive impact on future prospects.

[57] Participation for longer than six months, longer than one year and longer than two years.
[58] Participation more than weekly, at least weekly, and at least monthly.
[59] Number of activities and number of activity types participated in, and participation in more than one activity/activity type

"I believe emphasising the benefits of going to the clubs is extremely important. Because a young person might be looking for something that would benefit them, but that might not be clear to the young person what would be best for them." – ***Young Person***

5.6 It was also clear that it is **important to appeal to the motivations of parents/carers too** – as parents/carers can play a key role in identifying and making young people aware of activities that might be worthwhile, and in encouraging or supporting them to try something out or keep attending. These motivations are the same types of motivations cited by young people e.g. they want their child to have fun, experience personal development or to make friends. However, for some young people it was apparent that the motivations and priorities of their parents were not aligned. During the fieldwork a couple of young people were required to prioritise their studies or other commitments, and sector interviewees suggested parents may be mistrusting or overly protective.

"My mum also has to encourage me to go if I'm feeling a bit tired." – ***Young Person***

"As kids grow up and develop, they become interested in different things … [but] parents hang on to the things you liked when you were younger and don't understand why your interests change, and they try to get you to join clubs that either they would have liked when they were younger, or what you would have liked to do when you were younger." – ***Young Person***

"I think children should be given the choice of what to do. Some parents decide they should do stuff that's good for their CV but clubs should be for relaxing after school." – ***Young Person***

5.7 **Motivations can change with age**. Amongst the YPS responses enjoyment was more likely to be identified as a motivation for participating by those aged 10-12 (85%) than those aged 16+ (75%). While this may be more indicative of the activities they are involved in rather than what would theoretically motivate them (because it was only asked of young people participating in activities) the fieldwork findings also pointed to changing motivations with age. For example, sector interviewees suggested that older groups were more likely to prioritise developmental opportunities and activities that improve their future prospects, and to value a space to relax, over 'fun' activities. There is further evidence of this amongst the wider literature. For example, in one of the National Citizen Service's omnibus surveys 'fun' was the most common motivation, but older teens were relatively more likely to seek out activities for happiness, relaxation, getting out of the house and independence.[60]

Enjoyment

5.8 **The YPS results show enjoyment was the most common motivator for participating in youth activities.** During the fieldwork young people talked about the enjoyment of fun, escapism, avoiding boredom, new experiences, having a sense of accomplishment and relaxing. Having a variety of activities to cater to what gives each individual enjoyment was

[60] National Citizen Service (2024) NCS Omnibus

highlighted as important in this respect. The fieldwork also pointed to the importance of 'hooks' and incentives in youth provision, with young people particularly enjoying the opportunities to participate in new or novel activities, having a 'big thing' to look forward to or work towards such as an overseas trip or a performance, winning prizes, or even just having snacks provided. The link between enjoyment and wellbeing was highlighted too.

"I like that I do stuff that I normally wouldn't do like cooking and cool trips." – ***Young Person***

"I saw the activities and there was just so much to do, like climbing … stuff I haven't done before." – ***Young Person***

Skills and knowledge, sense of accomplishment and future prospects

5.9 Young people talked about developing a wide range of skills and knowledge, including in sports, artistic and educational pursuits, as well as practical and life skills. Practical and life skills ranged from swimming and self-defence to confidence to cooking. Young people valued the development of a skill or knowledge for a range of reasons – because it was enjoyable in itself, for the sense of accomplishment, because they felt it developed them as a person or because it would benefit their future prospects.

"Just learning to play different pieces of music is really fun, and you feel like you accomplish a lot when you learn a piece." – ***Young Person***

"It seemed like a really good way to challenge myself and prove myself that I can do certain things that I would have found difficult." – ***Young Person***

5.10 **Competition was clearly important for many young people**, as the challenge and prospect of winning offered a sense of achievement. Others valued recognition of their progress and achievements for example, achieving a grade in an instrument, or a certificate.

5.11 Amongst the young people who valued activities that would benefit their future prospects, there were mentions of **activities that could be included in a CV and skills that directly linked to a future profession.** For example, a couple of young people talked about their aspirations to compete in their sport at a professional level. Sector interviewees highlighted the valuable role youth provision can play in developing young people's soft skills for employment.

Socialising, community, belonging and safe spaces

5.12 The YPS responses also show the prevalence of young people being motivated by **opportunities to spend time with their friends or to make new friends.** For many of the young people we spoke to this was the main motivation for seeking out and participating in activities. Conversely this was a key barrier if they didn't have a friend to go with.

"It's 100% the people doing it because I don't find the activity that fulfilling but I get to see my friends more than I would." – ***Young Person***

"It filled the gap I had in my life of socialising with people my own age." – ***Young Person***

5.13 Beyond the emphasis placed on socialising, a number of young people also mentioned the importance of a **sense of belonging and being part of a community**. This was common amongst young people with a minority characteristic (such as being LGBTQ+ or neurodivergent) who sometimes felt isolated. However, there were also a couple of mentions of being part of a diverse community united around a shared interest such as football.

"[It was] a chance to meet other people who were queer and get some community." – ***Young Person***

"It's basically like a secondary family. You're all together." – ***Young Person***

5.14 Related to this, young people also talked about the importance of youth provision **providing a 'safe space' or allowing them to 'be ourselves'.** While it was the least motivation in response to Table 6-1, it was still chosen by a fifth of young people – and it was clear during the fieldwork that this is especially important to young people who felt marginalised. Sector interviewees also highlighted the importance of safe spaces for young people in challenging situations at home or school.

"Places like that feel like a safe place because all the people there have something in common and 'get' you." – ***Young Person***

Mental and physical wellbeing

5.15 Many young people emphasised the **mental and physical benefits to engaging in activities**. Physical benefits were generally mentioned in relation to sport, with young people talking about the need to be fit and active. Whereas participation in a whole range of activities were said to benefit mental wellbeing. Young people talked about benefits to mental wellbeing from being active, from socialising, from expressing themselves, from having an outlet, from having a relaxed or quiet environment, from having a safe space or sense of belonging, or from having support specifically for their wellbeing (considered more below). Some of the young people emphasised the beneficial impacts for mental wellbeing as particularly important following the COVID-19 pandemic.

"They are very relaxing. It is time I don't have to spend thinking about school work and instead just think about drawing." – ***Young Person***

"It's a chance to blow off steam if I get annoyed about something else during the week." – ***Young Person***

Staff, mentoring and support

5.16 Finally, some of the young people identified motivations that related to **support from staff and youth worker**s. This encompassed fun-orientated relationships with staff/leaders, mentoring and pastoral support, and access to targeted interventions for a particular issue such as mental health support. A small number of young people talked about the value of having a trusted adult to talk to, who cared and supported them. Sector interviewees emphasised the importance of this for young people who lack it elsewhere in particular.

"[I like] having someone to talk to and express my feelings." – ***Young Person***

"My manager at the volunteering group provides immense support. She's very nurturing. She isn't just nurturing to me, she acts that way towards everyone." – ***Young Person***

6. Barriers and enablers to participation

Chapter summary

Young people's barriers to participation can be broadly categorised as:

- 'Practical' – which include availability, time and other commitments, cost and affordability, access and transport, physical accessibility, parental permission, and information accessibility.
- 'Attitudinal, psychological and relational' – which include alignment with interests and preferences, confidence and apprehension, when environments feel inclusive, welcome and accessible, and wellbeing and safety.

These barriers may reflect demand side issues (e.g. a young person and their parents being unable to afford provision due to their disposable income) or supply side issues (e.g. an expensive activity), or the availability of provision.

The most frequently cited factors that prevented participation were lack of interest, being too busy with other commitments and a preference to do other things.

Young people with certain characteristics are more likely to report specific barriers. For example, a lack of interest was more likely to be reported by young people aged 13-19, males, and those in the least deprived areas. Being too busy was more likely to be reported by 16-19 year olds, females and those in the least deprived areas.

Introduction

6.1 The preceding chapters considered how a young person's participation in a youth activity or service is influenced by their characteristics, their awareness, and their motivations. This chapter considers other factors that can function as 'barriers' that impede or 'enablers' that support a young person's participation in youth provision. These factors may influence whether a young person chooses to engage in the first instance or whether a young person sustains their engagement (as visualised earlier in Figure 1-2).

6.2 The chapter starts by conceptualising barriers and enablers before considering the prevalence of different barriers captured by YPS. It then considers individual barriers and enablers in more depth, drawing primarily on findings from the interviews with young people

and sector interviews, and supplemented by the evidence review. Chapter 8 further builds on this by considering examples of good practice and suggestions from the sector around how to reduce barriers and enhance the role of enablers.

Conceptualising 'barriers' and 'enablers' to participation

6.3 The factors that influence a young person's participation can be categorised as either practical (e.g. cost or transport) or what we have termed 'attitudinal, psychological and relational' which captures factors such as a young person's interests, confidence, interactions with others, and their mental state. This is purposefully broad because of the high interdependency between these factors as described to us by young people, which made them difficult to meaningfully delineate. The detailed consideration of barriers and enablers in this chapter is structured around these two categories. In addition, the various broader factors in Figure 1-2 have an effect too – including a young person's relationships and social networks, the local offer from the youth sector, and cultural, economic and geographical factors – so these factors are considered where pertinent.

6.4 A useful distinction can also be made between the **demand side and supply side aspects of barriers.** An example of a demand side barrier is a young person and their parents being unable to afford provision due to their level of disposable income. A corresponding supply side barrier would be an activity that is intrinsically expensive to offer because of its need for specific physical space or equipment for example. Most of the issues in this chapter have both demand and supply aspects. Some of these distinctions are noted throughout. The suggestions presented in Chapter 8 on how to improve young people's participation and satisfaction mostly concern the supply side aspects of barriers, as these are generally more feasible to address.

6.5 **Young people with certain characteristics may be more likely to experience specific barriers and enablers.** Where the YPS regression analysis found significant relationships between characteristics and barriers (to participating in groups and clubs) these are included as highlight boxes throughout the chapter. These do repeat the results already set out in Chapter 3 where barriers were reported against each characteristic, except here it is presented in reverse: with relevant characteristics reported against each barrier. Analysis showing the relationship between characteristics and barriers to participating in volunteering and social action are set out in Table D-17 and Table D-18 in Annex D.

Prevalence of barriers in YPS analysis

6.6 The YPS included a question on the factors that stop young people participating in activities in their local area. The results in Figure 5-1 show the prevalence of the different barriers

across groups and clubs, volunteering and social action.[61] Please note all young people were asked the question for groups and clubs, and social action. For these categories, it therefore captures barriers to participating in any activities (for those not participating at all) or more activities (for those already participating in some). For volunteering only non-participants were asked the question and therefore volunteering is not directly comparable to the other two categories. The darker reds show more common responses.

6.7 The reasons given in the survey cover practical and attitudinal, psychological and relational barriers, as well as barriers relating to awareness ('I don't know what activities are going on in my area') and more directly relating to parents/carers ('I'm not allowed to go'). **The barriers found to have a statistically significant effect on the likelihood of not participating at all are indicated with a '#'**. This shows **lack of interest, a preference for other things, shyness or confidence, lack of knowledge, and physical health or disability, are all predictors of non-participation.** For example, young people who do not participate at all are more likely to have said they were not participating due to 'lack of interest' than young people already participating in some activities were to give it as the reason they did not want to participate in more activities. The others barriers were as likely to be identified as barriers to participation by those not participating at all and those already participating in some activities.

Table 6-1: Factors that stop young people attending activities in their local area

Barriers	Groups/clubs	Volunteering	Social action
I'm not interested in going	# 40%	# 22%	# 43%
Too busy with other commitments	37%	32%	24%
I prefer to do other things in spare time	# 29%	19%	19%
Cost	25%	5%	6%
I don't have anyone to go with	22%	10%	10%
I'm too shy/lack confidence	# 22%	# 13%	11%
Difficulty getting there	19%	10%	9%
I don't know what activities are going on in my area	18%	# 28%	22%
The activities aren't very good	10%	n/a	n/a
I won't fit in	10%	4%	5%

[61] Please note all young people (participants and non-participants) were asked the question for groups/clubs and social action. Whereas for volunteering only non-participants or those participating less frequently than once a month were asked. This means volunteering is not directly comparable to the other two categories.

Barriers	Groups/clubs	Volunteering	Social action
The activities not aimed at people my age	9%	n/a	n/a
My mental health	9%	5%	5%
My physical health or a disability	# 3%	2%	2%
I'm not allowed to go	2%	1%	1%
Number of responses	1,919	1,545	1,869

Source: SQW analysis of YPS data. Note: Everyone was asked about barriers to participation in groups/clubs and in social action. Only those who do not participate in volunteering at all or do so less frequently than once a month were asked about barriers to participation in volunteering.

Practical barriers and enablers

Availability

6.8 Young people's ability to access youth provision is influenced first and foremost by whether it exists locally, and whether young people are eligible to access it. Funding is obviously an important factor in this, but between 2010/11 and 2023/24 spending on youth services by local authorities fell by 73%.[62]

6.9 The regression analysis found certain types of young people were less likely to say they had enough clubs and activities in their local area in the YPS, as summarised in the box below.

> **Less likely to agree there are enough clubs and activities locally:** 16-19 year olds (relative to 10-12 year olds), females, limiting disability, most deprived areas (IDACI 1, relative to IDACI 4 and 5)

6.10 Availability differs between areas and has changed over time. The National Youth Sector Census found **twice as many youth sector organisations operating in the most deprived areas**.[63] However, an earlier census found **the most affluent areas had twice as many buildings purpose-built for or dedicated towards young people**.[64] **The number of open access youth clubs has decreased significantly over recent years**, with a Unison study finding 68% of council-run youth centres had closed between 2010 and 2023 across England and Wales.[65] Alternative spaces may not be suited to youth activities, for example due to lack of storage space. Other factors that influence availability include:

[62] YMCA (2025) Beyond the Brink? The state of funding for youth services.
[63] NYA (2024) National Youth Sector Census Snapshot: Summer 2024.
[64] NYA (2021) Initial Summary of Findings from the National Youth Sector Census.
[65] Unison (2024) Britain's Lost Generation: Government cuts have shattered council youth services and left vulnerable youngsters exposed.

- Whether schools encourage or welcome youth worker-led activities on school premises
- Access to community facilities – such as sports fields, leisure centres and swimming pools[66]
- Staff and volunteers – whether there are sufficient suitably qualified and experienced people to run an activity and their levels of availability.
- Eligibility criteria – a young person may not be eligible to access local provision because they do not meet specific eligibility criteria e.g. age or gender.

6.11 Other factors such as when and where the provision is, and the nature of that provision, are important too, and considered in other parts of this chapter.

"I genuinely don't think there is stuff going on." ***– Young Person***

"I feel like, for where I live, there should just be more activities. There isn't really anything here to do." ***– Young Person***

Time and other commitments

6.12 The most common barrier with a practical aspect in the YPS responses is **'too busy with other commitments' – which more than a third of young people said was a barrier** to engaging in groups/clubs. This barrier may reflect a lack of time required for the activity itself or for travelling to/from the activity, or a clash in timings between two activities. There may also be an attitudinal element in terms of which commitments a young person chooses to prioritise (which is considered more later).

More likely to say they were too busy with other commitments to attend any/more groups or clubs: 16-19 year olds (relative to 10-12 year olds), females, non-FSM*, least deprived areas (IDACI 5, relative to IDACI 1)

** Indicates results only statistically significant at the 10% level*

6.13 The other types of commitments that young people identified during the fieldwork include schoolwork and revision, employment, responsibilities at home (including caring responsibilities), religious worship, and involvement in other youth activities or other hobbies. Often these reflected the priorities of the young people, but in some cases these other commitments appeared to be more parent-led e.g. the pressure to prioritise academic studies. The YPS analysis found those aged 16-19 are more likely to cite this barrier – which is likely a reflection of the additional pressures and commitments that these older groups face. A small number of young people also mentioned the pressure to commit more time towards

[66] Moore, J. et al (2010) A qualitative examination of perceived barriers and facilitators of physical activity for urban and rural youth. *Health Education Research*, 25(2), pp.355–367

specialising in a single activity at the expense of others when mastering a skill or competing at a higher level.

"I don't have that much time to get into other activities. I mainly have to get home, study, relax, go to sleep, and repeat." – ***Young Person***

"My friend prefers to practise drawing and colouring rather than going out and doing clubs." – ***Young Person***

"It's not my main sport so I don't have time to dedicate to it." – ***Young Person***

Cost and affordability

6.14 Cost is the second most common practical barrier in the YPS responses, with a quarter of young people saying this was a barrier to participating in groups/clubs. As noted earlier this has both supply side (i.e. cost of activities) and demand side (i.e. ability to pay) aspects.

More likely to say cost: 10-12 year olds (relative to 13-15 year olds), FSM, most deprived areas* (IDACI 1, relative to IDACI 5)

** Indicates results only statistically significant at the 10% level*

6.15 **The costs that present a barrier include both 'direct' and 'indirect' costs**. Direct costs include fees or equipment for participating in the activity itself. Some young people said the direct costs of niche and unusual activities tended to be more expensive than commonly available activities such as football. Indirect costs include costs associated with transport, appropriate clothing and the costs of sustenance, which one young person described as 'hidden costs.' Foregone earnings are another potential indirect cost of participation for young people or parents who could otherwise have been doing paid work.

"Some places need money for you to be able to do an activity but I don't have a job so I wouldn't be able to do that." – ***Young Person***

"I think money would be a struggle. Lots of places have fees in order to be able to do the activity. Travel is expensive too, especially with the price rise in bus tickets." – ***Young Person***

6.16 Costs were frequently mentioned by young people during the fieldwork as a reason for not participating in youth provision in the first place and as a reason for stopping. The increased cost of living was often blamed. The wider evidence reflects this, with a Department for Education survey in 2023 finding one in five parents had reduced or stopped their child's participation in after-school clubs or extra-curricular activities because of cost pressures.[67] Similarly a survey by national youth charity OnSide in 2023 found 26% of young people had

[67] Department for Education (2023) *Parent, Pupil and Learner Panel 22/23 Recruitment Wave 1* referenced in Education Policy Institute (2024) *Access to extra-curricular provision and the association with outcomes*

stopped out of school activities because of the rising cost of living.[68] Research with young people by the Social Mobility Commission highlighted how young people themselves are sensitive to the financial burden of activity costs, which can dissuade them from participating even if their parents/carers are willing to fund it.[69]

"If my parents got paid more or if they made the clubs completely free that would help. It is about money basically." – ***Young Person***

"I used to do Rainbows and then Brownies but I had to stop when the fees went up." – ***Young Person***

6.17 There is also a distinction between **upfront and ongoing costs**. Upfront costs might consist of the purchase of sports equipment or a musical instrument which may be prohibitively expensive. The Social Mobility Commission study highlighted upfront costs as 'riskier' for those from lower social class backgrounds because, for example, the purchase of a musical instrument is more wasteful if the young person stops lessons or feels they are 'not good enough.'[70]

"A lot of these activities are quite expensive for many people, especially when you take into account the equipment and that you need to buy clothing." – ***Young Person***

Access and transport

6.18 'Difficulty getting there' was the third most common practical barrier in the YPS responses, with a fifth of young people saying this was a barrier to engaging in groups/clubs. This barrier reflects a few factors: the location and proximity of youth provision, the availability of transport and affordability of transport, and safety travelling. Barriers relating to transport and geography were frequently cited within the wider literature.[71,72,73]

More likely to say difficulty getting there: most deprived areas (IDACI 1, relative to IDACI 5), ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities), limiting disability

6.19 Unless an activity is within walking distance, young people said they were dependent on either parents, family, parents of friends, or public transport for getting to an activity. However, these options may not be available: their parents may not have a car or may have

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[68] OnSide (2023) *Generation Isolation. Onside's annual study into young people's lives outside school*
[69] Social Mobility Commission (2019) *An unequal playing field: extra-curricular activities, soft skills and social mobility*
[70] Social Mobility Commission (2019) *An unequal playing field: extra-curricular activities, soft skills and social mobility*
[71] Social Mobility Commission (2019) *An unequal playing field: extra-curricular activities, soft skills and social mobility*
[72] NCS (2024) *Understanding Young People*
[73] Department of Culture Media and Sport (2021) *Youth Evidence: Deep dive focus group findings*

other commitments, or their area may be poorly served by public transport, transport may be prohibitively expensive, or the timings may not work for the journey. Accordingly, young people emphasised the importance of activities purposefully being in accessible locations. Some also highlighted how activities might involve travel to both the 'usual' location and to other locations for matches, tournaments and special events – so while the 'usual' location might be accessible for a young person they may still face a barrier to participating fully.

