

East Riding of Yorkshire

Youth Voluntary & Community Sector

Needs Assessment

March 2026





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

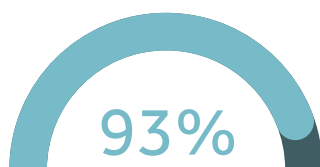
Voluntary sector organisations providing youth services across the East Riding of Yorkshire are remarkable.

The workforce is resilient and deeply committed. Between them organisations offer a wide range of opportunities from creative and sports activities, to specialist Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) and mental health provision, through to places for young people to be with their friends, have fun and stop them feeling bored - which young people told us was very important to them¹.

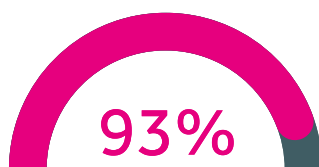
However, the sector is operating under significant pressure

predominantly as a consequence of limited resources. Rising needs among young people are colliding with funding insecurity, infrastructure limitations and workforce strain alongside the experience of rural isolation in many of its communities - and the hidden needs of young people therein.

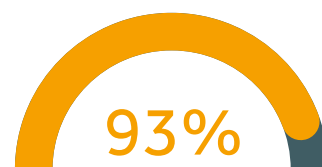
Headlines from interviews



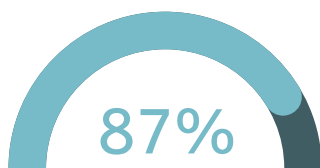
FUNDING INSECURITY
IS A CORE CHALLENGE



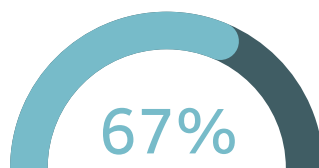
WANT
**SHARED VOICE AND
STRONGER
COLLABORATION**



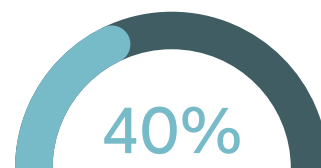
HIGHLIGHT
**YOUTH EMPOWERMENT
AND CO PRODUCTION**
AS A KEY OPPORTUNITY



**WORKFORCE CAPACITY
STRAIN**
WITHIN THEIR PAID AND
VOLUNTEER STAFF



IDENTIFY
**RURAL ISOLATION AND
HIDDEN NEED**



**LACK ADEQUATE KEY
ORGANISATIONAL
INFRASTRUCTURE**

There is a **strong desire to reach more young people**, to extend opportunities, to become more youth-led, to improve skills within organisations and for there to be more collaboration, skills and information sharing between organisations - potentially in the form of a region wide network, similar to the place-based networks operating already within towns (such as Bridlington and Goole)².

The sector would like wider recognition for and value of its work. The commitment of staff, the generosity of board members, the dedication of volunteers and the quality of projects and activities offered are outstanding for the modest levels of income they operate on. **A small grant goes a long way** in many of these organisations and the frequent request to funders is for longer term, core funding which appreciates the local context(s), is trust based and requires more appropriate (modest) monitoring and reporting for the amounts awarded.

This report will not offer many, if any, surprises to those who work in or alongside the youth voluntary and community sector in East Riding. The hope is that, in capturing the insight, this report will support the sector to advocate for its needs with a collective voice.

There are clear opportunities covering seven key areas within the recommendations³.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Prioritise (long term) funding for core costs
2. Introduce commensurate grant reporting
3. Assist organisations to recruit and retain volunteers
4. Extend workforce development opportunities
5. Foster opportunities for networking and collaboration
6. Support organisations with their infrastructure needs
7. Raise the profile of the sector

Investing in the youth sector across East Riding, even in small but tangible ways, will yield significant returns in a sector that already achieves a lot with limited resources.

BACKGROUND

This report was commissioned by SMILE Foundation, in order to understand the current capacity of Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) groups operating in the youth sector across the East Riding of Yorkshire alongside the challenges faced by the young people these organisations support.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the voluntary youth sector across East Riding offered a vibrant and varied youth offer, and a wide range of health and social care support⁴. Overnight this provision had to adapt and whilst many organisations were able to survive despite this challenge, unfortunately, many others had to close down hundreds of activities and services completely.

