



Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport

Policy paper

Youth Review: Summary findings and government response

Published 1 February 2022

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Ministerial foreword



As we recover from the pandemic, we face a unique opportunity to build back better. Young people need to be at the heart of those efforts. They have

sacrificed a great deal during COVID-19 - and those sacrifices have had a serious impact on their mental health and wellbeing. Anxiety levels are at a 12-year high, young people have seen the largest increase in unemployment during COVID, while a year of disrupted learning has widened the attainment gap.

Young people deserve a youth offer that addresses those challenges. Now is the time to support and empower local communities, invest in doing things differently and take innovative approaches to build back better. I am committed to ensuring all young people are given opportunities, levelling up where they are under-served, socially excluded and economically disadvantaged.

In 2020, government announced a Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport-led review of youth services. The aim was to develop a clear direction for our out-of-school youth agenda, and to ensure that our spending and programmes meet the needs of young people as well as our ambitions on 'levelling up'.

We heard from around 6,000 young people across the country. They told us to prioritise three things: regular clubs and activities, adventures away from home, and volunteering opportunities.

We have listened. Our new Youth Guarantee responds directly to that feedback, backed up by £560 million funding with a firm focus on levelling up. That funding will:

- deliver up to 300 new and refurbished youth spaces and services for the country's most left behind areas, creating over 45,000 extra youth activities per year over the next decade
- fund a reformed National Citizen Service programme for the next 3 years, with a year round offer for thousands of young people
- eliminate current non-military Uniformed Groups' waiting lists for teenagers up and down the country
- provide £4m to the #iwill fund creating tens and thousands of new youth volunteering opportunities

I'm pleased that through the Youth Guarantee, we are able to work with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the Department for Education to offer the award to every state secondary school in England. HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, was dedicated to creating opportunities for all young people to learn new skills, whilst helping their local communities. This investment will have a strong focus on enabling young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to access the Award, helping them to build confidence, develop essential life skills and support their local communities. In the year that would have marked the Duke of Edinburgh's centenary, I'm proud to be able to honour his legacy through the expansion of the Award he set up.

More broadly, across DCMS' sectors we will continue to invest in and expand opportunities for young people to engage in sport, arts, heritage and digital, including through the £155 million of new funding to build or improve up to 8,000 state-of-the-art sports pitches giving young people the facilities they deserve to

reap the benefits of sport.

Young people must be at the centre of our country's recovery. The findings from this Youth Review provide the direction for how this will be achieved - investing to develop the skills, creativity and energy of this country's youth to build back better.

Rt Hon Nadine Dorries MP

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Executive summary

The Youth Sector is a diverse landscape made up of a rich and varied range of youth and community organisations, Local Authority run services, professional youth workers and volunteers, providing young people with somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to outside of school.

The sector has faced significant challenges in response to the pandemic, and has risen to the challenge, with youth workers recognised as key workers providing crucial support to young people during this difficult time. Government also stepped up its support, providing over £100m from our Charities Recovery Fund for charities supporting children and young people during the pandemic, in addition to the £15.6 million Youth Covid Support Fund which provided emergency funding for 550 youth services.

At the 2020 Spending Review, the Treasury announced a DCMS-led Youth Review. A key part of this review was to engage with as many young people as possible, to incorporate their opinions and experiences into both the policy-making and decision-making processes. Throughout the review, DCMS engaged with around 6,000 young people across the country, 170 youth sector organisations and academics. This engagement and the feedback collected has been, and will continue to be, vital in informing future youth policy.

Through the Youth Review, DCMS has set out a clear direction for our out-of-school youth agenda, ensuring that our spending and programmes meet the needs of young people as well as our ambitions on 'levelling up'.

Youth Review Findings

Young people asked for:

- regular activities, (eg uniformed youth, youth clubs)
- adventures away from home

- volunteering opportunities to give back to the community
- activities that support mental and physical wellbeing and skills development
- to be a part of decision making and help build back better.