"My parents and my friends' parents did car shares that were very important as otherwise it would have been impossible to get there." – ***Young Person***

"I think that is related to location and being able to get to places – that was always my biggest issue. So if people's parents worked late or something they might not have the opportunity to go." – ***Young Person***

6.20 **Young people frequently commented on the limited range of activities available locally and/or within a travelable distance**. Young people in less urbanised areas were more likely to mention issues with limited local provision and public transport – although notably the YPS analysis did not find 'difficulty getting there' was a more common barrier for young people in rural areas. This may reflect issues such as area deprivation being a more important determinant in access to transport. In support of this conclusion, young people in the most deprived areas were more likely to report this barrier.

"They're more focused on sports and football, and things like that [locally]. So I guess if you wanted to try something else … you're restricted to travel really far." – ***Young Person***

"Anyone who lives in villages is relying on their parents or slightly unreliable community busses, and if their parents work then that's obviously quite difficult." – ***Young Person***

"There are some youth clubs that are further away from me and I can't get there. I know there is one in the next town but it would take me probably over an hour to walk there." – ***Young Person***

6.21 **Young people also expressed concerns about their safety when travelling**. This includes concerns about travelling in the dark, travelling to an unfamiliar area, travelling to or through areas with high levels of crime or anti-social behaviour, and concerns about safety on public transport. Safety when travelling was a common theme in the wider literature too.[74,75,76]

"Especially in the winter, I wouldn't want to travel in the dark. I would be worried about going to a new area that I didn't know … You don't know what you're going to face when you go to a

[74] Scottish Government (2018) *Young people's participation in out-of-school activities*
[75] NCS (2024) *Understanding Young People*
[76] Department of Culture Media and Sport (2021) *Youth Evidence: Deep dive focus group findings*

new place or how you can get help, and some areas are not safe here – you always see the police around – so I would want to feel safe getting there." – ***Young Person***

Physical accessibility

6.22 **'My physical health or a disability' is another barrier** with a practical aspect in the YPS responses, which a very small proportion of young people (3%) said was a barrier to engaging in groups/clubs. While of low prevalence amongst responses, it can be a very significant barrier for those who do face it. It is important to recognise the diversity of physical conditions that exist which can present a specific set of access issues. Issues around accessibility (both actual and perceived) for young people with more severe needs in particular were also identified in the wider literature.[77,78] The regression analysis found young people with a limiting disability were less likely to agree there were enough clubs and activities in their local area.

More likely to say my physical health or a disability: Limiting disability, LGBTQ+

6.23 The types of physical access barriers young people can face include issues with the physical accessibility of a location, facilities or equipment, or the approach to the activities not being catered to different physical abilities including fitness levels. A lack of knowledge or training for staff and volunteers may contribute to this, if it means staff do not understand the nature of young people's disabilities or how to make reasonable adjustments.[79] Sector interviewees highlighted staff knowledge gaps or misassumptions as more likely for young people with less common conditions. Provision specifically targeted at young people with physical disabilities can play an important role in providing accessible opportunities, however young people with access issues may want the option to participate in general provision (along with their non-disabled peers) or may not have not have targeted provision available locally. Young people who need to be accompanied by a carer may face additional barriers and potentially costs.[80]

"Sometimes it's just as easy as not having a club up a massive flight of stairs – how are people in a wheelchair supposed to get involved?" – ***Young Person***

"I would definitely say things could be personalised more to your level of fitness. They don't let us have many breaks and sometimes we can't have water breaks, and that is hard for some people depending on their fitness." – ***Young Person***

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[77] Arts Council England (2016) *Every Child: equality and diversity in arts and culture with, by and for children and young people*.
[78] Moran, T., and Block, M., (2010) Barriers to Participation of Children with Disabilities in Youth Sports. *Teaching Exceptional Children Plus.* 6(1)
[79] Moran, T., and Block, M., (2010) Barriers to Participation of Children with Disabilities in Youth Sports. *Teaching Exceptional Children Plus.* 6(1)
[80] Department of Culture Media and Sport (2021) *Youth Evidence: Deep dive focus group findings*

Parental permission

6.24 **'I'm not allowed to go' is the final and least common barrier** with a practical aspect in the YPS responses, which a very small proportion (2%) of young people said was a barrier to engaging in groups/clubs. It is possible these reflect practical barriers that parents/carers face around availability, other commitments, costs or transport, or they relate to attitudinal, psychological or relational issues (which are considered more later).

> **More likely to say I'm not allowed to go:** IDACI 3 areas* (relative to IDACI 1), ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities)

** Indicates results only statistically significant at the 10% level*

6.25 Schools and colleges are potentially an important solution to this barrier, as providers of activities that are readily accessible, that are known, familiar and often trusted for parents/carers, and potentially less dependent on parental permission.

Information accessibility

6.26 The accessibility of information is not captured by the YPS results because there is no corresponding question. It was, however, identified as a potential barrier during the fieldwork and within the wider literature.[81] **Language barriers, low reading comprehension or non-accessible information formats may prevent a young person or their parents/carers from becoming aware of or engaging with an activity**.

Summary of enabling factors

6.27 The fieldwork and wider evidence highlighted a range of actions that could mitigate the effects of some of the barriers described above. These are summarised as follows:

Barrier	Suggested enabler
Time and other commitments	Vary times, days and frequency of provision Drop in and flexible access
Cost and affordability	Provision free at point of access Affordable or subsidised direct and indirect costs Alternative payment options including pay as you go and paying in instalments Equipment loans and sponsorship Trials to de-risk cost of trying something new

[81] Arts Council of Ireland (2016) *Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and Young People: Insights from the Growing Up in Ireland.*

Barrier	Suggested enabler
Access and transport	Providing transport or subsidising costs Help with travel planning Take activities to where young people are (e.g. school or town centres) Safe, affordable public transport and safe active travel[82]
Physical accessibility	Physically accessible venues Physical adaptations to activities and specialist equipment Knowledgeable, trained activity providers Drawing on expertise of local SEND charities and practitioners Targeted support for groups of young people with similar physical access needs Online or hybrid delivery
Information accessibility	Community language versions of information Simple language for low literacy Accessible format

Attitudinal, psychological & relational

Alignment with interests and preferences

6.28 'I'm not interested in going' is the most common reason for young people not engaging in groups/clubs amongst the YPS responses, with four in ten citing this reason. Ultimately, if an activity does exist locally then a young person's decision to seek it out or participate will be heavily dependent on whether it interests them and aligns to their preferences. The motivations set out in Chapter 5 are relevant here.

6.29 Other relevant responses that indicate a lack of alignment between what young people want and their local youth offer include: 'too busy with other commitments' (just over a third), 'I prefer to do other things in spare time' (just under a third) and 'the activities aren't very good' (one in ten). The types of young people that the YPS regression analysis found more likely to choose each of these answers varied, as summarised in the box below.

More likely to say…

[82] Four people engaged in the research (young people and sector interviewees) highlighted Our Pass in Greater Manchester, which provides free bus transport to 16-18 year olds, as an example of this.

- **I'm not interested in going:** Aged 13-15 and 16-19 (relative to 10-12 year olds), males, least deprived areas (IDACI 5, relative to IDACI 1)
- **Busy with other commitments:** Aged 16-19 (relative to 10-12 year olds), females, non-FSM*, least deprived areas (IDACI 5, relative to IDACI 1)
- **I prefer to do other things in my spare time:** non-FSM, most deprived areas* (IDACI 1, relative to IDACI 2), white ethnicity*
- **The activities aren't very good:** Aged 13-15 (relative to 10-12 year olds)

** Indicates results only statistically significant at the 10% level*

6.30 A very common view amongst the young people spoken with was that **not all interests and types of young people were well catered to by their local offer.** Most commonly, there was a view that activities were unavailable or less accessible (travel and cost-wise) for those interested in artistic and creative activities, less mainstream sports, and niche interests. Examples of unmet demand amongst the young people we spoke with included art workshops, film clubs, book clubs, cooking, esports, knitting, ice skating, volleyball, American football and go-karting. There was also a noticeable divide amongst young people who valued competitive activities and those who preferred more relaxed, casual activities or environments. This latter group was seen as less well catered to. Relatedly, a common view was young people need to have physical spaces where they can spend time, without necessarily having to be involved in organised activities.

"[There's] not enough for creative people. Exploring more of a range would be a plus." – ***Young Person***

"I think there is a good range of clubs, but I guess it is a lot more concentrated on the popular things. There are tonnes of football clubs near me but not squash for example. Obviously the more popular it is, the more clubs there are going to be, but maybe if there were more niche clubs around then … loads of people might actually love to do them." – ***Young Person***

"There is a lack of more relaxed, casual activities for people to do." – ***Young Person***

6.31 **The young people we spoke to really wanted more variety, and the opportunity to try new and different things.** They also emphasised the importance of speaking with and listening to young people to better understand what they want. Being able to cater to these interests will depend on levels of demand and funding, staff or volunteers, and any necessary facilities or equipment being available – which the young people often recognised – but ultimately a lot of young people said they did not have all the opportunities available to them that they ideally would like.

"[They] should do a questionnaire of younger people in the area to see what they actually want club wise. They should ask and actually listen to what is wanted instead of just starting the club and hoping for best." – ***Young Person***

6.32 Some of the young people also suggested the interests of certain **types of young people were less well catered to by their local offer**. Most commonly, this was:

- **Females** – Often this related to the limited provision for artistic and creative interests, but also a preference for some activities to be single rather than mixed gender. The regression analysis found females were less likely there were enough clubs and activities in local area.

"I think it's quite boy focused, it's very football and rugby focused, and you don't really see girls wanting to do that. I don't really know about what there is in terms of activities where girls can go to them." – ***Young Person***

- **Older ages** – There was a common view that older ages have fewer activities catered to their interests. The regression analysis found those aged 16-19 were less likely there were enough clubs and activities in local area. Furthermore, 9% of YPS respondents said they were not participating in groups/clubs because they were not aimed at people their age.

"For my age, that 17-18 range, I think we're expected to make our own activities and entertain ourselves. I feel like there could be more things that older teenagers are into." – ***Young Person***

6.33 Some young people and sector interviewees expressed the view that certain young people simply do not want to participate in youth activities. One sector interviewee said this was to be expected from some young people as part of adolescent development. That said, some sector interviewees were of the view that youth workers engaging with and listening to these young people could identify or foster interests. Young people also pointed to preferences for other leisure activities, particularly digital media and spending time online. OnSide's survey of young people found 76% of young people spend most of their free time on screens, with the most time-consuming activities outside of school consisting of computer games (27% of young people), using phones including for social media (22%) and watching streamed content (21%).[83]

"Some people just don't want to be in clubs and adults don't get that" – ***Young Person***

"Most of my friends can't be bothered – that's why they don't do stuff." – ***Young Person***

6.34 **Young people's interests will also be influenced by their family, friends, social networks and wider culture**. The evidence around cycles of participation and non-participation noted earlier in Chapter 4 reflects this dynamic.[84,85] Another recurring example identified by young people and the wider literature was how gendered attitudes can influence

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[83] OnSide (2023) *Generation Isolation. Onside's annual study into young people's lives outside school*
[84] Arts Council England (2016) *Every Child: equality and diversity in arts and culture with, by and for children and young people*.
[85] Education Policy Institute (2024) *Access to extra-curricular provision and the association with outcomes*

what a young person chooses to participate in including through concerns about perceptions.[86]

"People who have a mentality that means they wouldn't get involved in activities. It's usually impacted by the people they surround themselves with, a mob mentality that they wouldn't want to do activities." – ***Young Person***

"Some will be worried about how you would be perceived. For example, there is a dance place near me that is all girls but I'm sure there is boys who would want to do it but don't because they don't want to be seen as wrong." – ***Young Person***

6.35 **Schools can play an important role in introducing activities to foster new interests and challenge perceptions.** For example, in the National Youth Social Action Survey just over half of young people involved in some form of social action had been encouraged to get involved by a member of school staff.[87] Providing opportunities through schools can also overcome the potential barrier of parents/carers lacking knowledge, not providing encouragement or being unwilling or unable to pay.[88] There were, however, different preferences amongst young people during the fieldwork as to whether they prefer activities to be school-based on outside of school. Young people who have less positive perceptions or experiences of schools may have a preference for activities outside of schools, albeit schools may still play a role in exposing them to different activities.

6.36 **The quality of activities and perceptions of quality matter too.** Beyond the nature of an activity, the factors that young people identified as important to quality included the staff/leaders, facilities and equipment. Opinions varied as to which mattered more amongst these, although more young people appeared to tolerate poorer quality equipment provided the staff/leaders were good. Words used by young people to describe the qualities of good staff included: nice, patient, knowledgeable, enthusiastic, passionate, supportive, caring, respect, empathy, listens, relatable, non-judgemental, friendly, approachable, respectful, qualified, relatable and subject expert. Some of these relate to their ability to ensure the other needs in this section are catered to e.g. around an inclusive and welcoming environment.

"It's things like the buildings – buildings really give an impression to be. If the building's a bit run down, but they have a good thing running, I still presume it's a bit low-quality." – ***Young Person***

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[86] Arts Council England (2016) *Every Child: equality and diversity in arts and culture with, by and for children and young people*.
[87] Department of Culture Media and Sport (2020) *National Youth Social Action Survey 2019 Summary Report*
[88] Social Mobility Commission (2019) *An unequal playing field: extra-curricular activities, soft skills and social mobility*

"Everyone involved needs to care to some degree … it really would need to be made and fostered with passion. Everything else stems from that. You can work on the other stuff, but if that isn't at the heart, it is not going to work." – ***Young Person***

6.37 It is notable that young people were more likely to report being satisfied with the activities they were involved in if they felt they had a level of agency or control. Opportunities to provide feedback and seeing that feedback taken onboard were key to this. A common suggestion from the young people was that more effort needed to be made to understand the wants of those participating in an activity.

"The people at the youth club were really good at taking into account what we wanted to do which made us want to go more. They asked for feedback and it made it more exciting." – ***Young Person***

"Sometimes adults think about what they would like to do themselves, rather than what the people in their club actually want to do … Because of that, children can maybe feel a bit forced into doing things that they don't necessarily want to do." – ***Young Person***

Confidence and apprehensions

6.38 'I'm too shy/lack confidence' and 'I don't have anyone to go with' were both identified as a barrier to participation in groups and clubs by nearly a quarter of young people in the YPS responses. These two issues are closely related, and present a barrier to initial engagement in particular.

More likely to say…

- **I don't have anyone to go with:** Aged 13-15* (relative to 10-12 year olds), females, FSM, least deprived areas (IDACI 5, relative to IDACI 1), LGBTQ+
- **I'm too shy/lack confidence:** Aged 13-15 and aged 16-19 (relative to 10-12 year olds), females, FSM, limiting disability, LGBTQ+

** Indicates results only statistically significant at the 10% level*

6.39 Often these barriers reflect a young person's **general confidence in social situations, fear of unknowns or fear of how they will be perceived.** These issues are particularly important to whether young people opt to engage with an activity in the first place, but can also prevent continued engagement. Young people spoke about the difficulty of attending activities if they were introverted or 'not outgoing', about being self-conscious, having a fear of being judged or out of place at an activity, and of concerns making a financial commitment to an activity they may not enjoy. The next section on inclusive, welcoming environments picks up the issues around feeling out of place. Issues around wellbeing picked up later in this chapter are closely related to this section too.

"A lot of people I know are not very outgoing so it can be hard to consider doing those things even in the first place. Going to a new place with new people is not something I would want to do." – ***Young Person***

"Social anxiety – that's what started to make me not want to go. That's a major thing. We want to but we just get put off by that fear of that first meeting." – ***Young Person***

"I would say I'm quite shy, so to meet new people and start a conversation is really difficult." – ***Young Person***

6.40 Three key factors – trust, familiarity and information – emerged from the fieldwork as important to countering issues around confidence and apprehensions. First and foremost, young people talked about feeling more confident if they could attend with a friend or family member because it provided some level of trust and familiarity. This is implicit in the YPS finding that one of the most common routes through which young people found out about an activity they are participating in was via a friend. It is also evident in the wider literature.[89,90,91]

"I went with my friend, which made me feel much more confident so that was good." – ***Young Person***

"I would make activities more sibling based. That is who I feel most comfortable with and I feel like it is a safe environment because I have a piece of home with me." – ***Young Person***

"It helps if you know someone. That's why I don't really join much stuff because I am scared and I would rather go with someone I know." – ***Young Person***

6.41 In instances where a young person lacked a **friend** to attend with, the fieldwork identified other approaches to overcoming issues of confidence and apprehension via trust, familiarity and information. This includes informing young people of activities through a trusted source (e.g. parents, school, youth worker), running activities on school premises or in other known locations, and providing opportunities to meet staff/leaders and other participants through outreach or tasters.

6.42 Issues around **confidence** and apprehensions often stemmed from uncertainty around what to expect. The approaches and types of information young people said was important to overcoming this, in order to make them more confident about engaging with an activity included:

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[89] Serido, J., Borden, L., and Wiggs, C. (2011) Breaking Down Potential Barriers to Continued Program Participation. Youth & Society, 46(1), pp.51–69
[90] Department of Culture Media and Sport (2020) *National Youth Social Action Survey 2019 Summary Report*
[91] NCS (2024) *Understanding Young People*

- Sufficient information around pre-requisites, who it is targeted at, who is welcome and whether access needs will be met.
- Social media content, which can provide a rich source of information on what to expect, including around the nature of the activities, space, the staff/leaders and the other participants.
- Insights into activities and opportunities to ask questions provided through tasters, trials and opportunities to meet staff/leaders beforehand.
- The use of peer support, peer mentors and buddies
- A couple of young people talked about the importance of online ratings of activities in order to be confident of their quality, particularly if seeking them out independently.

"Know[ing] what you are going to get when you arrive is important." – ***Young Person***

"[Young people] might struggle to take themselves to the activities if they don't know what to expect." – ***Young Person***

6.43 During the fieldwork, some young people and sector interviewees talked about young people who might struggle with **trust** or confidence. This may stem from poor relationships with mainstream services or adults, issues around social anxiety, and a 'retreat from social spheres' including absenteeism. Addressing this can require targeted outreach and support, plus time, persistence and going at that young person's pace until they feel ready or confident to engage. Some young people talked about engaging with a youth worker or an online offer prior to feeling confident enough to attend an activity in person.

"You sort of have a key worker within the trust. So I was speaking to them online and it was their encouragement that got me to go in person." – ***Young Person***

"I think a way to convince more young people is if you just went and spoke to them and in a way nag them a bit … being persuasive but of course don't nag too much." – ***Young Person***

6.44 A common issue around confidence and apprehension specifically related to **feeling out of place when starting a new activity.** While it was an issue across age groups, it was particularly acute for older groups who worried about being less good than others their age who were more experienced, or about being placed with younger ages based on level of competency. Opportunities for tasters, age-friendly beginner sessions, and segregation by both age and competency, were all suggested as potential solutions.

"It feels like because I didn't get into it when I was young, I can't go now. Especially with team activities, like everyone else is already good so going and starting as a new person is difficult." – ***Young Person***

"I have always wanted to do it but didn't want to be out of my depth with everyone being really good at this and me being dreadful and not knowing what I'm doing." – ***Young Person***

Inclusive, welcoming and accessible environments

6.45 **Concerns about fitting in, inclusivity and accessibility** are reflected by 'I won't fit in' (10% for groups/clubs) and 'my physical health or a disability' (3%) amongst the YPS responses. Young people with limiting disabilities were more likely to identify both of these barriers, while females were more likely to express concern about fitting in. Some of the factors that underpin whether young people feel comfortable in an environment include relationships with staff and other participants, the physical space itself, representation and diversity, and catering to access needs.

More likely to say…

- **I won't fit in:** Females, limiting disability
- **My physical health or a disability:** Limiting disability, LGBTQ+,

6.46 A large representative survey of young people by OnSide found the three factors that were most important to young people when considering a youth centre were the **friendliness of other young people, the friendliness of staff and feeling safe** (all 93%). Young people spoken to during the fieldwork frequently emphasised the importance of staff in facilitating a comfortable and judgement-free environment, including by fostering good peer relationships, listening, providing support and addressing any issues. The young people who had stopped participating in an activity often said it was because they did not feel included, felt out of place, felt they were not respected, or had not been sufficiently supported. In addition, free to access spaces and the 'feel' of spaces were highlighted as important too. Some of the young people also talked about initial impressions being key.