There are many great initiatives for young people across East Riding, however, there remain shortages across the geography and need.

This report is not written in isolation. It specifically focuses on needs within the VCSE youth sector across East Riding, to sit alongside the cross-sector priorities outlined by the East Riding Children and Families Partnership Board in its Strategic Plan 2025-2030⁵. It has been written just days after the launch of the Government's new ten year Youth Matters Strategy⁶ and weeks after the release of the 14th annual Good Childhood Report on the wellbeing of UK children and young people, produced by the Children's Society⁷. Many of the pressures faced by young people in the Good Childhood Report featured prominently in the survey for this needs assessment.

Quality of youth provision is vital to the outcomes of our young people and the tapestry of our communities. The Centre for Young Lives estimates that for every £1 invested in youth provision- including youth centres, youth workers, and positive activities - there would be a return of at least £2.40 in financial, economic, and social benefits⁸.

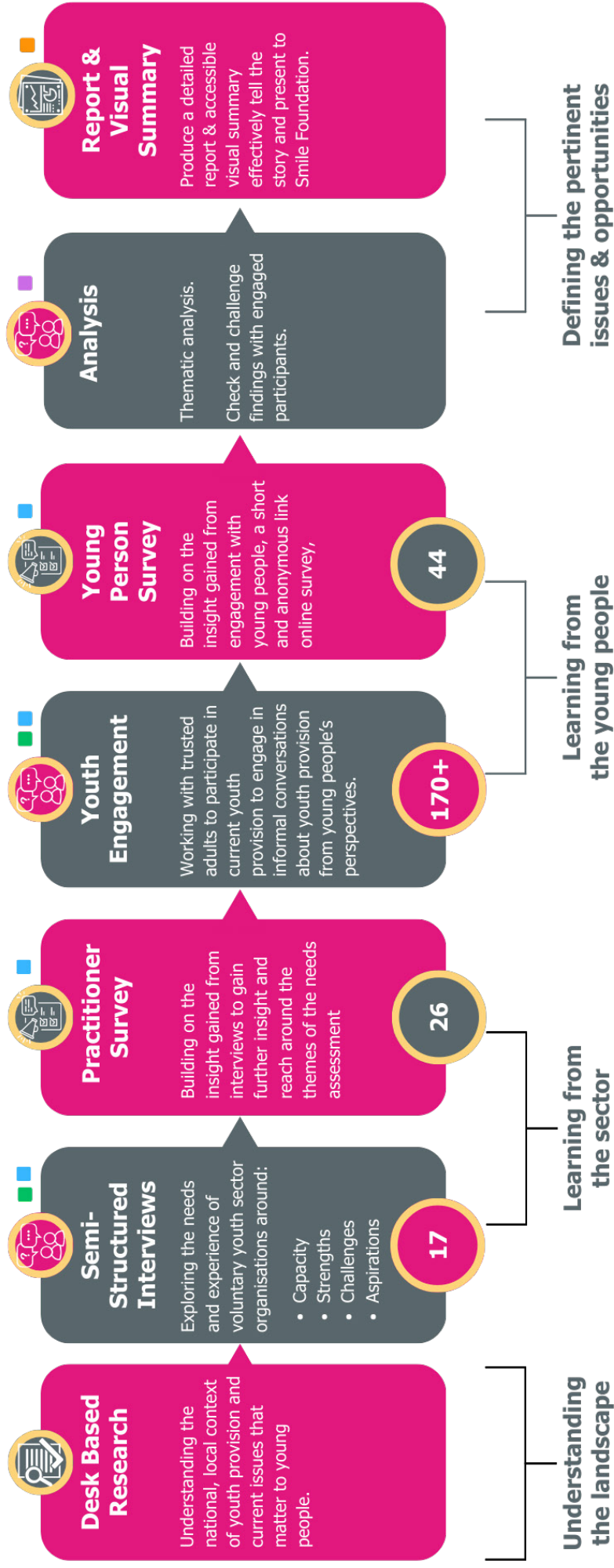
METHODOLOGY

The targeted approach to listening to people's views and experiences was underpinned by Lundy Model (right) of child participation. (see right)

The priority was to understand the needs of the voluntary youth organisations - primarily those previously funded by Smile Foundation. A targeted approach was applied at the mid point of the assessment to ensure good geographical coverage.