The youth sector told us:

- Resources need to be aligned across government departments, and within DCMS
- To champion a skilled, trained and accredited youth workforce.
- Government should involve young people in decision-making about services.
- Funding should be invested in universal services but as a complement to specialist services for young people with specific support needs.

Academics told us:

- There are excellent pockets of evaluation in the youth sector, however, there are challenges in showing the causal links between informal youth provision and positive outcomes, as clear as they might be on a 1-2-1 basis.
- They recommended looking at longer-term studies and considering common metrics/measurement techniques across the sector.

Government's response

Grounded in the findings from the Youth Review, it is this government's commitment that by 2025 every young person will have access to regular clubs and activities, adventures away from home and volunteering opportunities.

This Youth Guarantee will be supported through 3 strategic aims:

'Levelling up' and Expanding Access to youth provision

We will invest £560 million over the next 3 years to deliver the new National Youth Guarantee:

- Investing £368 million through the Youth Investment Fund to create up to 300 new youth facilities in the areas most in need.
- Delivering a reformed, year round, National Citizen Service for thousands of young people.
- Offering the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme to every state secondary school in England
- Eliminating the current waiting list for non-military Uniformed Youth Groups for 11 - 18 year olds Providing tens and thousands of youth volunteering opportunities through the #iwill fund.

Supporting the youth sector

Alongside funding, we will support the youth sector workforce by:

- Funding bursaries for entry level qualifications in youth work
- Supporting the National Youth Agency to maintain and improve a complete set of national youth work qualifications with a curriculum and workforce strategy, and online learning platform
- Working closely with DCMS Sectors and our Arm's Length Bodies to maximise and coordinate funding opportunities for the youth sector
- Providing greater clarity on the Statutory Duty for Local Authorities on youth services
- Strengthening the evidence base for the sector through the Youth Investment Fund evaluation
- Developing a Youth Sector Strategy to provide clarity on the government's role in supporting youth services

Listening to young people's voices

As we did with this Review, we will continue to embed and grow our youth engagement activities so young people have a voice in future policies; and expand the reach of our youth engagement work so more young peoples' voices can be heard in government policy and decision making.

Introduction

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is responsible for out-of-school youth policy and programmes, supporting the youth sector to deliver high quality services to young people, and funding the National Citizen Service (NCS) programme. More broadly, DCMS and its Arms Length Bodies create further opportunities for young people across Sports, Arts, Heritage and Digital, to enrich young people's lives and help them fulfil their potential.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact upon young people. Youth services are a vital part of the response to these challenges, delivering benefits for wellbeing, employability skills and reducing crime.

Youth Services provide young people with somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to in the estimated [86%](#) of a young person's waking hours when they are not at school - after school, at weekends and during school holidays. During this time, youth services provide a safe space for young people and the opportunity to build a relationship with a trusted adult. Youth services play a significant role in safeguarding young people and supporting their development, particularly for those who are at risk but not yet known to statutory services ([estimated at around 450,000 young people](#)). Regardless of a young person's background, youth services can help them harness skills to do better in education,

improve mental wellbeing, and develop life skills to help them get the job they want, and make a positive contribution in their communities. Crucially, these services help young people to build a life-long belief in themselves.

In light of the changing needs of young people, DCMS conducted a review of its support for young people (aged 11 to 18, or up to 25 for those with additional needs) outside of school hours, to ensure they address the needs of young people and 'level up' opportunities.

Engagement process

The review drew on the expertise of young people, those working in the sector and academics. We engaged with around 6,000 young people, between the ages of 11-18 years and over 170 Youth Sector organisations, 32 academics/researchers and other government departments. We achieved this through digital questionnaires, multiple workshops and focus groups.

To find out more about our methodology please look at Annex A: Methodology
To find out more about who we engaged with please look at Annex B:
Engagement Data

Summary findings

Importance of Youth provision to Young people

Young people told us youth services and youth clubs are hugely important to them. They provide an opportunity to meet people outside of school and engage with other young people from different backgrounds. This allows the formation of new friendships and socialising. Youth services allow young people to “be around friends in a safe space and be themselves”. Not only do these spaces feel like “a second family”, they provide the opportunity to speak to someone from outside the home and school environment. Moreover, young people highlighted that youth services provide the opportunity to volunteer and “give back” to their community.