"It matters who runs the activities. I think the person needs to treat everyone the same and make sure people feel included." – ***Young Person***

"There is a certain atmosphere that makes somewhere good. Everyone needs to be welcoming." – ***Young Person***

"Lots of young people are very insecure and scared of what people might think of them. It would have to be a place where there is not going to be judgement. I think it would just have to be good vibes and positivity." – ***Young Person***

I would want the other children to be welcoming. It is more the culture of the people that go rather than the adults that lead it." – ***Young Person***

6.47 Issues around **feeling welcome and included** often relate to young people's characteristics and needs, as highlighted earlier by the wider evidence included in Chapter 3. During the

fieldwork it was suggested young people from minority groups – such as ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ young people and disabled young people – were more likely to feel out of place or that an activity or space was 'not for people like me'. This may be because they do not see themselves represented amongst staff/leaders or other participants, so diversity is important in this respect. Having staff/leaders that are relatable and understanding was emphasised as important, which could be because they are relatively young, from the same area, or have similar characteristics. Young people volunteering in peer mentors or buddy roles can help in meeting this need.

"I think with going to youth clubs [the staff] are a bit younger, so can be a bit more relatable. I think that's quite nice because I can talk to them a bit more." – ***Young Person***

"The staff running the activity having a good understanding of the community and young people attending. Having sympathy and understanding the youth is the best way to make improvements." – ***Young Person***

"I'm black, so I feel like a mix of people from diverse background would help. I get along with everyone, but I feel like I'll relate more to people that are more similar to me. So I feel that inclusion and diversity would help. – ***Young Person***

6.48 Alternatively, for some young people it was about their **individual needs being catered for**. These include needs relating to health conditions or disabilities (e.g. an environment not being overstimulating), cultural or religious requirements (e.g. halal food, provisions for prayer, single gender provision) or level of competency or skill. Again, young people with less common characteristics or conditions are less likely to have those needs met. A couple of young people also talked about the need for provision to be flexible to account for any challenges young people are facing in their lives (e.g. that might mean they cannot attend weekly). These issues were sometimes about apprehensions that needs might not be met, or sometimes related to actual experiences of needs not being met. One sector interviewee said young people with access needs can experience 'ask fatigue' – and providing as much information upfront about meeting access needs, in an accessible format, can help to mitigate this.

"Staff having awareness about different conditions and how to adapt environments so they are suitable for people with certain needs. For example, my autism means I like low lighting and not too much noise." – ***Young Person***

"Some places when you don't attend you could be removed from the group for missing sessions but there needs to be more leeway for what's going on in someone's life." – ***Young Person***

"The support they offer being advertised better would have made it easier to pursue, because then I would have been less worried about sorting that out." – ***Young Person***

6.49 Targeted and specialist provision can be beneficial for young people who feel out of place or who do not get their needs met in generalist provision. As highlighted in Chapter 4 some

young people value the sense of community and understanding associated with this type of provision. However, many young people also expressed the view that all young people should feel able to participate in the activities they want to regardless of their characteristics – so general provision should be as welcoming, inclusive and accessible as possible. It is also important to note that young people may not have targeted, specialist provision available locally for their specific characteristics or conditions.

Wellbeing and safety

6.50 **Wellbeing and safety** were highlighted during the fieldwork as significant barriers for some young people, which are not fully captured amongst the YPS barriers, other than 'my mental health' which was identified as a barrier to engaging in groups/clubs by around a tenth of respondents. Table 5-1 earlier also showed young people who are motivated by access to a safe space are less likely to participate as frequently. These barriers can reflect demand side issues stemming from challenges a young person is facing in their wider life, including at home or school. Or they can be supply side issues, because an activity has a negative effect on their mental health, wellbeing or safety.

More likely to say my mental health: females, FSM, least deprived areas (IDACI 5, relative to IDACI 1), white ethnicity, limiting disability, LGBTQ+

6.51 **Issues around bullying and safety were highlighted by young people** during the fieldwork and commonly identified within the wider literature.[92,93] It was suggested certain groups of young people, such as LGBTQ+ and neurodiverse young people, were more likely to suffer in this regard and therefore in greater need of safe spaces or targeted provision. Concerns around safety when travelling are relevant too.

"The bad experience I had at [a club] really put me off wanting to go to [other] clubs." – ***Young Person***

"Queer and trans youth – especially with the culture it can be unsafe. They can definitely miss out on activities because of that." – ***Young Person***

6.52 **Many of the sector interviewees worked with young people who face issues related to their social, emotional and mental health.** Issues around safety and wellbeing were also identified for young people affected by violence, child sexual exploitation, those engaged in risky behaviours and those involved in criminal activity. The interviewees talked about the importance of mentoring, relationships with a trusted adult, and being able to provide pastoral support. This could be internally or by referring out to specialist services for

[92] National Citizen Service (2024) *NCS Omnibus*
[93] Social Mobility Commission (2019) *An unequal playing field: extra-curricular activities, soft skills and social mobility*

counselling or mental health support. Safeguarding processes and sufficient safeguarding resources were highlighted as critical too.

"If you are worried or nervous, there are youth workers there, and also you can email and text them." – ***Young Person***

"The people they hire, the staff, they're trained to get the message through to you and calm people or help them with their problems. They've had similar experiences, so they know how it feels. And the way they explain things are all relatable. So people know they can take advice from them basically." – ***Young Person***

"At the end of every day after dinner we could sit in a group and share what we found easy and difficult, reflect on what happened, and decide what changes to make for the next day … and that meant that I would be less worried, because I was able to speak about it in a healthy environment and not be judged for it." – ***Young Person***

Summary of enabling factors

6.53 The fieldwork and wider evidence highlighted a range of actions that could mitigate the effects of some of the barriers described above. These are summarised as follows:

Barrier	Suggested enabler
Alignment with interests and preferences	A varied offer to appeal to different interests and preferences Incentivising participation with trips for example Tasters, trials and open days Trying new things in schools Listening to and empowering young people to design activities High quality staff and spaces
Confidence	Provide comprehensive information so young people know what to expect, including via social media content Connect with young people through people they trust Delivery in familiar venues and locations Provide beginner-friendly entry points and tasters especially for older young people Outreach and opportunities to meet staff to build relationships prior to attendance Initial engagement online
Inclusive, welcoming and accessible environments	Staff trained around diversity and access needs Visible diversity and representation among staff and participants Targeted provision that young people know is specifically 'for people like me' and is more likely to meet their needs

Barrier	Suggested enabler
	Use of peer mentors, peer support and buddies
Wellbeing and safety	Mentoring and building relationships with a trusted adult Availability of pastoral support within youth organisations and in the wider landscape Sufficient resourcing of safeguarding and visible safeguarding processes

7. Why young people stop participating

Chapter summary

Participation in youth activities decreases with age.

YPS analysis shows length of participation is lower for females, those on free school meals, ethnic minorities and those with a limiting disability.

The reasons that young people stop participating in youth activities fall into six broad categories:

- issues with an activity (e.g. not longer enjoying it)
- changes to an activity (e.g. a change in cost, leadership or friends no longer going)
- the impact of the pandemic (activities ending or changing how young people felt about going back)
- life changes (e.g. moving house, sustaining injury)
- transition points (e.g. changing school or reaching a certain skill level)
- and age-related factors (e.g. needing to spend time studying, becoming too old to participate).

Introduction

7.1 The earlier chapters considered the range of factors affecting participation in a youth activity or service. This chapter is specifically focused on the reasons identified for young people stopping participation in youth provision, many of which have already been reflected in the preceding chapters. It starts by considering the findings around length of participation (as a proxy for 'stopping') from the YPS analysis. It then considers the range of reasons for stopping identified across the fieldwork and wider literature.

YPS analysis of length of participation data

7.2 The YPS captured young people's length of participation in groups and clubs. The regression analysis used this to test the extent to which **length of participation varied by characteristics, barriers, enablers and motivations**. While this does not directly equate to

'why young people stop participating' because it only covered young people currently involved in a group or club, it does offer a proxy if we infer from shorter participation that the young person is less likely to have sustained participation. There may be other factors (e.g. activity ending) that explain this, however, so caution is required. More detailed results are presented in Annex D, but in brief they show:

- The **following types of young people were generally less likely to participate in groups and clubs for longer:** females, those on free school meals, ethnic minorities and those with a limiting disability. Conversely, participation length increased with age which we might expect (older people are able to attend activities for longer simply because they are older, and have therefore had more years to participate) but as shown earlier older people are less likely to participate overall which means participation does decline with age.

- Considering the relationship between length of participation and barriers, enablers and motivations, the regression analysis further **found young people who participated for a shorter period of time were consistently**:

  - **More likely to have heard about an activity through school**. This suggests schools are less likely to create sustained engagement, although this may reflect how they enable young people to try more activities.
  - **More likely to be motivated to participate by making new friends**, which might reflect these young people prioritising new activities rather than sustaining engagement.

- Conversely, young people who participated for longer were:

  - **More likely to have heard about an activity through family**, pointing to the importance of family for sustained engagement
  - More likely to say that they are motivated to participate by the activity keeping them fit.

- Other factors were found to have a less consistent[94] effect but point to the importance of access for sustainment, and some of the motivations that are most important to sustainment:

  - Young people reporting difficulty getting there were less likely to participate for longer.
  - Those participating for longer were more likely to be motivated by doing something that they are good at, more likely to be motivated by learning new things or

[94] Meaning they did not affect all three measures of participation length used in the analysis. See Tables D8 and D9 Annex D for more information on this.

developing their skills further[95], and more likely to say that they are motivated by liking the people who run the activity.

- Those participating for longer were less likely to be motivated by building their confidence.[96]

Reasons for stopping participation

7.3 Through the fieldwork and wider literature it was possible to categorise the reasons that young people stop participating in youth activities into six broad categories: issues with an activity, changes to an activity including it stopping, the impact of the pandemic, life changes, transition points and age-related factors. The remainder of this chapter considers each of these in turn.

Issues with activity

7.4 **Often young people said they had stopped participating in an activity simply because they did not like it.** This could reflect issues around quality, or misalignment with their interests or preferences, sometimes because their interests had changed. Young people and the wider literature highlighted the importance of youth voice to mitigate this through continued relevance and a sense of ownership.[97] Some young people highlighted instances where their feedback was not sought or listened to. In some cases young people had opted to prioritise another preferred activity.

"I lost the motivation to do it. I just got bored to be honest." – ***Young Person***

"They weren't really organised with the activities and it seemed like a waste of time." – ***Young Person***

"Part of the reason [I left] was that there were two adults who weren't really taking ideas on board. I know how a youth club should run, because I run my own, so I didn't appreciate that." – ***Young Person***

7.5 Issues with an activity **could also reflect issues around inclusion, accessibility and feeling welcome**, reflecting a key theme in the previous chapter. This included not feeling good enough for an activity, or the activity not being sufficiently flexible to accommodate those who could not attend on a regular basis. There were also a small number of instances where young people reported a bad experience, such as bullying or suffering an injury, or fear they may be bullied.

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[95] Only statistically significant at the 10% level.
[96] Only statistically significant at the 10% level.
[97] Serido, J., Borden, L., and Wiggs, C. (2011) Breaking Down Potential Barriers to Continued Program Participation. Youth & Society, 46(1), pp.51–69

"It was quite hard with basketball, because when I did it everyone else there was so good and made me feel intimidated, which is why I left." – ***Young Person***

"I stopped because I didn't really have any friends in the class and I felt like everyone else did." – ***Young Person***

"I found that there was a lot of bullying happening within the young people and a lot of the adults seemed like they bullied the kids too. The stuff I saw the leaders do was not nice. I also just felt like the leaders just didn't care anymore. That was the main reason I left." – ***Young Person***

"[I was] worried about being made fun of for doing dance. Seeing as I was the only boy doing it in primary, I can't imagine it will have gone down well in secondary school." – ***Young Person***

Activity changes or stops

7.6 **Some young people reported a change with the activity had created a barrier to ongoing participation**. As highlighted in the previous chapter, an increase in costs was commonly identified by young people as the reason they had stopped participating which was also evident in the wider literature.[98,99] Other changes relating to an activity that had led to young people stopping participating including a change in staff/leaders, their friends stopping, or the activity ending.

"Most of my friends left because we had new leaders. Basically some of the old leaders re-joined back, they weren't very nice, they were very strict, so all my friends left and so did I." – ***Young Person***

"The football team I stopped because the club itself closed after about two years of me being in it. They had issues with having enough volunteers to run it." – ***Young Person***

"I used to be part of social action group to do with violence against women and girls, but that ended up closing due to lack of funding." – ***Young Person***

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

7.7 The COVID-19 pandemic was frequently identified by young people as well as more contemporary literature as having had a major impact on participation.[100] Many clubs or activities were cancelled during this period and services scaled back. At minimum this created a discontinuity for the young people who opted not to re-engage when the activity restarted. Alternatively, some clubs or activities did not restart at all. Young people also reported issues

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[98] Department for Education (2023) *Parent, Pupil and Learner Panel 22/23 Recruitment Wave 1* referenced in Education Policy Institute (2024) *Access to extra-curricular provision and the association with outcomes*
[99] OnSide (2023) *Generation Isolation. Onside's annual study into young people's lives outside school*
[100] Ibid.

with anxiety or confidence related to the pandemic, either around social situations, specific activities, or perceptions of their health and safety.

"It was stopped due to COVID. It ended and then it never restarted. [Would you have wanted to go back?] Yeah, I think I would." – ***Young Person***

"I do believe that if COVID didn't happen, I probably would have stayed on to do Rangers, because I'd still have been getting that socialisation and everything. But because of COVID it just didn't feel right anymore." – ***Young Person***

Life changes

7.8 Other reasons related to changes in a young person's life that prevented access to an activity, either temporarily or permanently. This included moving house or school, or experiencing ill health, disabilities and injuries. The sustainment of injuries while participating is a barrier to sustaining participation in sports in particular.[101]

"We moved areas so the clubs weren't available anymore." – ***Young Person***

"It was mainly my anxiety that stopped me. Most of the time it was generalised and I was feeling it about everything." – ***Young Person***

Transition points

7.9 During the fieldwork, young people also pointed to the effect of 'transition points' which included:

- **Completion of an activity**, such as completing all swimming levels or reaching the highest grade in an instrument
- **Finishing school or college**, which means they can no longer participate in the activities run by those institutions
- **Progressing to the next stage of an activity,** which could entail moving to a different group, moving to a more competitive or casual approach to the activity, or moving up to compete against older people including adults – all of which could be off-putting.

"You lose that motivation because you're like: 'Well I'm at the top now – there's nothing more for me afterwards.' So then you lose all that motivation and spark you had for that activity." – ***Young Person***

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[101] Pandya, N. (2021) Disparities in Youth Sports and Barriers to Participation. *Current Reviews in Musculoskeletal Medicine*, 14(1)

"Once I had completed lifeguard training, the only other option was competitive swimming and I just wasn't interested in that." – ***Young Person***

"I used to do lots of after school clubs at primary and secondary, but that just faded out when they weren't available anymore in college." – ***Young Person***

Age-related factors

7.10 As already established, as young people get older they are less likely to participate in youth activities. The research found the likelihood of young people experiencing the issues covered throughout in this chapter generally increase with age, but in particular **older groups were more likely to experience**:

- **Changing interests**, which might mean feeling too old for an activity or that it is no longer 'cool', and a greater preference for activities that develop skills or improve future prospects.
- **Other commitments** such as studying for exams, employment, or pressure to commit more time towards specialising in an activity[102,103]
- **The transition points** covered above, or reaching an age cut-off that means they are no longer eligible.

"I used to go to the youth club quite a lot, but I don't do it anymore because it's a little bit childish for me now." – ***Young Person***

"I feel like a lot of my friends have stopped activities and hobbies … It's not cool to be excited about stuff anymore." – ***Young Person***

"I've got revision sessions at school four times a week, so I don't really have much time for things like that anymore." – ***Young Person***

"It is difficult at this age because you're kind of in between. You can't go to the younger classes because a lot of them are younger than you but you can't really go to adult classes." – ***Young Person***

"Once you reach 16 … you're expected to then move straight up into the adult league and play adults … I felt a bit like an outsider and it didn't really click enough for me to want to carry on, which is a shame, because I really enjoyed playing netball. I am hoping that when I go off to university I can pick it up again, because I do miss playing." – ***Young Person***

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[102] NCS (2024) *Understanding Young People*

[103] Serido, J., Borden, L., and Wiggs, C. (2011) Breaking Down Potential Barriers to Continued Program Participation. Youth & Society, 46(1), pp.51–69

8. Practices to increase youth participation and satisfaction

Chapter summary

Sector interviewees provided a wide range of insights about the good practices they adopt to help overcome barriers to participation. They:

- were unanimous on the importance of youth voice, agency and empowerment for increasing participation and satisfaction
- emphasised the importance of community presence, visibility and brand recognition for supporting awareness, particularly for harder to reach groups (who a couple of interviewees preferred to call 'underserved')
- recognised the importance of trust, familiarity and information to improve initial engagement
- emphasised the need for variety and tailoring their approach to ensure their offer remains appealing and high quality, especially for older groups
- emphasised the importance of their provision being free or as affordable as possible
- talked about the importance of trust, familiarity and safety for young people to feel comfortable in a space.

Youth sector interviewees cautioned their ability to enact all aspects of good practice given the structural issues they face including limited and reducing funding, workforce challenges, poor or misinformed perceptions of the sector, and challenges related to coordination and partnership working.

Introduction

8.1 This penultimate chapter focuses on practical solutions to increase youth participation and satisfaction. It draws almost exclusively on the sector interviews and reflects both their ambitions to remove barriers to participation alongside some of the practical limitations of doing so.

Youth voice and agency

8.2 Sector interviewees were unanimous on the importance of youth voice, agency and empowerment for increasing participation and satisfaction. They talked about young people

needing to have influence or ownership over individual activities, individual services and the overall youth offer. They also suggested that listening to young people would help with the other issues covered in this chapter. Examples of good practice around this included:

- **Regular capture of feedback** throughout delivery. Approaches included capturing informal feedback at the start and end of individual activities, capturing formal feedback sessions at monthly meetings, panels or through annual surveys, young people in ambassador roles having responsibility for capturing feedback from peers, and the use of anonymous feedback systems.

  "We do annual surveys to get formal regular feedback. So we have a formalised process for it as well as more informally making space for feedback during group sessions." – ***Sector interviewee***

- **Co-creation of activities, spaces and services with young people.** This ranged from using youth steering groups, panels and ambassadors, to young people designing their own personalised support package of activities, to young people deciding which songs their orchestra play, to giving them opportunities to decorate their youth centre to provide a sense of ownership of the space.

  "Co-producing, co-planning and designing the programmes that young people want. The reason why they continue is that young people are invested:, they're listened to, they get a chance to have their say, they see that we respond to what they see, we manage their expectations and we deliver programme that is suited to their needs." – ***Sector interviewee***

- **Young people working as peer researchers** to capture the perspectives of young people, including peer research targeted at specific groups. One mental health charity had young Black men undertake research with their peers to understand why they were less likely to engage with mental health services. This informed the design of a targeted offer to young Black men based around in-community advertising, in-community delivery, use of identity-based groups and practitioners and the use of creative and peer-based activities. The resultant programme has achieved high levels of mental health recovery.

  "We needed young black men to talk to other young black men and find out what was really going on … and our methods to doing that are quite intense, in that we do peer research, we find out what those barriers are and then respond to it, putting things in place that they tell us so that we can then attract those people and offer them the service they want … and surprise, surprise: it works." – ***Sector interviewee***

- Importantly, any involvement or feedback from young people needs to be seen to be taken on board, and either acted on or explanation given for why it has not been. Some interviewees highlighted the need for using a proper participatory model, having sufficient support or scaffolding in place, and staff/leaders having good facilitation skills. Ultimately it should feel worthwhile for the young people, it should not be tokenistic, it should not place unreasonable expectations on young people, and it should be young

person led and organic. Compensating young people for their time was also flagged as important where possible.

"It's about using a proper participatory approach. We don't want young people to feel it's tokenistic. Following participation principles and theory – we tell them what we've done in between with what they've told us. Showing them what you're doing, so you're giving back as well." – ***Sector interviewee***

- A couple of sector interviewees also highlighted the importance of **training for young people** to be able to develop leadership and advocacy skills, in order to be a more effective voice for change within a service or their area.

- Resourcing of formal and informal youth voice initiatives within every local area, as not all areas were seen to be resourcing this or doing it well. This included the resourcing of detached and outreach youth workers, who can reach young people who may not be actively engaged in youth services, to capture their views and feed them into service design. It also included more formal youth voice such as local youth councils, and making sure young people are aware of these opportunities. Importantly, linking these together is important for making them as effective as possible.

Increasing awareness

8.3 Sector interviewees highlighted the importance of awareness of their service amongst young people and their social networks, but also amongst the wider youth sector and wider services who may refer to them. Wider services that referred into their organisations included schools, social care, children services, health services and youth justice.