What young people told us they enjoy?

- Having something fun to do after school/in the holidays/on weekends
- Making new friends
- Learning new skills

- Having a place to go for young people outside of school
- Being able to meet people from different background and mix with different cultures
- Having a place where I can be myself
- Being able to participate in lots of different activities
- Social interaction and coming together to create something

Youth services during the pandemic

During the pandemic, young people said the youth sector adapted to keep supporting them, providing digital and virtual services when physical ones were not possible. Young people really valued this, highlighting:

- the ability to keep connected to other young people
- providing a space to have fun
- opportunities to develop new skills, and have their voices heard, for example as part of the UK Youth Parliament.

However, many young people reported that it did not replace the need for in person opportunities, with barriers such as online accessibility, opportunities not designed to be virtual and finding it difficult to engage. Just as much as they provided vital support, young people looked forward to returning to youth services and activities in the real world.

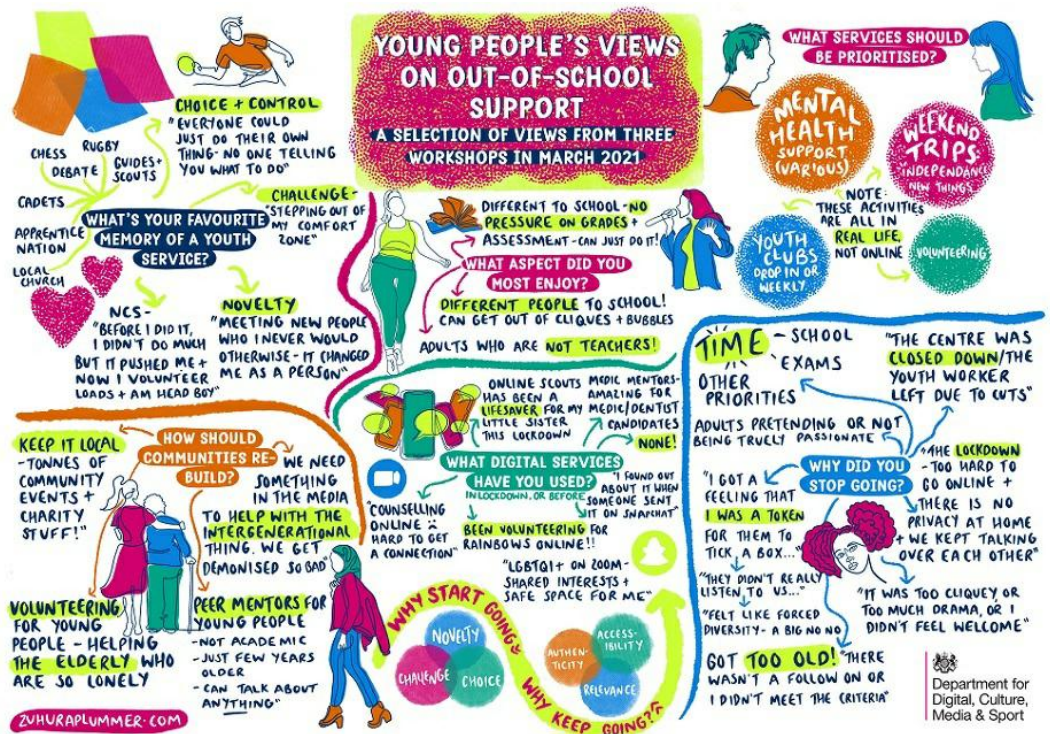


Image 1 - Drawing from workshops with Young people.

Barriers to attending youth services and activities

Young people acknowledge that youth services are an incredible support to them. However, we know there are barriers to attending youth services and activities. Young people mentioned that the quality of provision was important, needing trained and passionate youth workers or volunteers to create an inclusive and welcoming environment, where young people felt supported and respected. Where this was absent young people tended to disengage.