8.4 Community presence, visibility and brand recognition were all noted as important for supporting awareness, and particularly for harder to reach groups (who a couple of consultees preferred to call 'underserved'). This was achieved through the use of detached and outreach teams, co-location in key services, longevity within a community, and a presence at relevant community events. Funding and staffing frequently presented a challenge to the ability to resource this, however. One organisation highlighted how they had consciously pivoted from a regional to more of a neighbourhood level focus by seeking out funding that would enable them to do so. Having a long-term, community embedded approach was viewed as vital to developing awareness and trust amongst the harder to reach groups they wanted to engage – but they suggested most funding was not orientated to this approach. Certain types of youth provision, such as performing arts groups, reported putting on performances or showcases at community events for visibility.

"It's just dogged self-promotion." – ***Sector interviewee***

"We have outreach sessions where we go into local parks, local hotspot areas, and we identify young people and encourage them to come if they want to." – ***Sector interviewee***

"We've been going for 45 years so, so the reputation and word of mouth around [our organisation] is really strong and really respected by young people, which informs the levels of engagement we get." – ***Sector interviewee***

8.5 In line with the views expressed by young people, **schools were seen as key for building awareness but experiences of working with schools were mixed**. There was widespread recognition that lack of buy-in came from the pressures schools face, mismatched priorities, and lack of esteem or understanding of youth work. The academised school system was highlighted as a challenge by some interviewees.

"Schools are more inward looking and closed off to the community than ever, so that is incredibly challenging in terms of the flow of communication. The academies movement also means it's really fragmented so there are no standard communication channels. It's a massive issue." – ***Sector interviewee***

"When we link in with schools it is with individuals, and when they leave we have to start again. If schools could be more engaged that would help." – ***Sector interviewee***

8.6 Where services were well-embedded with schools it was due to personal relationships, longevity, co-location or having a streamlined approach[104]. One service's offer involved a Link Worker being embedded in schools and working one-on-one with young people at risk of disengagement from formal education. Schools made a small financial contribution (amongst a mix of other funding sources) towards Link Workers in recognition of the value they offered but effectively gained an entire member of staff. The Link Worker designed a personalised support programme with the young people, which could include micro-commissions of other youth provision, which gave those young people (and schools) access to a wider offer through a single point of access. Limiting the number of organisations a school needs to engage with can be helpful, and highlights the value of youth workers, local partnerships and local infrastructure organisations. Interviewees highlighted the importance of engaging the 'right' member of staff, which it was most commonly suggested is either pastoral staff or deputy heads.

"Being based in schools themselves is a really important part of our model. Link Workers are in schools full time for two years, and designing the programme for each young person involves designing that with schools as well, on an individual, per child level." – ***Sector interviewee***

8.7 Sector interviewees emphasised the importance of **those within the youth sector understanding the local offer too, in order to enable cross-referrals and work collaboratively**. Longevity in an area and the quality of local networks, coordination and partnerships were seen as beneficial to this. Limited capacity for networking was highlighted as a barrier to engaging with opportunities that did exist.

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[104] SQW and UK Youth (2025) Youth Sector Interactions, DCMS.

"[Awareness of provision] is definitely a challenge. I had it the other day: I was in a session … and I met someone who'd been running football clubs in the area for five years, and I'd never met him or known about it, and I felt very foolish. … so we experience it [too]. But I think through working in a place intentionally over time you can build those connections better." – ***Sector interviewee***

8.8 Sector interviewees emphasised the importance of opportunities to meet young people, making parents/carers aware of the offer, and word of mouth between peers, because these were considered the most effective for securing buy-in. Limited specific examples of effective marketing materials, either physical or online, were identified. Social media content was regarded as important too, and potentially powerful for reaching some young people, but challenging to do right. A couple of sector interviewees highlighted the challenges they faced around developing a good social media presence due to lack of resource or expertise. Parents/carers were often considered easier to reach. One sector interviewee pointed to the need to provide accessible marketing materials for young people with language or communication barriers, which might include the use of simple language or subtitles on videos.

"Increasingly we're using TikTok and Instagram but it is hard to do without anyone with a social media focus on the team." – ***Sector interviewee***

8.9 Collating and sharing of information on the local youth offer with young people, their parents/carers, the youth sector and wider services that support young people. This included a suggestion that the statutory duty of local authorities[105] needed to be better enforced and resourced. The suggestions by some young people of a 'go to' website or platform was seen as potentially beneficial, but also potentially challenging to implement as a live, up-to-date and quality resource, and with doubts over whether young people would actively use it. Newsletters and a physical directory distributed to all young people were also suggested.

Making initial engagement feel easier

8.10 One sector interviewee highlighted a noticeable drop in attendance rates from young people booked into youth clubs and outdoor centres within their partnership, which may be indicative of a growing issue around initial engagement.

8.11 The importance of **trust, familiarity and information** (as highlighted in Chapter 6) were also evident amongst the examples of good practice described by sector interviewees for improving initial engagement. The practices that helped to achieve these included:

[105] Under Section 507B of the Education Act.

- **Undertaking initial engagement or delivering activities in familiar, comfortable locations** including schools and community settings. Encouraging young people to bring along a friend, sibling or parent helps too.

- **Tasters and free trials,** which de-risk initial engagement and reduce apprehensions about being a beginner. One sector interviewee highlighted funding they had received from Arts Council England's In Harmony programme to link with local primary schools and provide access to a musical instrument and lessons for all pupils in Year 4. This made initial engagement easy for the young people, including by removing any barriers related to upfront cost, and it de-risked initial engagement for the schools. This had two positive impacts. Firstly, many young people continued to engage with the provider beyond this initial year and progressed into fee-paying activities. Secondly, many schools continued to pay for the service after the funding ended because they had bought into the value of the offer. This meant it had a positive legacy of removing cost barriers for future groups of young people.

- Providing a **range of activities** to cater to different interests, competencies and commitments, and increase the likelihood that there is an appropriate entry point for everyone. Plus appealing to different motivations, including the use of hooks and incentives, to encourage initial engagement. One sector interviewee talked about the importance of 'meeting young people where they are at' rather than pushing an agenda.

- **Opportunities to meet or develop familiarity with delivery staff beforehand** through outreach, tasters or an onboarding process. Having a consistent youth worker based in a young person's neighbourhood and school throughout their adolescence was highlighted as one way to ensure young people have a familiar face – but not all areas had this.

  "The initial meeting a young person has with a youth worker really helps, so they see a familiar face when they arrive at a session." – ***Sector interviewee***

- **Youth workers providing a 'handholding' role**, where needed, to support young people to attend new activities they might not feel comfortable attending otherwise, and advocating for any needs they have. This may include a sustained period beforehand to understand and identify what they need and develop their confidence, including through home visits. Persistence was highlighted as important too, as it can take time for a young person to come round.

  "We've seen a flyer is often not enough. It takes time to break down initial misconceptions about that activity. A lot of our Link Workers will take a young person to the first activity to introduce them to the facilitator, make them comfortable, talk to the parent." – ***Sector interviewee***

  "The changing nature of young people's social worlds and them being increasingly being cyber based can be a barrier … It can be difficult to encourage people to step out of that

world and into the real world. We do a lot of work around this on a one to one basis and home visits." – ***Sector interviewee***

- **Using social media and providing an online offer** can be beneficial to initial engagement in particular. Social media can be used to allow the young person to get insights into the activity prior to attending. A couple of the sector interviewees had created an online offer to meet demand, which often enabled young people to develop the confidence to attend in-person.

  "We use social media to provide familiarity – I think it's having a social story for anxiety. It's trying to pre-empt: what they're going to see, what they're going to hear, what the expectations are. So nothing's a big shock when they arrive and they think, 'Oh, it wasn't like how I thought it was going to be.'" – ***Sector interviewee***

  "Our social media has proved to be really popular. I've just interviewed a young man who said he'd gone onto the social media and seen what the group are doing, and thought that's something he'd like to do too. He's 21 and has a diagnosis of autism, and he's very anxious about being around groups of people and feels very socially awkward around any kind of noise … but he said that he'd looked at our social media for a number of months and that helped him feel comfortable deciding it was for him and something where he could fit in." – ***Sector interviewee***

- **Working to address mistrust or stigma around certain activities, both with young people and their parents/carers.** Another approach is to develop an alternative offer that limits the aspects that create this mistrust or stigma. The example earlier around working with young Black men to engage them in mental health support is a good example of this.

  "I think there's parental mistrust of services … often for very valid reasons or cultural-based reasons that, again through that trusted relationship, we can break down. But it takes time and trust, it takes time to build that." – ***Sector interviewee***

- Ensuring that young people are provided with information around what is provided (e.g. snacks, equipment) and being clear whether access needs can be met.

A varied, appealing and high quality offer

8.12 **The sector interviewees regularly highlighted the challenge of fulfilling the demand for more and different activities.** As far as possible they sought to do this though, with youth voice seen as a key component in ensuring the variety on offer was appealing. Offering spaces as well as activities was considered important too. A couple of interviewees highlighted how funding pressures meant physical spaces were more limited or niche activities that were possible in the past were no longer affordable, with motorbike groups given as one such example.

"The regular feedback from young people is they just always want more of the trips and visits and experiences and opportunities that we provide. Meeting the desire for more activities [is a key challenge we face]." – ***Sector interviewee***

"Young people are inquisitive, and you're at a stage of development where the whole world is new – you'll find that they will be open to new things … So we try put as many new things as we can in front of young people. They don't know what their thing is until they've discovered it." – ***Sector interviewee***

"Before austerity, we had a go-kart site and a motorbike site. We no longer have those. The young people that attended were very much at risk of criminal exploitation and poor outcomes." – ***Sector interviewee***

8.13 **Quality, purposeful youth work was seen as critical to delivering a high quality offer that keeps young people engaged.** Sector interviewees highlighted the need for one-to-one youth work with the young people who are at higher risk of non-participation in order to identify the individual, differentiated approach they needed.

"It's about individualisation – a differentiated approach for each young person. That is what our youth work, our localised approach can do. We make individual plans and try and support young people to be assigned a youth worker that can really get to know them and know when things are going right or going wrong." – ***Sector interviewee***

8.14 The use of incentives, including snacks and food, or a 'big' trip or residential at the end of a programme were highlighted as beneficial to engagement. There was also a recognition of the demand for creative activities, and how powerful these could be in enticing young people to engage and in how they benefitted their wellbeing. However, these could be difficult to source due to the costs associated with them and a lack of receptiveness to their importance amongst some funders. The provision of an online or hybrid offer was also found to be more appealing for certain young people too, particularly by young people with mental health challenges or social anxiety.

"Some basic incentivising. When we do activities that have snacks. attendance is much higher. It's so basic. But for young people, if it's appealing to them, if it's giving what them they're interested in, you know that they're much more likely to go and to keep going as well." – ***Sector interviewee***

"There's an absolute need for creativity. That's really important to us. So it's not a lovely bolt on – splash paint around and stuff – it really, really works for young people, the creative stuff. So that's a massive angle for us … [but it] is seen as fluffy, nice to have, by funders and it isn't. It's incredibly intense, professional work." – ***Sector interviewee***

8.15 On keeping older groups engaged, there was a common acceptance that young people will naturally 'age out' of activities, which some described as a positive reflection of progression. That said, some practices were identified as helping sustain engagement:

- Segregating activities by age so older groups feel they are in provision specifically for them. Giving older people more responsibility, often in a mentor or ambassador role, either as a volunteer or as paid staff. Having these young people continuing to be involved meant younger groups could benefit from having a role model or someone relatable involved in delivery.

- Providing different activities with a greater focus on life skills and employability, or providing support related to social, emotional or mental health needs.

- Providing more casual spaces that older groups could feel was their own, rather than having such an emphasis on structured activities.

"Even from the age of 16 or 17, but certainly at 18, we're talking about them about giving something back, taking on board a bit of responsibility, helping others and it's much more around a senior volunteer or trainee ambassador role." – ***Sector interviewee***

"Your older years want a comfy sofa, cup of tea and a chat. They want education around how to write CV, want to know how to apply for jobs, want to participate in things where they're going to get certificates or they can see for themselves that they've gained skills. It doesn't have to be all encompassing all the time. If it was like that for us as adults, we'd all leave." – ***Sector interviewee***

8.16 Lastly, sector interviewees emphasised the importance of having a strategic overview of the local youth offer in order to link young people to relevant opportunities and to fill gaps in provision, by introducing a new offer themselves or commissioning other provision. Partnerships, alliances, networks and active local authorities were identified as useful in this regard – as well as for helping each other to identify funding opportunities to deliver a more varied offer.

Removing or reducing practical barriers

8.17 **Sector interviewees emphasised the importance of their provision being free or as affordable as possible.** Approaches to make activities affordable included subsidising costs for all, targeted subsidies and discounts, asking for voluntary financial contributions, offering a variety of options with different prices points, providing food and equipment, travel bursaries, free bus tickets, free attendance for carers – and being clear about the direct and indirect costs that could be covered. Funding and resource often prevented services from being able to offer activities as frequently or openly as they would like to suit all young people's availability, however.

"We try to remove barriers for all our young people. For example, we heavily subsidise places on our residential. We never want a young person to not be able to attend because of funds." – ***Sector interviewee***

8.18 **Activities were generally paid for or subsidised through public or private funders and fundraising efforts**. In a couple of instances we identified examples of organisations commercialising aspects of their offer, for example by renting out their space. OnTrak in Bradford was identified as an example of an organisation that provides opportunities for young people to participate in go-karting but also to learn mechanics with bikes, go karts, cars and classic car restoration which was understood to be commercialised to part-fund itself.

8.19 **Offering free tasters**, including via schools, was highlighted as a way to enable young people to try an activity that will subsequently have a cost. The example earlier in this chapter of providing music lessons initially through schools is a good example of this.

8.20 On the barrier of travel, sector interviewees highlighted the importance of **choosing locations that are accessible by public transport.** One noted the importance they placed on identifying a new location no more than one bus away from any young people in their city because of the scale of drop-off they had experienced when young people had to get two buses. Some also highlighted the importance of locations being 'psychologically' accessible which meant it needed to be in their neighbourhood or a familiar location. In addition to financial support for transport, interviewees had provided transport planning and travel training – in recognition that not all young people are confident in how to use public transport. One sector interviewee highlighted that during co-design of their programme in a new area they proposed using a minibus for transport but the response from young people was they wanted better public transport for improved access in general rather than a single fix.

"We get some young people who might want to join us, but aren't independent travellers. In those cases, we try to encourage parents to set routes or support them there. We also have peer mentors who can help with travel training as well to encourage them to travel independently on the bus." – ***Sector interviewee***

8.21 There was a **recognition of the physical barriers and corresponding costs that young people with disabilities or ill health can face,** particularly those with more severe or uncommon needs. Sector interviewees reported accommodating these by choosing accessible venues, accessing grants to make premises accessible, budgeting to cover the costs of any access needs for the young person, providing specialist equipment and running some sessions online. One music organisation ran a scheme to provide instruments adapted for young people with missing limbs by renting them to schools at affordable prices. Another organisation provided opportunities for young disabled people to participate in extreme sports with adapted equipment. However, providing adapted equipment or activities was noted as often having a higher cost attached which meant it was not always possible, or that organisations which placed a greater emphasis on accessibility were disadvantaged in bids for funding because of higher costs per head.

Inclusive, welcoming, accessible and supportive environments

8.22 Sector interviewees talked about the importance of trust, familiarity and safety for young people to feel comfortable in a space. The role that good youth work plays in this respect was repeatedly highlighted. Actions to ensure services feel like a 'safe space' included zero tolerance of bullying, allocating time to 'emotional check ins' during activities and co-design of safeguarding processes with young people.

"You're only going to go into that space if you trust the person telling you it's safe and it's OK." – ***Sector interviewee***

"Creating a space where everyone is welcome. No tolerance of bullying of victimisation. But then equally, if we have to kick an individual out for that, we try to keep them with us somehow. We don't want to exclude them further … you have to engage and build up my trust, before I'm going to allow you back into the group setting." – ***Sector interviewee***

8.23 Just as young people identified the importance of a focus on diversity and inclusion, so did sector interviewees, who described various good practices around this:

- **Monitoring of diversity, informally and formally** (for funders), and using this to inform any remedial action. Upon identifying that the pandemic had negatively impacted on its diversity negatively, one sector interviewee sought to address this through targeted efforts to improve its representativeness. This also reflected their organisational commitment to diversity, including amongst leadership.

  "[Our participant profile] is really representative and we're proud of that. When it starts to not be like that, for example after lockdown we noticed a skew, with children from less diverse backgrounds returning to us, so we've worked really hard to try and make it more proportional again. It's something that's really important to us as an organisation." – ***Sector interviewee***

- **Factoring diversity into the focus of activities**. For example, by playing music from different cultures in an orchestra. Again youth voice can help by letting the young people decide what they want to do.

- **Considering religious or cultural requirements** within generalist provision for a particular group, to accommodate them within general activities or provide a distinct offer. An example of the former is a service that was seeking to move away from the use of community spaces that had a bar, so that young Muslim people did not feel uncomfortable attending. An example of the latter is a youth centre that reported having a females only gym session one day a week for females who did not want to or would not be allowed to attend with males present.

- **Providing visual indications of spaces being inclusive**, such as rainbows to demonstrate LGBTQ+ friendly spaces.

8.24 Staff having knowledge and experience of different disabilities and health conditions was viewed as critical for accommodating young people with disabilities. As highlighted previously, young people with less common conditions were considered more likely to suffer from a lack of understanding or misconceptions. Targeted and specialist provision were therefore more likely to be able to accommodate access needs – but these organisations could still face challenges around available expertise, resource or funding, particularly for young people with more complex needs. It was also suggested by some of these sector interviewees that often young people do not want to be excluded from general provision because they want to be able to access it with their non-disabled friends. One interviewee further highlighted the multiple aspects to a young person's identity which could mean a young disabled person would also want to access an LGBTQ+ group to be with other people with similar experiences. Therefore, funder expectations around accessibility, and providing access to funding, training and resources, are important for general provision too. Linking with local disabled charities and SEND specialists to draw was highlighted as a potentially beneficial approach to draw in relevant expertise, particularly for supporting young people with less common conditions.

"The young person maybe is disillusioned because they feel that they haven't been listened to, and often that's because somebody might not understand their needs … but this charity exists to meet their needs and support them in a holistic way." – ***Sector interviewee***

8.25 **Good practices included being clear to young people that access needs can be supported,** considering accessibility at every stage of a young person's journey, anticipating needs in order to 'be ready rather than reactive', building accessibility in by default, having funds allocated to accessibility and a willingness to spend them, and drawing on the expertise within local support disability organisations. Examples of how general provision has accommodated young people with access needs included the earlier example of adapted musical instruments, plus targeted activity strands such as a neurodiverse orchestra which enabled additional needs to be better accommodated within an appropriate sensory environment. Ways in which specialist provision had built inclusivity into their activities included a strong commitment to thinking creatively to deliver activities that disabled young people asked for, and only providing them if all their young people would be able to participate

"[Our] purpose is to promote inclusion with disabled and non-disabled people, children, youth and adults. … We run adventures and it could be holiday adventures or day adventures like skiing or sailing, or flying. The most important thing is everything's included. Unless everyone can all do it, we don't do it." – ***Sector interviewee***

8.26 The intensity of support that **youth workers can provide, including working across services and undertaking home visits, means they are uniquely well-placed** to provide

young people with the support that can address barriers to participation, including social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Many of the sector interviewees highlighted a growing level of need amongst young people they were engaged with, which may suggest an increase in potential barriers to participation for young people. Counselling and identity-based groups were identified as beneficial approaches to provide this support. SEMH support may be provided internally, dependent on there being sufficient resource and knowledge, or by linking with specialist providers. Examples of working with other services included signposting to mental health charities known through personal networks, co-locating specialist provision within a youth centre, and micro-commissioning of specialist services. However, not all organisations felt they knew where to secure adequate support for their young people.

"There is increasing complexity and acuity of need in the area. More and more referrals are of high need, not low or moderate. Young people are increasingly facing complex and multiple challenges." – ***Sector interviewee***

"I think the trusted relationship is the key … [and] not operating just within one sphere. So we're not just in school, we're not just working with the young person with their family … It's that same trusted adult that works across those spheres … [and] having that trusted adult being able to communicate and advocate for that young person across different contexts is, I think, really, really key." – ***Sector interviewee***

8.27 The importance of supporting young people during transition periods, including beyond the age of 18 where young people can experience a 'cliff edge' of support, was widely commented on. That said, there was a lack of concrete examples of good practice for this age group other than continuing to support them as far as possible. On supporting transitions more generally, the identified examples included moving young people into the adult rugby team as part of a 'transition group' rather than moving up individually, which could have been isolating. Another was a young person who moved house, who had a warm handover between youth workers in the two different areas.

Structural issues for the sector and related suggestions

8.28 Finally, it is important to recognise the structural issues within the youth sector that are an impediment to the ambition to increase young people's participation and satisfaction. In particular, four structural issues were repeatedly identified during the sector interviews: funding, workforce, esteem and perceptions of the sector, and coordination and partnership working. The challenges and a series of practical suggestions around each of these issues are considered briefly in this last section.

Sector funding

8.29 **The scale, distribution, nature and quality of provision available to young people depends on the availability of funding.** Furthermore, the solutions identified as reducing

barriers young people face generally have a cost attached, particularly for those with more complex needs. However, as noted earlier spending on youth services by local authorities fell by 73% between 2010/11 and 2023/24.[106] Funding was therefore often identified as the foremost challenge to the sector's ability to improve participation and satisfaction. Beyond expressing a desire for an overall increase in funding for the youth sector, other common suggestions from the sector related to:

- Longer-term sustainable funding that allows youth services to achieve longevity and greater embeddedness within local communities
- Providing funding focused on outreach, initial engagement and accessibility
- Recognising the need to fund not just delivery time, but to fund preparation and supporting activities too, which includes outreach.
- Supporting the youth sector to build strong partnerships with allied professionals, such as education and health, given the positive impacts it can deliver for those agendas. Organisations that had been able to tap into other funding streams from allied sectors regarded their diverse funding streams as a key asset.
- Minimising barriers that smaller organisations face when applying for funding.

Sector workforce

8.30 The engagement of young people in youth provision hinges on the quality of the youth sector workforce. Limited and short-term funding was noted as creating difficulties due to issues of low pay and short-term contracts, contributing to staff turnover. This undermines young people's overall levels of access, and the availability of consistent, familiar faces within communities. Recent changes to employers' national insurance contributions were identified as exacerbating funding and workforce challenges.

8.31 **The availability of youth work training, qualifications and career pathways were highlighted as an issue too.** A recurring suggestion was around the professionalisation of the sector to safeguard the quality of provision and ensure anyone delivering youth work is properly qualified. However, it was noted that caution would be needed to avoid creating further barriers to achieving a diverse, representative workforce. Some of the interviewees highlighted the efforts they had put into developing a diverse, representative workforce to better meet young people's needs, including through extensive, targeted recruitment and training efforts.

"Trained and experienced youth workers do not come out of the woodwork … You need sustained and secure training that will allow for them to come through and get employed and gain

[106] YMCA (2025) Beyond the Brink? The state of funding for youth services .

experience. Our apprenticeship programme pays for the learning, but we then have no money to employ them after that." – ***Sector interviewee***

"For us at the moment it is keeping up with demand and enough staff who can work weekends and unsociable hours. The rate of pay is not great … so retaining a skilled workforce and continuing to be able to train youth workers is difficult, especially because [the local] college stopped offering youth work courses." – ***Sector interviewee***

8.32 **The sector frequently relies on volunteers, which some organisations had found more challenging to recruit since the pandemic**. This reflects a wider challenge in the sector around access to sufficient numbers of volunteers with the right profile and skills.[107] One sector interviewee suggested a national push on volunteering within the youth sector.

Sector esteem and perceptions

8.33 A challenge frequently highlighted by sector interviewees was the esteem, perception and understanding of the youth sector and youth work. It was often felt schools and wider services did not value what youth work does, which could make building relationships challenging. The professionalisation of youth work and making 'youth worker' a protected title was suggested as a potential solution to this. One sector interviewee said their organisation had been perceived differently when they described themselves as delivering youth work rather than mental health support, which had revealed misperceptions and low esteem around youth work.

"[We need] changing of hearts and minds when it comes to youth work – people understanding it is more than face painting and playing games." – ***Sector interviewee***

Coordination and partnership working

8.34 The value of local coordination and partnership working was also a common theme. However, local areas were reported as varying in the extent to which this existed locally. Having a strategic approach, good quality information and strong networks enables better collaboration and a more effective offer for local young people. Where it was in place, it was attributable to the role of local authorities, alliances, partnerships or infrastructure organisations. This was seen as important for grassroots organisations in particular due to their relatively limited capacity. One consultee highlighted the forthcoming Youth Strategy as potentially offering an opportunity for the sector to work to a shared national agenda.

[107] SQW and UK Youth (2024) Volunteering in the youth sector. DCMS

9. Reflections and conclusions

9.1 Young people experience youth activities in different ways that reflect both their own characteristics (their socio-economic background and psycho-social traits), and the nature of provision in their locality. Those factors shape their awareness of provision, and their motivation to engage and to keep on attending.

9.2 The study drew on evidence from secondary analysis of the Youth Participation Survey, a rapid review of published evidence, and primary fieldwork with 74 young people (68 of whom had previously completed the YPS), and 16 professionals who run or oversee youth provision.

9.3 This evidence gathered related to youth activities broadly defined – it included youth activities and services run by youth workers, volunteers or the private sector, as well as activities run by schools – but the factors and dynamics identified are all pertinent to our primary focus of 'out of school' provision. The activities covered by the YPS were categorised as clubs and groups, volunteering and social action. Clubs and groups were then further divided into five different types (sports, arts and music, youth clubs/centres, uniformed groups and 'others'.

9.4 This section provides summaries of key findings following the key research questions. Many of the responses make suggestions for the youth sector and associated groups to do 'more', to extend practice and develop services. However, the broader context of youth provision needs to be considered alongside these findings. That context is that youth services have seen budget cuts consistently applied over the past ten years or more. Between 2011 and 2021 95% of local authorities in England reduced their spending on youth provision by at least a quarter, but one third of local authorities reduced their spending by more than three quarters.[108] Alongside this the professional workforce has declined with over 4,500 youth work jobs have been lost since 2011-12.[109] These workforce challenges coupled with increased demand by young people for youth services has resulted in an increase in the use of volunteers to support design and delivery. However, there have been concerns about volunteers' ability to effectively replace qualified youth workers and to maintain consistency in service quality.[110] Improving the overall scale and the equity of access to youth activities relies more than individual behaviour changes alone.

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[108] DCMS (2024) Youth Evidence Base
[109] National Youth Agency & YMCA (2021) Time's Running Out
[110] Institute for Government & UK Youth (2024) A preventative approach to public services, DCMS (2024) Youth provision and life outcomes: A study of the local impact of youth clubs

Which groups of young people are most at risk of experiencing barriers to participation in youth services?

9.5 We found young people have different patterns of participation in youth activities based on their characteristics. The YPS analysis showed differences by age, gender, deprivation, ethnicity, disability and health, sexuality and gender identity, and geography. This includes a general decrease in participation as young people get older. Another key finding is females, young people living in more deprived areas, or those receiving free school meals, are less likely to participate in groups and clubs. Whereas males are less likely to participate in social action and volunteering.

9.6 Each young person will have several characteristics that, in combination, may create multiple barriers and further reduce their likelihood of participation. Accordingly, analysis of a combination of the characteristics found to affect participation individually identified a large gap in participation levels. Just 26% of females aged 16-19, who live in a deprived area and are in receipt of free school meals, participate in a youth group or club – compared to around 90% of males and females aged 10-12 in the least deprived areas who are not in receipt of free school meals.

9.7 Other barriers are associated with household factors such as lone parent families, those with separated parents, single child households, young people with caring responsibilities, young people who are frequently absent from school or not in mainstream education, and young people from different religious and cultural beliefs. These characteristics may be less easily observable or identifiable compared to the characteristics covered by the YPS, such as gender.

9.8 The analysis also found young people are more likely to experience report certain barriers, enablers or motivations based on their characteristics. These are too numerous to summarise, but one example is that shyness or a lack of confidence was more likely to be identified as a barrier by older groups, females, those receiving FSM, those with a limiting disability and LGBTQ+ young people.

What barriers do young people experience accessing youth services?

9.9 The barriers identified through the research could be broadly categorised as practical or attitudinal, psychological and relational. Positively, in every case we were able to identify corresponding enablers and practices that can help to address or mitigate these barriers.

9.10 Practical barriers included the availability of activities in a locality, a lack of time or competing commitments, cost and affordability, location and transport, and physical accessibility. Other barriers related more to how a young person feels included lack of alignment with interests or preferences, a lack of confidence, including not knowing anyone or having a friend to go with, needing inclusive and welcoming spaces, and feeling safe and happy in those spaces. Again, certain barriers are more likely to be experienced by young people with particular characteristics. Young people may face numerous interrelated or separate barriers at once.

9.11 The things that drew young people to participate in activities were fun and enjoyment. Most young people who participate in activities do so because they enjoy it (82%). Other motivations include learning and skill development (73%), and keeping fit (59%). Young people who were motivated by these factors were also more likely to participate more frequently, and in multiple activities. Other important motivations include socialising, having a community, belonging or safe place, benefits to mental wellbeing, and valuing relationships with staff or support.

9.12 Any efforts to broaden and extend participation must focus on ensuring enjoyment and meeting what young people value (including personal development and support), alongside efforts to mitigate barriers to participation.

Why do young people stop participating in youth provision?

9.13 The analysis highlighted an important trend: that levels of participation decrease with age. The various practical and attitudinal, psychological and relational barriers identified, and the increased likelihood that certain young people face these barriers, contribute to young people stopping participation. Young people also pointed specifically to the following reasons for why stopping participation:

- issues with an activity (such as no longer enjoying it)
- changes to an activity (activity stops, a change in cost, leadership or friends no longer going)
- the impact of the pandemic (which ended activities or changed how young people felt about going back)
- life changes (for example moving house, sustaining injury)
- transition points (for example leaving school or completing an activity)
- and age-related factors (needing to spend time studying, becoming too old to participate).

9.14 Stopping participation was, in some cases, a deliberate and positive decision taken by a young person who felt they had gained what they wanted from that club or activity. In other cases though, it was associated with a shortcoming or negative experience (such as not fitting in) or an opportunity missed (where a lack of progression or follow-on activities forces a young person to finish their participation).

9.15 Once a young person has stopped participating in a particular activity, they may then face various barriers identified as preventing engagement in new activities. Older groups specifically also appear to suffer from fewer age-appropriate activities, loss of key awareness pathways and activity providers (i.e. schools and colleges), and perceptions that they are too old or too much of a novice to start a new activity. Altogether, it is therefore unsurprising that

overall participation decreases with age given the many factors working against sustained or new participation.

What can be done to help reduce or remove barriers, and increase young people's participation and satisfaction?

9.16 Each young person we spoke to had a unique story to tell, but there were common themes in what young people told us they wanted. These asks can be grouped into six broad themes:

- Youth voice and agency – young people valued having a say on the type of activities that were available to them, and how they were run.
- Increasing awareness – including through information sharing and opportunities to meet provision, particularly through schools, tasters, trials and open days. Also, better use of social media to reach young people and parents/carers, and better use of communication through schools.
- Making initial engagement feel easier – with more and easier opportunities to try new things, including through tasters and trials, providing better entry routes for beginners, more opportunities to meet staff, and better information about activities.
- A varied, appealing and high quality youth offer – with variety especially important, but also the quality of staff, physical spaces, green spaces and equipment, and with recognising the need for a distinctive offer for older groups including around transitions.
- Removing or reducing practical barriers – including through free or affordable provision, and better access and transport options.
- Inclusive, welcoming, accessible and supportive environments – including through helping young people know people like them are welcome and will be included, providing targeted provision, and providing pastoral support and mentoring.

9.17 The forthcoming National Youth Strategy provides the opportunity to use and build on these asks to further explore how to respond to young people's needs and preferences. Youth voice is central to design of the new strategy through a combination of national survey (Deliver You) and a wide range of other engagement mechanisms.[111]

9.18 Across the six themes there are certain factors and approaches that feature multiple times. This highlights possible areas of activity that could mitigate multiple barriers young people face. Most notably, the role of schools and colleges, having opportunities to build relationships

[111] DCMS (2024) New National Youth Strategy to break down barriers to opportunity for young people.

with youth service staff, and access to open days, trials, tasters. Drawing on youth voice can also be beneficial across the different themes.

9.19 Finally, the sector interviewees we spoke with had together worked with hundreds of thousands of young people. They were selected because they were experienced in supporting young people identified as having a range of characteristics associated with barriers to participation. Their collective experience meant they could identify practical solutions to what young people said they wanted in order to increase participation and satisfaction. They also highlighted the structural challenges the sector faces – around funding, workforce, esteem and perceptions, and coordination and partnership working – which present an obstacle to implementing good practices and meeting what young people say they want.

9.20 The examples and suggestions from the sector point to potential avenues for funding, piloting or further research. It is important, however, to recognise the small scale of the fieldwork undertaken with the sector. Further focused research on effective practices and asks within the wider sector – particularly in response to what young people told us they wanted – may therefore be beneficial.

Annex A: References

A.1 References listed here were used in the rapid evidence review conducted in the scoping phase.

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Annex B: Methods and analytical approach

B.1 This Annex provides a more detailed overview of the methods and analytical approaches used in this research. Both the quantitative and qualitative strands of the research are covered.

Quantitative strand

B.2 The quantitative research strand consisted of analysis of data from the YPS pilot, which was conducted in Summer 2023 by Verian (formerly Kantar Public) on behalf of DCMS. The YPS obtained responses from a nationally representative group of approximately 2,000 young people in England, covering ages 10 to 19 years, using the Department for Education's National Pupil Database (NPD) as a sampling frame. The data was shared with SQW in a pseudonymised format, with respondents' names replaced with unique identifiers.

B.3 For further information on the coverage of the YPS please refer to the YPS Technical Report, which includes a copy of the survey as an appendix.[112] For the detailed analysis results tables please see Annex D.

YPS coverage and definitions

B.4 The YPS included questions on young people's characteristics, young people's participation in and demand for youth groups and clubs, volunteering and social action, young people's motivations, and barriers and enablers of participation.

B.5 This study used the YPS data to explore the three following research questions (RQs):

- RQ1: Relationship between participation and individual characteristics
- RQ2: Relationship between participation and enablers/barriers/motivations
- RQ3: Relationship between enablers/barriers and individual characteristics

B.6 The approach to the analysis for each of the three research questions is set out below. First though, we set out how youth activities and participation were defined using the YPS data.

B.7 YPS captured participation in (1) clubs and groups, (2) volunteering and (3) social action. We refer to these as **activity '*categories.*'** Within the groups and clubs category there is a further distinction between sports, arts and music, youth clubs/centres, uniformed groups and other clubs and groups. These are referred to as **activity '*types*'**.[113] An overview of how the

[112] DCMS (2024) Youth Survey Pilot Technical Report

[113] Please note the survey also collects data on '*going to the gym to exercise/work out and not part of an organised class*'. However, given that this is not a group/club activity, it was considered out of scope for the study.

categories and types are defined is set out in **Table B-1** below. While this shows that YPS also distinguishes between different types of volunteering and social action activities, **it was agreed with DCMS the analysis would look at volunteering and social action at the category level rather than using the granular activity types**. The YPS pilot also collected information about other activities considered out of scope for this study, such as going to the cinema/theatre, watching live sport, or painting/drawing.

B.8 It is important to note that while the core focus of this research was on activities outside of school, the scope of YPS is slightly broader. The survey asks young people to consider *any* activities 'outside of a school lesson' – meaning that participation in school-based activities such as before/after school clubs and lunchtime groups is captured within the survey's scope. It should also be noted that 'participation' is defined as any participation in the last 12 months.

Table B-1: Youth activities covered by YPS

Category of activity	YPS
Groups & clubs	**Activity types**: • Sports or fitness classes • An art or music group, course or club • Uniformed groups (e.g. Scouts, Guides) • A youth club or centre • Any other group or club, e.g. cooking, science or IT club **Analysis undertaken:** • By category (i.e. all activity types combined) • By activity type (where possible)
Volunteering	**Activity types**: • Helping at a local club or group, e.g. youth group or care home • Helping at a charity • Raising money for charity, taking part in a sponsored event • Helping someone outside of family, unpaid • Taking care of someone outside of family who is disabled, elderly or sick, unpaid • Volunteering through scouts, girl guides, cadets or other similar group **Analysis undertaken:** • By category (i.e. all activity types combined) only
Social action	**Activity types**: • Campaigning and/or raising awareness for an issue • Contacting someone about an issue (MP, councillor, media, etc.) • Joining an organisation or group related to an issue • Doing something to help improve the local area (e.g. litter picking, clean up, planting trees, plants and flowers) • Being involved in Young advisors groups, such as the youth council, youth parliament or youth board • Organising or signing a petition • Attending a demonstration, protest or public meeting **Analysis undertaken:** • By category (i.e. all activity types combined) only

B.9 We used four different measures of participation for the analysis, which functioned as our outcomes for RQ1 and RQ2. These were defined as follows:

- **outcome (a): participation in any youth activity** – defined as participation in at least one activity within an activity type or category
- **outcome (b): participating for longer periods of time** – defined using the length of the most frequent activity by activity type (within groups & clubs)[114]
- **outcome (c): more frequent participation** – defined using the frequency of the most frequent activity by activity type (within groups or clubs)[115] or by activity category (for volunteering)
- **outcome (d):** participating in multiple:
  - **youth activities –** defined using the number of activities for each activity type (within groups & clubs)[116]
  - **youth activity types** – defined using the number of activity types for the groups & clubs category.[117]

B.10 We say more on the approach to analysing each participation outcome in the following sections.

Methodological approach for Research Question 1: Relationship between participation and individual characteristics

B.11 This analysis explored the extent to which factors captured by YPS on demographics (age, gender, ethnicity, disability, receipt of free school meals and sexual orientation[118]) and geography (region, urban vs rural, IDACI deprivation score[119]) were associated with the four participation outcomes:

- outcome (a): participation in any youth activity

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[114] The highest participation length across activity types is selected for the groups & clubs category. Length of participation is not captured by YPS for volunteering or social action.
[115] The highest participation frequency across activity types is selected for the groups & clubs category. For volunteering, frequency refers to the frequency of doing any volunteering activity in the last 12 months. Frequency of participation is not captured by YPS for social action.
[116] The YPS asks respondents to indicate the number of groups & clubs activities they are involved in for each activity type. The sum of these is calculated for the groups & clubs category as a whole.
[117] The number of activities is not captured by YPS for volunteering and social action.
[118] For those aged 16-19 years old only, as this was the only group for which this was captured.
[119] The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) measures the proportion of children aged 0 to 15 living in income-deprived families within a specific area. Areas are grouped into five quintiles, with quintile 1 being the most deprived and quintile 5 the least deprived.

- outcome (b): participating for longer periods of time
- outcome (c): more frequent participation
- outcome (d): participating in multiple youth activities or activity types.

B.12 Logistic regression analysis enabled us to quantify how the probabilities of outcomes (a) to (d) vary with each individual characteristic, while holding the composition across the other characteristics constant. Unlike descriptive analysis, regression analysis enabled us to isolate the effect of each characteristic, and to identify those characteristics that matter most for participation – thus **identifying those groups of young people that are most at risk of not participating in youth activities**. We then used marginal effects estimation to generate predicted probabilities of any participation (i.e. outcome (a)) for different values of the characteristics found to matter for participation.

B.13 The outcome (a) is captured by a binary variable (taken part in any youth activity: yes or no) and we investigated it using logistic regression. The outcomes (b) and (c) are categorical variables that capture the length of participation and frequency of participation. Our approach was to create suitable binary variables for each of the two and use logistic regression. For example, the outcome "participating for longer periods of time" was defined as attending the activity for at least six months, at least a year, and at least two years – with each of the three outcomes tested. Similarly, we tested three frequency outcomes: attending the activity more than once a week, at least once a week and at least once a month.[120] Finally, the outcome (d) is captured by a numeric variable which gives the number of youth activities (or activity types) participated in. We explored two approaches here: (i) simple linear regression with numeric variables as the outcome, predicting the number of different activities (or activity types) attended; and (ii) logistic regression with a binary variable denoting participation in more than one activity (or activity type) as the outcome. Importantly, for outcomes (b) to (d), non-participants were not included in the regressions due to the focus on intensity of participation.

B.14 **Table B-2** summarises the analysis conducted for RQ1 by activity category and by participation outcome. The full set of outcomes was tested for groups & clubs (both by activity type and for the category as a whole). However, only outcomes (a) and (c) were tested for volunteering, and only outcome (a) was tested for social action – because the remaining outcomes were not captured by the survey for volunteering and social action.

Table B-2: RQ1 analysis by activity category

Outcome	Groups & clubs	Volunteering	Social action
(a) Any participation	✓	✓	✓

[120] Please note only the 'at least once a month' outcome was tested for volunteering. This was because no one in the sample volunteered 'at least once a week' or 'more than once a week'.

Outcome	Groups & clubs	Volunteering	Social action
(b) Length of participation	✓	-	-
(c) Frequency of participation	✓	✓ *('at least once a month' only)*	-
(d) Number of activities / activity types	✓	-	-

Source: SQW

B.15 Most regressions were run using the full sample, except for data on sexual orientation (used to construct the LGBTQ+ status variable) which was only available for respondents aged 16+. This characteristic was therefore only tested for the subsample of young people aged 16-19.