Competing priorities was often an issue, with school work becoming the top priority, whereas other young people lost interest in youth activities. They either moved onto other activities, outgrew the existing provision or found some activities, particularly in sports and performing arts, created a pressurised and competitive environment, making them unenjoyable. Young people also spoke about the loss of youth provision or increase in participation fees in their areas due to funding cuts.

Young People's priorities

Coming out of the pandemic, around 6,000 young people told us to prioritise:

- Regular activities
- Adventures away from home
- Volunteering opportunities to give back to the community
- Activities that support mental and physical wellbeing and skills development

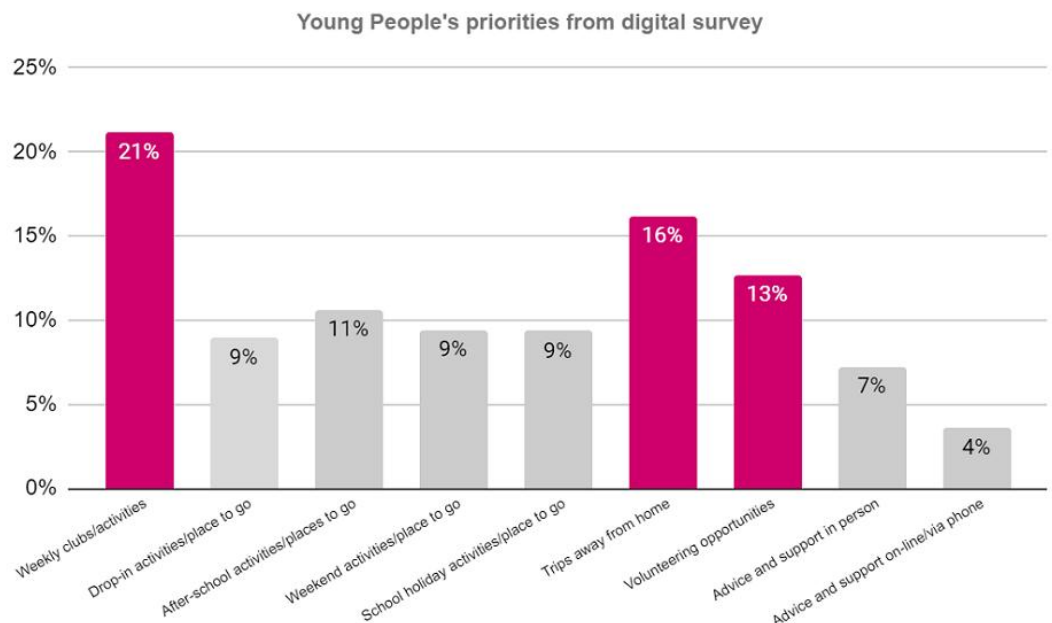


Image 2 - Graph of Young people's priorities from the digital survey.

Youth engagement

Young people showed enthusiasm for being involved in decision making and being proactive members of society. Youth engagement is essential to the decision making process for this government and young people want to be a part of it. They told us they wanted a chance 'to talk at the table, rather than just be at the table' and to have their voices heard, opinions respected, expressing a desire for more opportunities to be involved in democracy and more avenues of involvement in government. They highlighted that this can be achieved through: social media, short surveys, discussion groups, voting and through youth councils.

Youth Sector organisations echoed the call for strong youth engagement, and involvement of young people in decision making.

The youth sector and academics

We sought views from the youth sector and academics on how DCMS can best support the sector. They highlighted that DCMS has a role in championing youth services and creating better alignment between policies and funding pots across government departments and within DCMS, to maximise investment in young people and achieve outcomes greater than the sum of their parts.