B.16 We replicated the analysis described above for the sub-sample of females only due to DCMS's special focus on females in the context of YPS and other evidence suggesting females have lower participation rates.

Methodological approach for Research Question 2: Relationship between participation and enablers/barriers

B.17 This analysis assessed the relative importance of the following non-demographic factors on participation outcomes (a) to (d):

- Barriers – the reasons given for not attending any activities or not attending more activities, such as cost, time, travel, lack of interest, etc.
- Enabling factors – including information channels (i.e. where young people heard about an activity), activities being arranged by schools, and whether the young person thinks there are enough activities in their local area
- Motivations – the reasons given for attending activities, such as to spend time with their friends, learn new things, etc.

B.18 The regression analysis took a similar approach to the analysis for RQ1, with the same outcome variable definitions and the same estimation method (mostly logistic regression). The main difference was that the explanatory variables were enabling factors, motivations and barriers to participation in youth activities (rather than the demographic/geographic variables used for RQ1). Importantly, there were two sets of analysis based on the availability of data on these explanatory variables.

B.19 For the **barriers and one of the enablers**, data was available for all respondents. For outcome (a) we conducted the analysis using data on all survey respondents (i.e. participants and non-participants) to explore the relationship between participation and (i) reporting each of the barriers to participation that were captured and (ii) how young people judge the

availability of youth activities in their area (one of the enablers captured by the YPS). The estimated relationships tell us whether a given factor affects the decisions of non-participants (i.e. decision to not participate) more than it affects the decisions of participants (i.e. decision to not participate even more). Therefore, lack of statistical significance should not be interpreted as a given factor not affecting participation – rather, it could mean that the factor affects non-participants and participants to a similar extent. For outcomes (b) to (d) the factors were explored for participants only.

B.20 **For motivations and the remaining enablers, data was available for participants only** (i.e. it was not available for non-participants). We investigated the remaining enablers (e.g. whether activities were organised by their school, how the young person had heard about the activity) and motivations for participating (e.g. making friends, learning a new skill) for the respondents who had participated in at least one youth activity. This data was not captured for those who had not participated at all. This part of the analysis therefore considered outcomes (b) to (d) only, focusing on predicting the length and frequency of youth activity attendance and the number of attended activities. As a result, the analysis allowed us to investigate which motivations and enablers are associated with greater intensity of participation.

B.21 **Table B-3** below summarises the analysis conducted for RQ2 by activity category and participation outcome. For both sets of analysis we included individual and geographical characteristics as controls, which allowed us to investigate barriers, enablers and motivations while conditioning on characteristics. In addition, as with RQ1, we replicated the main analysis for the subsample of females only, given the special focus on females in the study.

Table B-3: RQ2 analysis by activity category

Outcome	Groups & clubs	Volunteering	Social action
(a) Any participation	• Barriers • One enabler (availability of activities)	• Barriers	• Barriers
(b) Length of participation	• Barriers • Enablers • Motivations	-	-
(c) Frequency of participation	• Barriers • Enablers • Motivations	• Barriers[121]	-

[121] Please note the frequency outcome used for volunteering in RQ2 was 'participation a few times a year' vs 'participation once a year'. This was because volunteering participants who participate more frequently (i.e. at least once a month) were not asked about barriers to volunteering. The relationships estimated for volunteering are therefore not directly comparable to those for groups & clubs.

Outcome	Groups & clubs	Volunteering	Social action
(d) Number of activities / activity types	• Barriers • Enablers • Motivations	-	-

Source: SQW

Methodological approach for Research Question 3: Relationship between enablers/barriers and individual characteristics

B.22 This analysis assessed the relationship between demographic/geographical characteristics and the presence of enabling factors and barriers affecting different groups of young people. For the RQ3 regression analysis:

- The outcomes (dependent variables) were enabling factors and barriers
- The explanatory variables were demographic and geographical variables.

B.23 This analysis was intended to identify which groups of young people are less likely to report certain enablers or barriers. The measures of enabling factors and barriers were all binary variables, and therefore we used logistic regression.

B.24 **Table B-4** summarises the analysis conducted for RQ3 by activity category and by outcome (barriers/enablers in this case).

Table B-4: RQ3 analysis by activity category

Outcome	Groups & clubs	Volunteering	Social action
Barriers	✓	✓	✓
Enablers	✓	-	-

Source: SQW

Non-participation risk profiles

B.25 The regression analysis enabled us to identify the characteristics and factors that are strongly associated with low participation or non-participation. The estimated logit models enabled us to estimate the effect of each characteristic/factor on the predicted probabilities of participation (through marginal effects estimation) and generate predicted probabilities of participation for particular values of the characteristics, and combinations of those values. As a result, we were able to **build profiles of young people with different levels of risk of non-participation**.

Qualitative strand

B.26 The qualitative research strand comprised a rapid evidence review, interviews with young people who responded to the YPS, and interviews with youth sector representatives. The approach for each of these methods is set out below.

Rapid Evidence Review

B.27 The rapid evidence review was undertaken alongside the quantitative analysis, between August and October 2024. It had two main objectives: (1) to help plan later phases of the study and (2) to contextualise the study findings.

B.28 The rapid evidence review focused on evidence about open access youth provision in England or comparable jurisdictions (e.g., Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and countries in the EU) involving young people aged 11 to 18, and up to age 25 for young people with SEND. It made use of existing evidence suggested by DCMS and UK Youth, and additional evidence identified through online searches. The online searches were conducted in accordance with the search protocol outlined in a research plan agreed with DCMS. The protocol established the search terms, locations (databases and search engines) and parameters (e.g., years, geography, document types) to be used. Evidence published from 2016 onwards was prioritised, although older evidence was included in the review where sufficiently relevant.

B.29 A three-stage review of the evidence – title sift, abstract sift, and full text review – was undertaken using a coding framework. The purpose of the coding framework was to provide structure to the title and abstract sifts, rather than enforce strict inclusion or exclusion criteria. In total, 60 documents were identified which were subject to the title sift, which reduced the documents in scope to 46 documents subjected to the abstract sift. This resulted in 23 documents that were reviewed in full.

B.30 The review used qualitative analysis software (MaxQDA) to code themes within the text. The coding framework was structured around the high-level research questions and evolved as common themes were identified. The findings were written up in a paper that was shared with DCMS. Following this, three further sources of evidence were incorporated. Thus in total 26 sources of evidence were used. The evidence included largescale representative surveys and research based on interviews or focus groups with young people. Any additional evidence used in this report was not subject to a full review and coding exercise.

Interviews with young people

B.31 Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with a sample of 74 young people. In December 2025 an invitation to sign up to participate was sent to 1,523 young people (or their parents/carers) who (i) completed the Youth Participation Survey and (ii) indicated a willingness to be re-contacted for further research. The invitation included a sign-up survey for young people or their parents/carers to share information on their characteristics and

participation in youth activities to inform sampling. These questions adopted the same wording as the original YPS to enable it to be used as a reference for a representative sample.

B.32 Additional 'top up' recruitment was also carried out via targeted dissemination of the sign-up survey through UK Youth's networks.

B.33 A £15 high street voucher was offered to young people if they were selected for interview as an incentive to sign up. In total 164 young people signed up to the interview pool via the sign-up survey. The vast majority of these were original YPS respondents.

B.34 Quotas were then used to inform which young people were invited from the interview pool. These shaped by two research aims:

- Understanding how to increase participation in youth services amongst all young people
- Understanding how to increase participation in youth services amongst groups identified as less likely to participate.

B.35 To evidence aim (1) we sought a broad spread of the population to capture a range of perspectives whereas for (2) we wanted to oversample certain groups of young people identified as less likely to participate in the YPS analysis results and evidence review. Our quotas sought to achieve a balance between these two aims. The characteristics used for sampling and our intended sampling approach are summarised in Table B-5. Two principles guided the oversampling:

- Those we intend to oversample are all groups identified as having a lower likelihood of participating in some youth activities, either at all, or in terms of intensity or length of participation.
- We also sought to oversample the smallest sub-groups, to avoid relying on the perspectives of just one or two individuals within these groups.

B.36 The characteristics of the achieved sample are set out in Annex C, accompanied by the characteristics of those who signed-ups to the interview pool and YPS respondents.

Table B-5: Sampling of characteristics

Characteristic	Sampling approach
Age	• Oversample older groups
Gender	• Roughly even split for male/female • Oversampling those who 'Identify in another way'

Characteristic	Sampling approach
Ethnicity	• Broadly representative spread[122]
Receive free school meals (FSMs)	• Oversample those receiving FSM
Deprivation (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI))	• Oversample more deprived areas
Limiting long-term illness or disability	• Oversample those with a long-term illness of disability
Sexuality (for 16+ only)	• Oversample for those who are 'Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Other'
Region	• Broadly representative spread
Rural/urban	• Broadly representative spread
Participation in clubs/groups in the last 12 months	• Oversample non-participants
Participation in volunteering in the last 12 months	• Oversample non-participants
Participation in social action in the last 12 months	• Oversample non-participants

B.37 The interviews were conducted by phone or online via MS Teams, depending on the young person's preference. The interviews explored: the types of youth activities the young person was involved in and the reasons they got involved; their satisfaction with the youth activities in their local area; barriers and enablers to participation; and their ideas for improvements and changes. All interviews were written up, inputted into MaxQDA, and thematically analysed by research question and emerging key themes.

B.38 In a small number of instances parents or carers were present during the interviews with young people, especially for younger participants or access needs. The presence of adults may have influenced the young peoples' responses. Where this appeared to be the case, SQW interviewers ensured that the transcripts accurately reflected this to factor it into our analysis.

Interviews with sector representatives

B.39 Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with 16 professionals from the youth sector in February and March 2025. The sector interviewees were initially identified based on

[122] For a 'broadly representative' spread the minimum quotas for each group was equivalent to 80% (with rounding down applied) of the proportion of the population they account for. For example, 'White' young people accounted for 70% of the total population so a minimum quota of 56% was set.

nominations from young people participating in the interviews, DCMS and UK Youth. Some sector interviewees made nominations who were subsequently approached too. A total of 45 organisations were invited to help with the research, of which 16 agreed to participate.

B.40 We aimed to speak with youth sector organisations with a spread of characteristics as per the criteria in Table B-2. In practice, those that signed up covered a range of characteristics, including good representation of general youth provision, volunteering, social action. partnership/infrastructure organisations and local authorities. However, there was more limited representation of arts/culture focused organisations and no representation of sports and uniformed groups, although some of the general youth provision did cover provide arts, culture and sports based activities. The sector organisations included some with particular expertise related to deprivation, mental health, ethnicity, special educational needs and disabilities, and LGBTQ+ young people. A list of the organisations spoken with is included in Annex C.

Table B-6: Proposed sector interviewee characteristics

Type of activity	Delivery context
Sports based youth provision, such as football, running or swimming	Youth provision located in communities with high socioeconomic deprivation
Arts/culture based youth provision such as theatre groups or music ensembles	Open Access and / or targeted provision for different groups of YP e.g. LGBTQ+, health disabilities etc
Uniformed services such as cadets or scouting	Youth provision located in rural and urban areas
Volunteering and / or social action	Centre-based open access youth club / youth group
	Youth provision accessed in schools (or other educational settings) or community settings

B.41 The interviews were conducted online or, in one case, in person. The interview topics spanned the full set of research questions for this study. There was a particular focus on effective practices for increase participation and satisfaction, and on suggestions for changes or support that would enable the interviewees or wider youth sector to further increase participation and satisfaction.

B.42 All interviews were written up, inputted into MaxQDA, and thematically analysed by research question and emerging key themes.

Study limitations and challenges

B.43 The research findings should be interpreted with the following limitations and challenges in mind:

- **Different definitions of youth activities**. DCMS's Youth Team lead on out of school provision for young people aged 11 to 18 (up to 25 for those with SEND needs) so that was our primary focus, but in practice the coverage of this research was broader. The YPS asked young people to consider *any* activities 'outside of a school lesson' meaning that participation in school-led and school-based activities such as before/after school clubs and lunchtime groups were within the survey's scope. During the fieldwork young people also talked about school-led and school-based activities as they tend not to distinguish activity providers.. The literature used in the evidence review also used varying definitions of youth activities. This said, during the research we did probe further on outside of school activities to a greater extent to reflect the Youth Team's remit. Please refer to Annex B for a more detailed overview of how youth activities were defined in the YPS.

- **Broad definition of 'volunteering'**. The YPS used a broad definition of volunteering, with 'helping' or 'taking care of' someone outside the family unpaid in scope.

- **Gaps in YPS coverage.** The YPS sample frame did not include young people who were not attending a state-funded school or college in 2021/22 which it estimated to account for 9% of young people within the target population. This primarily will have excluded those attending independent schools or colleges, plus young people who were home-schooled or who had stopped attending school or college prior to 2021.

- **Scope of secondary resources.** Although the rapid evidence review incorporated documents spanning a range of youth activities, there was a slight skew towards youth sport.

- **Sampling of young people for interview**. Our initial intention was to oversample certain groups identified as less likely to participate through the YPS analysis and evidence review but in some cases this was challenging to achieve in practice. The final sample was broadly representative, with intended skews towards older groups, young people with a limiting disability or health condition, and young people who did not participate in groups, clubs or social action.

- **Parental involvement**. In a small number of instances parents or carers were present during the interviews with young people, especially for younger participants or access needs. The presence of adults may have influenced the young peoples' responses. Where this appeared to be the case, SQW interviewers ensured that the transcripts accurately reflected this to factor it into our analysis.

- **Reporting issues raised by young people**. YPS provided captured findings of a representative sample of 2,000 young people, however the detailed findings from this research around 'what young people want' are based largely on the interviews. While the 74 young people we spoke with were broadly representative of the wider population we do not anticipate their experiences to necessarily be representative of the experiences of all young people. In places we have therefore provided an indication of whether the views shared by young people were common or reflected just one or two voices. However, it is important to note that a low prevalence does not equate to low importance as some uncommon issues were of high salience to specific types of young people.

- **Sampling of youth sector interviewees.** Similarly, given there are approximately 8,500 youth organisations operating in over 28,000 locations across England[123] it was not possible, nor was it intended, for our youth sector interviewees to be representative of youth organisations across the country.

- **Selection bias**. All interviewees opted into the research (including into the YPS). Therefore responses may be influenced by self-selection bias. Where possible we have triangulated findings across different data sources (quantitative and qualitative) to mitigate this.

- **Time period covered by wider literature.** Much of the literature pre-dates the COVID-19 pandemic, which we recognise had a material impact on the provision landscape and on the lives of young people and how they relate to youth provision.

[123] National Youth Agency (2024) *National Youth Sector Census Snapshot.*

Annex C: Research Participants

C.1 The qualitative research involved interviews with young people and youth sector representatives. This Annex sets out sets out the characteristics of the young people included in our sample and who the sector interviewees were.

Young People

C.2 A sample of 74 young people were interviewed as part of this research. The tables below set out the characteristics of the young people in our sample and in the available interview pool (i.e. those who signed up for possible invitation to interview). The YPS achieved a representative sample so is included to provide an indication of a representative split. We have used the YPS splits because national data is not readily available for all characteristics.

C.3 As set out in Table B-5 above in some cases we purposefully aimed to skew away from a representative split by oversampling young people with certain characteristics identified as less likely to participate and smaller sub-groups.

Age

Table C-1: Age

Category	Number of interviewees	% of interviewees	% of interview pool	% of YPS respondents
10-12	16	22%	25%	29%
13-15	21	28%	31%	33%
16-19	37	50%	43%	38%

Gender

Table C-2: Gender

Category	Number of interviewees	% of achieved sample	% of interview pool	% of YPS respondents
Male	38	51%	47%	50%
Female	34	46%	50%	49%
Identify in another way	1	1%	2%	1%
Prefer not to say	1	1%	1%	-

Ethnicity

Table C-3: Ethnicity

Category	Number of interviewees	% of interviewees	% of interview pool	% of YPS respondents
White	47	64%	66%	72%
Asian/Asian British	14	19%	16%	15%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	6	8%	8%	6%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	3	4%	5%	6%
Any other ethnic group	0	0%	4%	1%
Prefer not to say	0	0%	1%	1%

Free School Meals

Table C-4: Currently in receipt of free school meals

Category	Number of interviewees	% of interviewees	% of interview pool	% of YPS respondents
Yes	12	16%	15%	15%
No	56	76%	76%	72%
Don't know	1	1%	2%	-
Not applicable	5	7%	7%	-

IDACI Quintile (identified using young person's postcode)

Table C-5: IDACI Quintile

Category	Number of interviewees	% of achieved sample	% of interview pool	% of YPS respondents
IDACI 1 (most deprived)	16	22%	18%	21%
IDACI 2	25	34%	24%	20%
IDACI 3	16	22%	18%	20%
IDACI 4	6	8%	18%	20%

Category	Number of interviewees	% of achieved sample	% of interview pool	% of YPS respondents
IDACI 5 (least deprived)	10	14%	19%	19%
Unknown	1	1%	1%	-

Limiting long-term illness or disability

Table C-6: Long-term illness or disability

Category	Number of interviewees	% of interviewees	% of interview pool	% of YPS respondents
Yes	10	14%	10%	9%
No	60	81%	85%	91%
Don't know	4	5%	5%	-

Sexuality (16+ only but percentages are out of all young people)

Table C-7: Sexuality

Category	Number of interviewees	% of interviewees	% of interview pool	% of YPS respondents
Heterosexual or straight	17	23%	21%	30%
Gay, lesbian, bisexual or other	3	4%	4%	6%
Don't know	1	1%	1%	-
Prefer not to say	3	4%	2%	-

Rural/Urban (identified using young person's postcode)

Table C-8: Rural/Urban

Category	Number of interviewees	% of interviewees	% of interview pool	% of YPS respondents
Rural	9	12%	15%	17%
Urban	64	86%	85%	83%
Unknown	1	1%	1%	-

Region (identified using young person's postcode)

Table C-9: Region

Category	Number of interviewees	% of interviewees	% of interview pool	% of YPS respondents
East Midlands	10	14%	8%	8%
East of England	9	12%	12%	12%
London	8	11%	14%	15%
North East	3	4%	4%	5%
North West	8	11%	11%	12%
South East	12	16%	18%	18%
South West	9	12%	10%	10%
West Midlands	7	9%	11%	11%
Yorkshire and Humber	7	9%	9%	10%
Unknown	10	1%	1%	-

Participation in youth activities

Table C-10: Participation in youth activities

Category	Number of interviewees	% of interviewees	% of interview pool	% of YPS respondents
Participation in any groups/clubs in the last 12 months				
Yes	45	61%	71%	67%
No	28	38%	28%	33%
Not Sure	1	1%	1%	-
Participation in volunteering in the last 12 months				
Yes	30	41%	34%	45%
No	42	57%	64%	55%
Not sure	2	3%	1%	-
Participation in social action in the last 12 months				
Yes	20	27%	27%	47%

Category	Number of interviewees	% of interviewees	% of interview pool	% of YPS respondents
No	49	66%	65%	53%
Not sure	5	7%	8%	-

Sector representatives

C.4 The full list of organisations interviewed as part of this research are set below.

- 42nd Street
- AllChild
- Bradford City Council Youth Services
- Hull City Council Youth Development Service
- Isledon Arts CIC (nominated based on their Lift Youth Hub)
- Kirklees Youth Alliance
- London Youth
- Peer Action Collective (PAC)
- Phab
- RECLAIM
- Nottingham Music Hub (nominated based on their Robin Hood Youth Orchestra)
- SignHealth
- Skills 4 Work (Gateshead) Ltd.
- The Kite Trust
- Whizz Kidz
- Yorkshire Youth Work Unit

Annex D: Results of survey data analysis

D.1 The key results from the survey analysis are included in the main body of the report. This Annex includes the full analysis results tables for transparency and for those who may find them of interest. The table below provides an overview of the different results tables contained in the Annex.

D.2 Each table or series of tables include a brief introduction to explain the contents and analytical approach. For more information on the definitions used and the overall approach to the analysis please refer to Annex B.