The youth sector provided strong messaging that funding needed to be accessible and long term, to support improved evaluations and opportunities for small, grassroots organisations. It should be invested in universal services, especially in deprived or isolated areas, that complement tailored services. They spoke about the importance of data to develop a clear understanding of existing provision across the country, to help with future funding to identify these 'cold spots.' There was a strong preference for resource funding, and where capital funding was needed it should be small-scale, flexible and locally determined. This includes the repair, repurpose and implementation of pop-up or modular builds. They also highlighted that funding international opportunities remains a priority for the sector.

Whilst there is some positive evidence around the impact of youth services, this needs to be strengthened to help drive greater investment into the sector and so that funding can be targeted to what works. There needs to be a clear strategy for youth services, including youth workforce, detailing desired outcomes and metrics to provide clarity to the sector and support a shared, quality-assured approach to evaluation, that takes the complex lives of young people into consideration.

Government's response

As we emerge from the pandemic young people deserve a youth offer that addresses their challenges and provides exciting, life changing experiences and opportunities. We will invest £560 million of funding over the next 3 years delivering a Youth Guarantee that reflects young people's priorities, with a firm focus on levelling up.

“ By 2025, every young person will have access to regular out of school activities, adventures away from home and opportunities to volunteer”

The Youth Guarantee will be underpinned by 3 key strategic aims:

Levelling up and expanding access to youth provision

We recognise the need to create more opportunities across the country, so that every young person has access to a trusted adult, opportunities to develop skills for life and work and access to support for mental and physical wellbeing, through regular clubs and activities, adventures away from home and opportunities to volunteer.

Over the next three years we will invest £171 million in the NCS programme creating a more cost effective and year round programme for thousands of young people, who will be given the opportunity to access residential experiences, meet new friends, and make a contribution to their communities. The NCS Trust will work to ensure equitable access to the programme and level up skills through subsidised and free opportunities and create a higher proportion of opportunities for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We know access to youth facilities and services is not felt equally across the country. This government will invest £368 million through the Youth Investment Fund (YIF), in the areas most in need, levelling up youth infrastructure in 'left-behind' places, so young people who are most in need have access to youth workers and positive activities. This investment will create and expand up to 300 new youth centres, over the next 3 years. These facilities will be supported by revenue funding, creating over 45,000 extra youth activities per year. The fund will be locally driven, tailored to the needs of young people in the community and existing infrastructure.

To further drive and increase opportunities for young people, in particular those from lower socio-economic backgrounds DCMS will invest £22 million to:

- Offer the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme to every state-funded secondary school in England by 2025, in collaboration with the Department for Education.
- Eliminate Uniformed Youth waiting lists for 11-18 year olds up and down the country (England), so they can participate in regular activities, learn new skills and gain experiences.
- Provide £4m to the iwill fund, creating thousands of new youth volunteering opportunities across England so young people are supported to gain new skills.

The opportunity to participate in a diverse range of activities is vital for young people's physical and mental wellbeing, and skills for life and work. Arts, digital, heritage, sport and civil society, in addition to youth services, bind communities together and enrich lives. We are continuing to invest in activities for young people across DCMS sectors, including:

- £205 million investment has been committed to build or improve up to 8,000 state-of-the-art sports pitches across the UK, primarily targeting the communities most in need over the next three years. In addition to £25m being delivered this year, this investment represents a step towards reaching full UK coverage of quality community sports facilities by 2030, and supporting every young person to have a chance to take up sport and participate in regular activities with a trusted adult.
- £7 million of funding will be made available through the new Volunteering Futures Fund to improve the accessibility of volunteering in arts, culture, sports, civil society, youth and heritage sectors. There will be a strong focus on young people, those experiencing loneliness, those with disabilities and those from ethnic minority backgrounds. The fund comprises £6 million in DCMS funding, of which £4.7 million of grants will be administered through Arts Council England (ACE), and an additional £1.15m has been awarded to match funding partners Pears Foundation and NHS Charities Together. These two charities have agreed to match fund £1.15 on a 1:1 ratio, bringing the total funding to £2.3 and will use this funding to award grants to organisations that support young people, those with disabilities, those from ethnic communities or from areas with fewer volunteering opportunities.
- Arts Council for England will continue to create opportunities for young people to develop their own creative and cultural skills, wherever they live and irrespective of their socio-economic background.

Young people are at the heart of this government's priorities, to build back better and fairer and DCMS is keen that our support is within the government's wider offer for young people. Therefore, we will continue to collaborate with other government departments to build a strong, cohesive offer, ensuring young people have access to a range of opportunities.

- NCS is piloting a 'Year of Service' programme, an employability initiative offering young people a 9 to 12 month paid service placement in the UK's local communities wherever the need is greatest. It is part-funded by the NCS Trust CiC and many employers will be using DWP's recently extended Kickstart scheme to part-pay wages. The pilot of this new programme will support 330 young people into socially impactful jobs and the Kickstart scheme has supported nearly 95,000 young people to date.
- We will work closely with DfE who are investing over £200 million per year, over the next three years on the continuation of the holiday activities and food programme, providing enriching activities and healthy meals for disadvantaged school-aged children during school holidays.
- DfE will provide funding for the continuation of the Turing Scheme for the next three years, including £110 million for the academic year 2022/23, funding

thousands of students across the UK to go on placements and exchanges overseas.

Supporting the Youth Sector

Much provision of services for young people is delivered and funded externally to government. We will continue to support the youth sector to champion the value of youth services, amplify opportunities and increase quality of provision. We will do this in 5 ways:

- **Building a skilled and trained youth workforce** - qualified youth workers, support workers and volunteers are integral to increasing the quantity and quality of youth provision. We will continue to support the National Youth Agency (NYA) to deliver a range of initiatives to create standards for youth work through maintaining and improving national youth work qualifications, developing a national curriculum and a workforce strategy. To encourage people to enter the profession, we will fund approximately 550 bursaries for entry level qualifications in youth work and continue supporting the NYA to provide free online non-accredited learning for anyone working with young people, including a comprehensive safeguarding package. Finally, for the first time there will be a National Youth Work Register to bolster the professional standing of youth work and give funders, young people and their parents the ability to know who is a qualified practitioner.
- **Maximising investment** - working closely with DCMS Sectors and our ALBs we will create greater alignment across the department (and government) to maximise and coordinate funding opportunities for the youth sector. We will strive to improve the sustainability of investments and leverage additional external funding, seeking monetary and in-kind match funding, further increasing opportunities for young people and broadening support for the sector.
- **Review the statutory duty** - Local Authorities are subject to a statutory duty to provide youth services. DCMS will conduct a review to provide greater clarity for Local Authorities on this statutory duty.
- **Strengthen the evidence base** - we recognise the upstream value youth services provide to prevent wider societal problems, and acknowledge sector challenges in quantifying impact. We will focus on developing strong evaluations for the NCS Programme and YIF to build an understanding of 'what works' and create a solid evidence base for the sector. DCMS will consider the benefit and feasibility of common evaluation measures for youth programmes.

Listening to young people's voices

DCMS is committed to leading the way in enabling effective youth participation in decision-making at all levels. We are committed to supporting our existing programmes - the UK Youth Parliament, Make your Mark and Youth Policy Development Group - that get young people with diverse backgrounds, involved in democracy and policy making, helping them to learn to engage, debate, listen, negotiate, and most importantly share their views on policies which impact them and their communities. To enable as many young people as possible to play a role in consultations and programme design nationally, we will continue to develop

our digital engagement tools. Young people have the desire to engage with the government on issues that matter to them. We have made strong progress in engaging young people in policy making, and know that there is more we can do to drive this further. We will strive to develop innovative approaches which reach more young people and embed youth engagement across government.

Annex A: Methodology

Engaging young people

A number of methods were used to gather the views of young people as part of the youth review:

Survey

The DCMS Youth team created a youth friendly, short survey to explore young peoples' views on youth services. The survey questions were tested with a diverse group of young people from DCMS' Youth Steering Group and Young Inspectors, to ensure they had the right tone and language, whilst the survey was kept short so young people would be more likely to take part and respond to questions. The survey was also agreed and signed off by the Minister for Civil Society.