Table D-1: Overview of the analysis tables

Table	Research question and analysis
Table D-2	RQ1: Relationship between individual characteristics and participation in any youth activity – regression results
Table D-3	RQ1: Relationship between individual characteristics and participation in any youth activity – predicted probabilities
Table D-4	RQ1: Relationship between individual characteristics and length of participation
Table D-5	RQ1: Relationship between individual characteristics and frequency of participation
Table D-6	RQ1: Relationship between individual characteristics and participation in multiple activities and activity types
Table D-7	RQ2: Relationship between barriers/enablers and any participation
Table D-8	RQ2: Relationship between enablers and length of participation
Table D-9	RQ2: Relationship between motivations and length of participation
Table D-10	RQ2: Relationship between barriers and frequency of participation
Table D-11	RQ2: Relationship between enablers and frequency of participation
Table D-12	RQ2: Relationship between motivations and frequency of participation
Table D-13	RQ2: Relationship between barriers and participation in multiple activities and activity types
Table D-14	RQ2: Relationship between enablers and participation in multiple activities and activity types

Table	Research question and analysis
Table D-15	RQ2: Relationship between motivations and participation in multiple activities and activity types
Table D-16	RQ3: Relationship between individual characteristics and barriers (for groups and clubs)
Table D-17	RQ3: Relationship between individual characteristics and barriers (for volunteering)
Table **D-18**	RQ3: Relationship between individual characteristics and barriers (for social action)
Table D-19	RQ3: Relationship between individual characteristics and enablers (for groups and clubs)

Research Question 1: Relationship between participation and individual characteristics

Outcome (a): any participation

D.3 Table D-2 shows the regression results for outcome (a): any participation in youth activities by activity category and type. Where we found statistically significant relationships, the colour green refers to a positive (>0) regression coefficient, i.e. it means that people with a given characteristic (e.g. being female) are more likely to participate compared to those with the 'base category' of that characteristic (e.g. being male). Conversely, the colour orange refers to a negative (<0) regression coefficient, meaning that people with a given characteristic are less likely to participate than those with the 'base category' of that characteristic. The asterisks indicate statistical significance levels[124] with *** (1% level) providing the strongest evidence against the results being due to chance, followed by ** (5% level) and * (10% level).[125] Other results marked with a hyphen (-) were not found to be statistically significant.

> **Interpretation example for Table D-2:** For gender we found that females are less likely to participate than males in groups & clubs overall (though only at the 10% level). This seems to be driven by sports, uniformed groups and 'other' groups where females were found to be less likely to participate (at higher statistical significance levels). However, we also found that relative to males, females are more likely to participate in music & arts activities, as well as volunteering and social action.

D.4 In addition, where we found statistically significant relationships we also calculated the predicted probabilities of participation. In other words, we calculated the predicted probability that a person with a given characteristic participates in youth activities, under the assumption that their remaining characteristics are set at the sample mean values. This is shown in Table D-3.

[124] Statistical significance refers to the probability that the observed results are due to chance, e.g. the 1% level means that there is a 1% probability that the results are due to chance.
[125] Please note that the 10% statistical significance level provides the weakest evidence that the results are not due to chance. Such findings are included with small sample sizes to provide an indication of a relationship but this should be treated with caution.

Table D-2: Regression analysis results for relationship between individual characteristics and outcome (a) – any participation (N=1,586)

Characteristic	Any groups & clubs	Sports & fitness	Arts & music	Uniformed groups	Youth club/centre	'Other' groups & clubs	Any volunteering	Any social action
Age: 13-15 and 16-19 rel. to 10-12	***(16-19), ***(13-15)	***(16-19), ***(13-15)	***(16-19), **(13-15)	***(16-19), **(13-15)	-	*** (16-19)	*(16-19), *(13-15)	-
Gender: female rel. to male	*	***	***	**	-	**	***	***
FSM	***	***	-	***	***		-	**
Ethnicity: ethnic minorities (exc. white minorities) rel. to white	-	-	-	***	-	**		*
Limiting disability	-	***	-	-	-	**	-	-
Urban rel. to rural	-	-	-	-	-		-	-
IDACI quintile: 2, 3, 4, 5 rel. to 1	***(3), ***(4), ***(5)	*(3), ***(4), ***(5)	***(3), **(4), ***(5)	***(4)	-	-	***(4), ***(5)	-
Region: London, EM, NE, NW, SE, SW, WM, YH rel. to EE	-	-	-	-	***(London), **(SW), *(WM)	*(WM)	**(London), *(NE), **(NW), **(SW)	***(NW)
LGBTQ+	-	**	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: SQW analysis of YPS data
Note: The LGBTQ+ characteristic was explored using the subsample of respondents aged 16-19, where the sample size was 455.
**** 1% significance, ** 5% significance, *10% significance;*
The colour green refers to a positive regression coefficient (i.e.>0); the colour orange refers to a negative regression coefficient (<0).

Table D-3: Predicted probabilities for relationship between individual characteristics and outcome (a) – any participation (N=1,586)

Characteristic	Any groups & clubs	Sports & fitness	Arts & music	Uniformed groups	Youth club/centre	'Other' groups & clubs	Any volunteering	Any social action
Age	**86%** for 10-12 yo **78%** for 13-15 yo **49%** for 16-19 yo	**75%** for 10-12 yo **63%** for 13-15 yo **35%** for 16-19 yo	**29%** for 10-12 yo **23%** for 13-15 yo **12%** for 16-19 yo	**17%** for 10-12 yo **12%** for 13-15 yo **7%** for 16-19 yo	-	**12%** for 10-12 yo **12%** for 13-15 yo **7%** for 16-19 yo	**43%** for 10-12 yo **48%** for 13-15 yo **48%** for 16-19 yo	-
Gender	**70%** for females **74%** for males	**54%** for females **63%** for males	**28%** for females **15%** for males	**11%** for females **14%** for males	-	**9%** for females **12%** for males	**50%** for females **43%** for males	**52%** for females **44%** for males
FSM	**64%** for FSM **73%** for non-FSM	**47%** for FSM **61%** for non-FSM	-	**5%** for FSM **14%** for non-FSM	**12%** for FSM **7%** for non-FSM	-	-	**41%** for FSM **49%** for non-FSM
Ethnicity	-	-	-	**8%** for ethnic minorities **14%** for white	-	**14%** for ethnic minorities **10%** for white	-	**52%** for ethnic minorities **46%** for white
Limiting disability	-	**46%** for disabled **60%** for not disabled	-		-	**16%** for disabled **10%** for not disabled		-
Urban vs rural	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IDACI quintile	**64%** for quintile 1 **67%** for quintile 2 **73%** for quintile 3 **78%** for quintile 4 **78%** for quintile 5	**51%** for quintile 1 **54%** for quintile 2 **58%** for quintile 3 **64%** for quintile 4 **67%** for quintile 5	**14%** for quintile 1 **17%** for quintile 2 **23%** for quintile 3 **23%** for quintile 4 **30%** for quintile 5	**9%** for quintile 1 **12%** for quintile 2 **10%** for quintile 3 **17%** for quintile 4 **13%** for quintile 5	-	-	**38%** for quintile 1 **44%** for quintile 2 **45%** for quintile 3 **52%** for quintile 4 **53%** for quintile 5	-
Region	-	-	-	-	**4%** for EE **6%** for EM **12%** for London **9%** for NE **7%** for NW **7%** for SE **12%** for SW **9%** for WM **7%** for YH	**13%** for EE **10%** for EM **15%** for London **12%** for NE **12%** for NW **10%** for SE **7%** for SW **7%** for WM **10%** for YH	**40%** for EE **42%** for EM **51%** for London **52%** for NE **50%** for NW **43%** for SE **52%** for SW **44%** for WM **48%** for YH	**44%** for EE **41%** for EM **45%** for London **48%** for NE **59%** for NW **48%** for SE **49%** for SW **47%** for WM **48%** for YH

Characteristic	Any groups & clubs	Sports & fitness	Arts & music	Uniformed groups	Youth club/centre	'Other' groups & clubs	Any volunteering	Any social action
LGBTQ+		**21%** for LGBTQ+ **36%** for non-LGBTQ+						

Source: SQW analysis of YPS data
Note: Predicted probabilities are provided where statistically significant relationships were found.
The %s refer to the predicted probability of participation for a given value of a characteristic, holding all other characteristics at their mean values (at the level of the sample).
The LGBTQ+ results are based on a sub-sample of older young people (aged 16-19).

Outcome (b): length of participation

D.5 **Table D-4** shows regression results for length of participation, defined in three ways: participation for longer than two years, longer than one year, and longer than six months. Data on this outcome is not available for volunteering and social action, therefore only results for groups & clubs (category and types) are presented. Direction of effects and significance levels are denoted in the same way as for outcome (a).

D.6 Importantly, **only those who reported that they participate in youth activities were included in these regressions**, with the results showing which characteristics are associated with longer participation. As only participants were included in the analysis, sample sizes were significantly smaller (especially for most activity types) – this had implications for the likelihood of finding statistically significant relationships (where such relationships exist).[126]

[126] Sample sizes for outcome (b) ranged from 90 to 1,042 in the full sample regressions, and from 47 to 205 in the LGBTQ+ regressions.

Table D-4: Regression analysis results for relationship between individual characteristics and outcome (b) – length of participation

Characteristic	Any groups & clubs, N=1,042	Sports & fitness, N=853	Arts & music, N=292	Uniformed groups, N=182	Youth club/centre, N=90	'Other' groups & clubs, N=142
Age: 13-15 and 16-19 rel. to 10-12	More than 2 years: ***(16-19) More than 1 year: **(16-19) More than 6 mos.: ***(16-19)	-	More than 2 years: ***(16-19), **(13-15)	More than 1 year: *(13-15) More than 6 mos.: *(13-15)	More than 6 mos.: *(16-19)	-
Gender: female rel. to male	More than 1 year: ** More than 6 mos.: **	More than 1 year: ** More than 6 mos.: **	More than 1 year: *	-	-	-
FSM	More than 2 years: ** More than 1 year: *** More than 6 mos.:***	More than 2 years: *** More than 1 year: *** More than 6 mos.:***	More than 2 years: *** More than 1 year: ** More than 6 mos.:**	More than 1 year: ** More than 6 mos.:***	-	-
Ethnicity: ethnic minorities rel. to white	More than 2 years: *** More than 1 year: *** More than 6 mos.:***	More than 2 years: *** More than 1 year: *** More than 6 mos.:***	More than 1 year: **	More than 2 years: ** More than 1 year:*** More than 6 mos.: ***	-	-
Limiting disability	More than 2 years: ** More than 1 year:*	More than 1 year: * More than 6 mos.: **	-	More than 2 years: *	More than 2 years: *	-
Urban rel. to rural	-	More than 6 mos.: **	-	More than 2 years: ** More than 1 year: ** More than 6 mos.: **	-	-
IDACI quintile: 2, 3, 4, 5 rel. to 1	-	More than 2 years: **(3), *(4), ***(5) More than 1 year: **(4), ***(5) More than 6 mos.: **(5)	More than 2 years: **(2), ***(3), *(4)	-	More than 2 years: *(4) More than 1 year: **(4)	More than 2 years: *(3) More than 6 mos.: **(5)

Characteristic	Any groups & clubs, N=1,042	Sports & fitness, N=853	Arts & music, N=292	Uniformed groups, N=182	Youth club/centre, N=90	'Other' groups & clubs, N=142
Region: London, EM, NE, NW, SE, SW, WM, YH rel. to EE	More than 2 years: *(NW)	More than 2 years: **(NW) More than 1 year: **(NW)	More than 1 year: **(NW) More than 6 mos.: *(NW), *(SE)	-	-	-
LGBTQ+	-	-	More than 2 years: * *More than 6 mos. not run due to data structure*	*More than 2 years / 1 year / 6 mos. not run due to data structure*	*More than 2 years / 1 year / 6 mos. not run due to data structure*	*More than 2 years / 1 year / 6 mos. not run due to data structure*

Source: SQW analysis of YPS data

Note: The LGBTQ+ characteristic was explored using the subsample of respondents aged 16-19, where the sample size was 205 for groups & clubs, 151 for sports and 47 for arts & music.
**** 1% significance, ** 5% significance, *10% significance;*
The colour green refers to a positive regression coefficient (i.e.>0); the colour orange refers to a negative regression coefficient (<0).

Outcome (c): frequency of participation

D.7 **Table D-5** shows the regression results for frequency of participation, where frequency is captured by three measures: participation more than weekly, at least weekly, and at least monthly. The results are presented for groups & clubs (category and types) and volunteering, with the frequency of social action participation not being captured by YPS. Direction of effects and significance levels are denoted in the same way as in earlier tables. Similarly, to outcome (b), only those who participate were included in the regressions.[127]

D.8 It is worth noting that for most of the groups & clubs activity types and volunteering, it was not possible to run regressions for all of the three frequency measures. This was due to the data structure (i.e. people's survey responses) – for example, among those participating in volunteering, no one volunteered 'at least weekly' or 'more than weekly' so it was only possible to run the regression for participating 'at least monthly'. The table provides information on which frequency measures were not run for each activity type/category.

[127] Sample sizes for outcome (c) ranged from 121 to 1,121 in the full sample regressions, and from 53 to 219 in the LGBTQ+ regressions.

Table D-5: Regression analysis results for relationship between individual characteristics and outcome (c) – frequency of participation

Characteristic	Any groups & clubs, N=1,121	Sports & fitness, N=914	Arts & music, N=329	Uniformed groups, N=196	Youth club/centre, N=121	'Other' groups & clubs, N=158	Any volunteering, N=682
Age: 13-15 and 16-19 rel. to 10-12	More than weekly: ***(16-19), ***(13-15)	More than weekly: ***(16-19), ***(13-15)	More than weekly: ***(16-19)	More than weekly: ***(16-19), ***(13-15)	*At least monthly not possible*	*At least weekly / at least monthly not possible*	At least monthly: ***(16-19), ***(13-15)
	At least weekly: **(16-19), *(13-15) At least monthly: *(16-19)	At least weekly: ***(13-15) At least monthly: **(13-15)	At least weekly: *(16-19)	*At least monthly not possible*			*More than weekly / at least weekly not possible*
			At least monthly not possible				
Gender: female rel. to male	More than weekly: ***	More than weekly: ***	*At least monthly not possible*	*At least monthly not possible*	*At least monthly not possible*	*At least weekly / at least monthly not possible*	*More than weekly / at least weekly not possible*
FSM	More than weekly: ** At least weekly: ** At least monthly: *	-	*At least monthly not possible*	*At least monthly not possible*	More than weekly: *	*At least weekly/ at least monthly not possible*	*More than weekly / at least weekly not possible*
					At least monthly not possible		
Ethnicity: ethnic minorities rel. to white	More than weekly: *	More than weekly: **	At least weekly: **	At least weekly: *	*At least monthly not possible*	*At least weekly/ at least monthly not possible*	*More than weekly / at least weekly not possible*
			At least monthly not possible	*At least monthly not possible*			
Limiting disability	More than weekly: *** At least weekly: * At least monthly: **	More than weekly: ** At least monthly: **	At least weekly: ***	More than weekly: *	*At least monthly not possible*	*At least weekly / at least monthly not possible*	*More than weekly / at least weekly not possible*
			At least monthly not possible	*At least monthly not possible*			

Characteristic	Any groups & clubs, N=1,121	Sports & fitness, N=914	Arts & music, N=329	Uniformed groups, N=196	Youth club/centre, N=121	'Other' groups & clubs, N=158	Any volunteering, N=682
Urban rel. to rural	-	-	*At least monthly not possible*	*At least monthly not possible*	*At least monthly not possible*	*At least weekly / at least monthly not possible*	At least monthly: **
							More than weekly / at least weekly not possible
IDACI quintile: 2, 3, 4, 5 rel. to 1	-	-	*At least monthly not possible*	At least weekly: **(4), **(5)	More than weekly: **(2), *(5) At least weekly: *(4)	More than weekly: ***(2), **(3)	*More than weekly / at least weekly not possible*
				At least monthly not possible	*At least monthly not possible*	*At least weekly / at least monthly not possible*	
Region: London, EM, NE, NW, SE, SW, WM, YH rel. to EE	More than weekly: **(SE)	More than weekly: **(SE)	More than weekly: **(NE)	More than weekly: *(EM), *(NE)	More than weekly: *(EM), *(London)	More than weekly: **(NW)	*More than weekly / at least weekly not possible*
			At least monthly not possible	*At least monthly not possible*	*At least monthly not possible*	*At least weekly/ at least monthly not possible*	
LGBTQ+	More than weekly: * At least weekly: ** At least monthly: **	*At least weekly / at least monthly not possible*	*At least monthly not possible*	*More than weekly / at least weekly / at least monthly not possible*	*More than weekly / at least weekly / at least monthly not possible*	*More than weekly / at least weekly / at least monthly not possible*	*More than weekly / at least weekly not possible*

Source: SQW analysis of YPS data

Note: The LGBTQ+ characteristic was explored using the subsample of respondents aged 16-19, where the sample size was 219 for groups & clubs, 156 for sports and 53 for arts & music.
**** 1% significance, ** 5% significance, *10% significance;*
The colour green refers to a positive regression coefficient (i.e.>0); the colour orange refers to a negative regression coefficient (<0).

Outcome (d): participation in multiple activities and activity types

D.9 **Table D-6** shows the regression results for participation in:

- **Multiple activities**, captured by two measures: participation in more than one activity and the number of activities that a person participates in (with multiple activities possible within one activity type)
- **Multiple activity types**, captured by two measures: participation in more than one activity type and the number of activity types a person participates in.

D.10 The former is presented for the groups & clubs category and its activity types (except for youth clubs where this data is not captured by YPS). The latter applies to the groups & clubs category only. Volunteering and social action are not included in the table as the YPS does not provide information on the number of volunteering and social action activities.

D.11 As in earlier tables, the colour green refers to a positive relationship. Depending on the measure used, it means that a person with a given characteristic is more likely to participate in more than one activity (or activity type) or that people with a given characteristic tend to participate in a greater number of activities (or activity types). Conversely, the colour orange refers to a negative relationship. Similarly to outcomes (b) and (c), only those who participate in a given youth activity were included in the regressions[128] (with sample sizes ranging from 150 to 1,137).

[128] Sample sizes for outcome (d) ranged from 150 to 1,137 in the full sample regressions, and from 28 to 222 in the LGBTQ+ regressions.

Table D-6: Regression analysis results for relationship between individual characteristics and outcome (d) – participation in multiple activities and activity types

Characteristic	Any groups & clubs – no. of activities, N=938	Any groups and clubs – no. of types, N=1,137	Sports & fitness – no. of activities, N=806	Arts & music – no. of activities, N=298	Uniformed groups – no. of activities, N=187	'Other' groups & clubs– no. of activities, N=150
Age: 13-15 and 16-19 rel. to 10-12	Number of activities: ***(16-19), **(13-15)	More than one type: ***(16-19), *(13-15) Number of types: ***(16-19), **(13-15)		More than one activity: *(13-15) Number of activities: *(16-19)		
Gender: female rel. to male			More than one activity: *	More than one activity: * Number of activities: **		
FSM		More than one type: *** Number of types: *		Number of activities: ***		
Ethnicity: ethnic minorities rel. to white			More than one activity: **		Number of activities: ***	
Limiting disability		More than one type: * Number of types: *	Number of activities: **	Number of activities: *		
Urban rel. to rural				Number of activities: **		
IDACI quintile: 2, 3, 4, 5 rel. to 1	More than one activity: *(3), ***(4), ***(5) Number of activities: ***(5)	More than one type: **(5) Number of types: **(4), ***(5)	More than one activity: ***(4), ***(5)	Number of activities: *(2)		

Characteristic	Any groups & clubs – no. of activities, N=938	Any groups and clubs – no. of types, N=1,137	Sports & fitness – no. of activities, N=806	Arts & music – no. of activities, N=298	Uniformed groups – no. of activities, N=187	'Other' groups & clubs– no. of activities, N=150
Region: London, EM, NE, NW, SE, SW, WM, YH rel. to EE		More than one type: **(London), *(SW) Number of types: **(London), *(SW)			More than one activity: *(YH) Number of activities: *(SE)	
LGBTQ+	Number of activities: *		More than one activity: *** Number of activities: **		*More than one activity not run due to data structure*	*More than one activity not run due to data structure*

Source: SQW analysis of YPS data

Note: The LGBTQ+ characteristic was explored using the subsample of respondents aged 16-19, where the sample size was 170 for groups & clubs (no of activities), 222 for groups & clubs (no of activity types), 127 for sports, 51 for arts & music, 30 for uniformed groups, 28 for 'other' groups.

**** 1% significance, ** 5% significance, *10% significance;*

The colour green refers to a positive regression coefficient (i.e.>0); the colour orange refers to a negative regression coefficient (<0).

Research Question 2: Relationship between participation and enablers/barriers

Outcome (a): any participation

D.12 Analysis of outcome (a) was undertaken using data for participants and non-participants for the three categories of youth activity: groups & clubs, volunteering, and social action. The results of this analysis enabled us to identify relationships between reporting a certain barrier or enabler[129] and one's probability of participation. In other words, **the estimated relationships tell us whether a given factor affects the decisions of participants** (i.e. decision to not participate even more) **more than it affects the decisions of non-participants** (i.e. decision to not participate at all).

D.13 Moreover, it is worth noting that while the regressions for groups & clubs and social action use data from questions that were asked of all respondents, **the volunteering regression relies on data from a question that was asked only of those who volunteered less than once a month or those who did not volunteer at all.** Therefore, the interpretation of the estimated volunteering relationships is slightly different; namely, these results tell us whether a given factor affects the decisions of participants who participate infrequently (i.e. less than once a month) more than the decisions of those who do not participate at all.

D.14 The results of the analysis are shown in **Table D-7**. Like for RQ1, relationships which are estimated to be statistically significant are shown in green where the relationship is positive and in orange where the relationship is negative. As such, a green cell indicates that participants are more likely than non-participants to experience a particular barrier/enabler, while an orange cell means that non-participants are more likely to experience that barrier/enabler. The corresponding level of statistical significance is indicated using asterisks. Importantly, **lack of statistical significance should not be interpreted as a given factor not affecting participation** – rather, it could mean that the factor affects non-participants and participants to a similar extent.

[129] The YPS collects data on only one enabler where data on both participants and non-participants is collected. Therefore, only one enabler was used in outcome (a) regressions.

Table D-7: Regression analysis results for relationship between barriers/enablers and outcome (a) – any participation

Barrier/enabler	Any groups & clubs N=1,431	Any volunteering N=1,232	Any social action N=1,501
Barriers			
I'm not interested	**	***	***
Cost			
Difficulty getting there			***
Too busy with other commitments (such as school/college work, working, other activities)	***	***	***
I prefer to do other things in my spare time	***		
The activities are not aimed at people my age		n/a	n/a
I don't have any one to go with			
The activities aren't very good		n/a	n/a
I don't know what activities are going on in my area		**	
I'm not allowed to go	*		
I'm too shy/lack confidence	***	**	
I won't fit in			
My physical health or a disability	***		
My mental health			
Enabler			
Agree that enough clubs and activities in local area	***	n/a	n/a

Source: Source: SQW analysis of YPS data
**** 1% significance, ** 5% significance, *10% significance;*
The colour green refers to a positive regression coefficient (i.e.>0); the colour orange refers to a negative regression coefficient (<0).
"n/a" signifies that a particular barrier/enabler was not asked about for the relevant activity category.

Outcome (b): length of participation

D.15 Outcome (b) regression analysis focused on understanding differences in the barriers, enablers, and motivations experienced by those participating in youth activities for a longer time vs those participating for shorter. As in RQ1, three measures for length of participation were used, comparing: those who participate for at least six months vs less than six months (*measure i*); those who participate for at least one year vs less than one year (*measure ii*); and those who participate for at least two years vs less than two years (*measure iii*). This analysis was conducted for groups & clubs only due to survey data availability.

D.16 The results of this analysis are shown for enablers in **Table D-8** and for motivations in **Table D-9**. The analysis for barriers revealed minimal significant results and is excluded from this presentation.

Table D-8: Regression analysis results for relationship between enablers and outcome (b) – length of participation

Enabler	Groups & clubs		
	i. Over six months vs. less than six months N=978	ii. Over a year vs. less than a year N=978	iii. Over two years vs. less than two years N=978
Agree that enough clubs and activities in local area			***
At least one activity organised by school/college/university			
Heard through school/college	***	***	***
Heard through family	***	***	***
Heard through a friend			
Heard through social media			
Heard through an online search			
Heard through a leaflet/poster			
Heard through a religious/faith group			

Source: Source: SQW analysis of YPS data
**** 1% significance, ** 5% significance, *10% significance;*
The colour green refers to a positive regression coefficient (i.e.>0); the colour orange refers to a negative regression coefficient (<0).

Table D-9: Regression analysis results for relationship between motivations and outcome (b) – length of participation

Motivation	Groups & clubs		
	i. Over six months vs. less than six months N=1,041	ii. Over a year vs. less than a year N=1,041	iii. Over two years vs. less than two years N=1,041
To meet new people/make friends	*	**	***
To spend time with friends			
To learn new things/develop skills further	*		
To do something outside of home			
Because they enjoy it			
To keep them fit	***	***	***
To build confidence	*		
It's a safe space to be oneself			
Liking the people who run it	**		
To do things they are good at		**	***

Source: Source: SQW analysis of YPS data
**** 1% significance, ** 5% significance, *10% significance;*
The colour green refers to a positive regression coefficient (i.e.>0); the colour orange refers to a negative regression coefficient (<0).

Outcome (c): frequency of participation

D.17 Outcome (c) regression analysis aimed to investigate how those who participate in youth activities more vs. less frequently experience different barriers, enablers, and motivations. Due to data availability, the analysis of barriers was conducted for groups & clubs and volunteering, while enablers and motivations were investigated for groups & clubs only.

D.18 As in RQ1, we used **different measures of participation frequency**. Specifically, for clubs & groups we compared barriers, enablers, and motivations for those who have participated more than once a week vs. less frequently (*measure i*); at least once a week vs. less frequently (*measure ii*); and at least once a month vs. less frequently (*measure iii*). Because the volunteering barriers question was only asked of those who either volunteered less than once a month or did not volunteer at all, we **used a different definition for volunteering frequency**, i.e. at least a few times a year vs. just once a year.

D.19 The results of this analysis are shown for barriers in **Table D-10**, for enablers in **Table D-11** and for motivations in **Table D-12**.

Table D-10: Regression analysis results for relationship between barriers and outcome (c) – frequency of participation

Barrier	Groups & clubs			Volunteering
	i. More than once a week vs. less frequently N=1,078	ii. At least once a week vs. less frequently N=1,078	iii. At least once a month vs. less frequently N=1,078	A few times a year vs. once a year N=407
I'm not interested in going				**
Cost	**			
Difficulty getting there		***	**	
Too busy with other commitments (such as school/college work, working, other activities)	***	**		
I prefer to do other things in my spare time	**			**
The activities are not aimed at people my age				n/a
I don't have any one to go with				
The activities aren't very good				n/a
I don't know what activities are going on in my area				***
I'm not allowed to go				
I'm too shy/lack confidence	***			
I won't fit in		**	*	
My physical health or a disability				
My mental health			*	

Source: Source: SQW analysis of YPS data
**** 1% significance, ** 5% significance, *10% significance;*
The colour green refers to a positive regression coefficient (i.e.>0); the colour orange refers to a negative regression coefficient (<0).

Table D-11: Regression analysis results for relationship between enablers and outcome (c) – frequency of participation

Enabler	Groups & clubs		
	i. More than once a week vs. less frequently N=1,048	ii. At least once a week vs. less frequently N=1,048	iii. At least once a month vs. less frequently N=1,048
Agree that enough clubs and activities in local area			
At least one activity organised by school/college/university	***		
Heard through school/college	***		
Heard through family	***	***	***
Heard through a friend	***	**	***
Heard through social media	***		
Heard through an online search	*		*
Heard through a leaflet/poster			
Heard through a religious/faith group			

Source: Source: SQW analysis of YPS data
**** 1% significance, ** 5% significance, *10% significance;*
The colour green refers to a positive regression coefficient (i.e.>0); the colour orange refers to a negative regression coefficient (<0).

Table D-12: Regression analysis results for relationship between motivations and outcome (c) – frequency of participation

Motivation	Groups & clubs		
	i. More than once a week vs. less frequently N=1,119	ii. At least once a week vs. less frequently N=1,119	iii. At least once a month vs. less frequently N=1,119
To meet new people/make friends		*	**
To spend time with friends			
To learn new things/develop skills further		*	
To do something outside of home			
Because they enjoy it	***	***	***
To keep them fit	***	***	**
To build confidence			
It's a safe space to be oneself		*	
Liking the people who run it			
To do things they are good at	***	**	

Source: Source: SQW analysis of YPS data
**** 1% significance, ** 5% significance, *10% significance;*
The colour green refers to a positive regression coefficient (i.e.>0); the colour orange refers to a negative regression coefficient (<0).

Outcome (d): multiple activities

D.20 As in RQ1, outcome (d) regression analysis investigated four types of outcomes in total, i.e. one binary and one numeric outcome for participation in multiple activities, and one binary and one numeric outcome for participation in multiple activity types. First, using binary outcomes, we investigated whether those who participate in more than one activity (or activity type) experience different barriers, enablers, and motivations to those who participate in just one activity (or activity type). Second, for numeric outcomes, the analysis considered how the number of activities (or activity types) that a person participates in is related to barriers, enablers, and motivations.[130] This analysis was done for groups & clubs only.

D.21 The results are shown for barriers in **Table D-13**, for enablers in **Table D-14** and for motivations in **Table D-15**.

[130] As mentioned previously, the total number of activities excludes the youth club activity type, as participants in this activity type were not asked about the number of youth clubs that they attended.

Table D-13: Regression analysis results for relationship between barriers and outcome (d) – multiple activities and activity types

Barrier	Groups & clubs			
	Participating in more than one activity type vs one activity type N=1,091	Number of activity types N=1,091	Participating in more than one activity vs one activity N=908	Number of activities N=908
I'm not interested in going				
Cost		**		
Difficulty getting there		*		**
Too busy with other commitments (such as school/college work, working, other activities)	***	***	**	***
I prefer to do other things in my spare time				**
The activities are not aimed at people my age	***	***		**
I don't have any one to go with	***	***	**	*
The activities aren't very good				
I don't know what activities are going on in my area	*			
I'm not allowed to go			**	
I'm too shy/lack confidence				
I won't fit in				
My physical health or a disability				
My mental health				

Source: Source: SQW analysis of YPS data
**** 1% significance, ** 5% significance, *10% significance;*
The colour green refers to a positive regression coefficient (i.e.>0); the colour orange refers to a negative regression coefficient (<0).

Table D-14: Regression analysis results for relationship between enablers and outcome (d) – multiple activities and activity types

Enabler	Groups & clubs			
	Participating in more than one activity type vs one activity type N=1,060	Number of activity types N=1,060	Participating in more than one activity vs one activity N=886	Number of activities N=886
Agree that enough clubs and activities in local area				
At least one activity organised by school/college/university	***	***	***	***
Heard through school/college	***	***		
Heard through family	***	***	***	***
Heard through a friend	***	***	***	***
Heard through social media			**	*
Heard through an online search	***	***	***	***
Heard through a leaflet/poster	**			
Heard through a religious/faith group	***	***		

Source: Source: SQW analysis of YPS data
**** 1% significance, ** 5% significance, *10% significance;*
The colour green refers to a positive regression coefficient (i.e.>0); the colour orange refers to a negative regression coefficient (<0).

Table D-15: Regression analysis results for relationship between motivations and outcome (d) – multiple activities and activity types

Motivation	Groups & clubs			
	Participating in more than one activity type vs one activity type N=1,132	Number of activity types N=1,132	Participating in more than one activity vs one activity N=936	Number of activities N=936
To meet new people/make friends	***	***		
To spend time with friends	**	**		*
To learn new things/develop skills further	***	***		**
To do something outside of home				
Because they enjoy it	***	***	***	
To keep them fit			***	***
To build confidence				
It's a safe space to be oneself				*
Liking the people who run it				
To do things they are good at			***	***

Source: Source: SQW analysis of YPS data
**** 1% significance, ** 5% significance, *10% significance;*
The colour green refers to a positive regression coefficient (i.e.>0); the colour orange refers to a negative regression coefficient (<0).

Research Question 3: Relationship between enablers/barriers and individual characteristics

D.22 This sub-section explores the relationship between barriers/enablers and characteristics of individuals and their local area. We present regression results where the enabling factors and barriers to participation are the outcomes (dependent variables) and demographic and geographical characteristics are the explanatory variables. As a result, we are able **to identify the groups of young people that are less likely to experience certain enablers and face a particularly high risk of encountering certain barriers**.

D.23 As in earlier tables, the colour green refers to a positive relationship, i.e. it shows that people with a given characteristic are more likely to report a certain barrier or enabler, relative to people with the 'base' category of that characteristic. Conversely, the colour orange signifies a negative relationship, meaning that people with a given characteristic are less likely to report a given factor. Statistical significance levels are denoted in the same way as before. Please note motivations were not studied under this research question.

The relationships between barriers and characteristics are shown in **Table D-16** (for groups & clubs), **Table D-17** (for volunteering) and

D.24 **Table D-18** (for social action). Results for enablers are shown in **Table D-19** (available for groups & clubs only).

Table D-16: Regression analysis results for relationship between barriers and individual characteristics for groups/clubs (N=1,534)

Barrier	Age: 13-15 and 16-19 rel. to 10-12	Gender: female rel. to male	FSM	Ethnicity: ethnic minorities rel. to white	Limiting disability	Urban rel. to rural	IDACI quintile: 2, 3, 4, 5 rel. to 1	Region: London, EM, NE, NW, SE, SW, WM, YH rel. to EE	LGBTQ+ (16-19 sample)
I'm not interested in going	**(16-19), ***(13-15)	***					***(5)	**(NE), **(SE)	
Cost	**(13-15)		***				*(5)		
Difficulty getting there				**	**		**(5)		
Too busy with other commitments (such as school/college work, working, other activities)	***(16-19)	**	*				***(5)		
I prefer to do other things in my spare time			**	*			*(2)	**(NW)	
The activities are not aimed at people my age	*(16-19), ***(13-15)	***					***(2)		
I don't have any one to go with	*(13-15)	***	**				**(5)	**(NE)	***
The activities aren't very good	***(13-15)								
I don't know what activities are going on in my area	**(13-15)	***						*(London)	*
I'm not allowed to go				***			*(3)		
I'm too shy/lack confidence	***(16-19), ***(13-15)	***	**		***				***
I won't fit in		**			***				
My physical health or a disability					***			*(WM),*(NW)	**

Barrier	Age: 13-15 and 16-19 rel. to 10-12	Gender: female rel. to male	FSM	Ethnicity: ethnic minorities rel. to white	Limiting disability	Urban rel. to rural	IDACI quintile: 2, 3, 4, 5 rel. to 1	Region: London, EM, NE, NW, SE, SW, WM, YH rel. to EE	LGBTQ+ (16-19 sample)
My mental health		***	**	***	***		**(5)	**(WM)	***

Source: SQW analysis of YPS data
Note: The LGBTQ+ characteristic was explored using the subsample of respondents aged 16-19, where the sample size was 448.
**** 1% significance, ** 5% significance, *10% significance;*
The colour green refers to a positive regression coefficient (i.e.>0); the colour orange refers to a negative regression coefficient (<0).

Table D-17: Regression analysis results for relationship between barriers and individual characteristics for volunteering (N=1,232)

Barrier	Age: 13-15 and 16-19 rel. to 10-12	Gender: female rel. to male	FSM	Ethnicity: ethnic minorities rel. to white	Limiting disability	Urban rel. to rural	IDACI quintile: 2, 3, 4, 5 rel. to 1	Region: London, EM, NE, NW, SE, SW, WM, YH rel. to EE	LGBTQ+ (16-19 sample)
I'm not interested in going	**(16-19), ***(13-15)	***		**					
Cost	*(16-19)		***	***	*	*		**(NW)	**
Difficulty getting there			**	***		**		*(EM)	
Too busy with other commitments (such as school/college work, working, other activities)	***(16-19)	**					***(2)	**(SW)	
I prefer to do other things in my spare time	*(16-19)	***					***(2)		*
I don't have any one to go with	**(16-19)								
I don't know what activities are going on in my area	***(16-19), ***(13-15)	***						**(SE)	
I'm not allowed to go	**(16-19)	*			*				
I'm too shy/lack confidence		**			***			*(SW),*(London)	
I won't fit in	**(16-19)		***		**	*		*(NE)	
My physical health or a disability			*		***			*(NE)	
My mental health				**	***				*

Source: SQW analysis of YPS data
Note: The LGBTQ+ characteristic was explored using the subsample of respondents aged 16-19, where the sample size was 345.
**** 1% significance, ** 5% significance, *10% significance;*
The colour green refers to a positive regression coefficient (i.e.>0); the colour orange refers to a negative regression coefficient (<0).

Table D-18: Regression analysis results for relationship between barriers and individual characteristics for social action (N=1,501)

Barrier	Age: 13-15 and 16-19 rel. to 10-12	Gender: female rel. to male	FSM	Ethnicity: ethnic minorities rel. to white	Limiting disability	Urban rel. to rural	IDACI quintile: 2, 3, 4, 5 rel. to 1	Region: London, EM, NE, NW, SE, SW, WM, YH rel. to EE	LGBTQ+ (16-19 sample)
I'm not interested in going	***(16-19), ***(13-15)	***	**	**				*(EM)	
Cost			***	*	*		*(4),**(5)		
Difficulty getting there				***				**(SE)	*
Too busy with other commitments (such as school/college work, working, other activities)	***(16-19)	***	***				*(3),**(5)	***(NW), **(SW), *(NE)	
I prefer to do other things in my spare time	*(16-19)							***(NE), ***(NW), ***(SE), ***(SW)	
I don't have any one to go with		*	*						**
I don't know what activities are going on in my area	***(13-15)	***			*	*		*(NW), **(SW)	
I'm not allowed to go				*					
I'm too shy/lack confidence	**(16-19), ***(13-15)	***			***		**(4)		***
I won't fit in		**			***			*(SW), *(SE)	
My physical health or a disability					***		*(3),**(5)	**(London)	
My mental health		***		**	***			*(WM)	

Source: SQW analysis of YPS data

Note: The LGBTQ+ characteristic was explored using the subsample of respondents aged 16-19, where the sample size was 441.

**** 1% significance, ** 5% significance, *10% significance;*

The colour green refers to a positive regression coefficient (i.e.>0); the colour orange refers to a negative regression coefficient (<0).

Table D-19: Regression analysis results for relationship between enablers and individual characteristics for groups/clubs

Enabler	Age: 13-15 and 16-19 rel. to 10-12	Gender: female rel. to male	FSM	Ethnicity: ethnic minorities rel. to white	Limiting disability	Urban rel. to rural	IDACI quintile: 2, 3, 4, 5 rel. to 1	Region: London, EM, NE, NW, SE, SW, WM, YH rel. to EE	LGBTQ+ (16-19 sample)
Agree that enough clubs and activities in local area (N=1,474)	***(16-19)	***			***		**(4), ***(5)		
At least one activity organised by school/college/university (N=1,137)	***(16-19)			***			*(5)	**(NW), *(SE)	
Heard through school/college (N=1,109)	**(16-19)	***		**					
Heard through family (N=1,109)	***(13-15), ***(16-19)		**	**				*(NE), **(NW), **(SW), ***(WM)	
Heard through a friend (N=1,109)		***	*					**(YH)	**
Heard through social media (N=1,109)	***(13-15)								
Heard through an online search (N=1,109)	***(13-15)								
Heard through a leaflet/poster (N=1,109)	*(13-15), ***(16-19)		**				*(3)		
Heard through a religious/faith group (N=1,109)				**				*(London)	

Source: SQW analysis of YPS data

Note: The LGBTQ+ characteristic was explored using the subsample of respondents aged 16-19, where the sample size was 220-425, based on enabler considered.

**** 1% significance, ** 5% significance, *10% significance;*

The colour green refers to a positive regression coefficient (i.e.>0); the colour orange refers to a negative regression coefficient (<0)

Areas for further consideration with the YPS

D.25 There are a number of possible avenues for further quantitative analysis of the YPS data. Below we outline some options for further research:

- Our paper presents the estimated predicted probabilities of *any* participation for people with characteristics that were found to matter for participation under RQ1 (YPS only). A similar approach could be taken to calculate the **predicted probabilities of *more intense* participation** under RQ1 for YPS, which would allow for the development of risk profiles for less intense participation. In addition, on the basis of predicted probabilities under RQ1, non-participation risk profiles could be calculated for groups & clubs activity types (and not just for groups & clubs as a whole).

- More analysis could be done to investigate **the role of schools**, in particular this could include an analysis of whether school-organised activities are associated with more intense participation by groups & clubs activity *type* (and not just activity *category*).

- There could be further work done to investigate **geographical differences**, including some recoding to make the geography variable be more 'meaningful' (e.g. having London as the base category) or analysis of how people view the availability of local provision by region.

- Free school meals and area deprivation scores are two interrelated measured capturing deprivation. To **disentangle the effect of being on free school meals from the effect of area deprivation**, further analysis could test the effect of FMS conditional on area deprivation (conditional effects). Related to this, future analysis could look at the availability of local provision by area deprivation.

- A **different definition of volunteering** could be explored, e.g. excluding volunteering in the form of unpaid work to help or take care of someone, in order to isolate more 'standard' volunteering activities or to look at differences by volunteering type.

- While not for regression analysis, further descriptive analysis could help investigate which **combinations of activities** are the most common. Similarly, further descriptive analysis could show what barriers tend to be reported together.

- The YPS findings could also be **compared to other evidence**, such as the National Youth Social Action Survey or Understanding Society. However, it will be important to be aware of differences in the definitions of youth activities and participation, with implications for the comparability of evidence.

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