The survey was available online via the platform 'Qualtrics'. An online route was chosen due to the timeframes for the youth review and the preference from young people to complete the surveys online. The survey was also optimised for mobile phone use.

The survey was live from 9th February 2021 to 7th March 2021. Consent was gained from the young people to take part with parental/guardian consent also requested.

To encourage young people to take part, the survey was distributed by youth groups, youth organisations and through the National Youth Agency (NYA) network and was also published on gov.uk to maximise uptake and participation.

To analyse the results, basic analysis of the quantitative data from the survey was undertaken and for the open ended questions, thematic analysis was carried out.

Points to note on the survey

The survey was not designed or undertaken as a representative survey of the youth population in England. Due to timing and resourcing constraints, undertaking a survey using the methodology noted above was the best option available.

There may be an over representation of certain groups who have taken part in the survey as it was promoted by certain youth organisations. We tried to mitigate this by undertaking the research with NatCen and Beatfrees to make sure a wider group of young people were included and we could explore their views in more detail.

The survey was accessed by 7882 young people, however questions were not mandatory and as such response rates per question vary.

Workshops

The agency Beatfrees conducted three workshops to understand what young people's priorities were outside of school. The workshops were made up of a wide range of young people from a variety of different backgrounds and locations across the country.

Focus Groups

Findings from a separate piece of commissioned work were also used to inform the youth review. The research agency NatCen undertook eight focus groups with young people aged 13-24, in total 46 young people took part. The focus groups were made up of a mix of young people from a range of demographics and covered young people from urban, rural and coastal locations of England and recruitment was undertaken by a specialist research recruitment agency. Seven of the focus groups took place online with one group which was made up of young people with learning disabilities that took place face to face.

The groups took place over December 2020 and January 2021 and explored how young people spend their time, missing provision in their local area and barriers to accessing youth services. Data was thematically analysed.

Engaging researchers/academics

As part of the youth review we worked with The Open Innovation Team (OIT), a cross government unit who work with a range of academics and researchers. The OIT engaged 32 experts working in youth related research as well as undertaking desk based research. The experts were interviewed and provided their views on:

- Quality of evidence in the youth sector
- Effectiveness of interventions/activities in the youth sector
- How to value the youth sector
- The future of the youth sector

Engaging youth sector organisations

We worked with the National Youth Agency Advisory Board to create a series of questions to help us gain insights from Youth Sector Organisations. These questions were circulated to Youth Sector Organisations, through our Youth Stakeholder networks and national infrastructure bodies. Organisations encouraged to submit responses directly to DCMS via an online form. Alongside the c.160 submissions we received from youth sector organisations directly, the

NYA also facilitated a series of workshops with a range of different groups within the youth sector to provide a collective youth sector response to the youth review.

The National Youth Agency Advisory Board helped DCMS to facilitate two workshops with youth sector organisations to enable us to probe responses and gain greater insights from the youth sector.

Annex B - Online survey engagement data

As part of the Youth Review we engaged with a large number of young people. We were able to gather the data of those young people who participated in the survey. Data on the young person population in England has been taken from the Office for National Statistics Mid Year Estimates (2016, 2019). Ethnicity data we have gathered is based on the 2011 census.

Age

Age	Online survey (%)	England (%)
11	10	14
12	13	13
13	13	12
14	12	12
15	12	12
16	12	12
17	12	12
18	6	12

Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Online survey (%)	YP population England (%)
White	87	82

White	57	52
BAME	13	18

Gender

Gender	Online survey (%)	YP population England (%)
Female	46	49
Male	54	51

Location

Location	Online survey (%)	YP population England (%)
North East	6	5
South East	27	17
South West	12	10
Greater London	12	16
Eastern England	8	11
West Midlands	7	11
East Midlands	6	9
Yorkshire and the Humber	11	10
North West	11	13

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