Methodology overview



FINDINGS

Staff from 38 voluntary sector youth organisations across the East Riding participated in this needs assessment.

Interviews were conducted with 17 organisations and the findings were collated and sense-checked through a wider sector survey, completed by 26 people from 24 organisations.

We attended various youth groups across the geography, with 170+ young people engaged in conversation and 44 young people completing surveys. The geographical spread of data capture is outlined on the map below.



FINDINGS SUBGROUPS

The findings are outlined within the following headings:

STRENGTHS

CHALLENGES

ASPIRATIONS

These sections are followed by an analysis of findings.

STRENGTHS

There were many reported strengths, foremostly the skilled, resourceful, committed paid and volunteer workforce (reported by 65% of interviewees). People working well together to deliver great quality activities with modest resources (i.e. they do a lot with a little) was reported by 65% of survey respondents.

Themes emerging in interviews regarding strengths in project delivery:



“ We have such great attendance, we support young people from numerous villages, different schools. Young people connect and get a sense of belonging. ”



“

We have a brilliant team, many who have been through the youth club who know what's needed and are relatable to young people.

”

The aptitude of the workforce

The aptitude within the workforce is significant, with **capable leaders running complex projects**, supporting staff teams and volunteers, and securing funding.

Within organisations it is a 'team effort', with board members, staff and volunteers maximising their contributions and working collectively to deliver high quality opportunities for young people.

Great relationships with children, young people, families and community

Great relationships with young people, their families and the wider community, including locally rooted volunteers, were widely reported as a significant strength in interviews and survey responses alike, with **'being part of the local community'** being the top strength cited by survey respondents. Community pride, strong local identity and mutual support (despite hardship) were highlighted.

The quality, flexibility, responsive and innovative activity

Demonstrated through high attendance at events/activities and the distance young people are willing to travel to access activities, the history or track record of organisations and the variety and creativity of activities being offered.

Organisations report that they are agile, flexible, innovative, responsive to young people's needs, provide a safe, inclusive (including SEND friendly) **space in which young people experience a sense of belonging**.

“ We've got brilliant relationships with young people, and their families, they trust us. It's magical when we bring them together, you see relationships forming and it changes people's lives. People don't feel alone any more. ”

Youth Voice and Lived Experience

Some organisations focused on the strength of youth voice and lived experience being at the core of their activities.

Emphasis on emotional wellbeing

Emphasis on emotional wellbeing includes **empathy based practice**, for example one organisation helps young people to read and understand body language and social cues rather than focusing on behaviour.

The importance of role modelling and the ability to evidence outcomes such as the reduction in anti-social behaviour were also cited.

Strong collaboration

Over half of organisations interviewed reported strong collaboration between organisations **within the sector or with other sectors**, as well as appreciation for the support of infrastructure organisations - those named included SMILE Foundation, the University of Hull, the local parish council and Two Ridings Community Foundation.



“ *Young people come week in week out...that speaks for itself.* ”

Good internal working practices and facilities

A handful of organisations highlighted good internal working practices enabling optimal delivery of projects, such as high safeguarding standards, volunteer induction and training. Other systems, structures and resources mentioned one-off as strengths by organisations include:

great facilities;
financial
accountability and
integrity;
fundraising; IT and
website; and a stable funding base.

“ *Youth club is my
safe space.* ”



CHALLENGES

The key challenges experienced by youth organisations within the sector (listed in order of priority identified in interviews) are as follows:

1. Funding insecurity
2. Staff and volunteer capacity and workforce pressures
3. Intersection with other organisations and sectors
4. Rural isolation and hidden need
5. Rising complexity of young people's needs
6. Infrastructure limitations

“**Continual efforts to secure funding and cover costs for activities, volunteer retention, and basic operations. Expectations from funders are often the same whether its £100,000 or £500...we need more proportionate reporting.**”

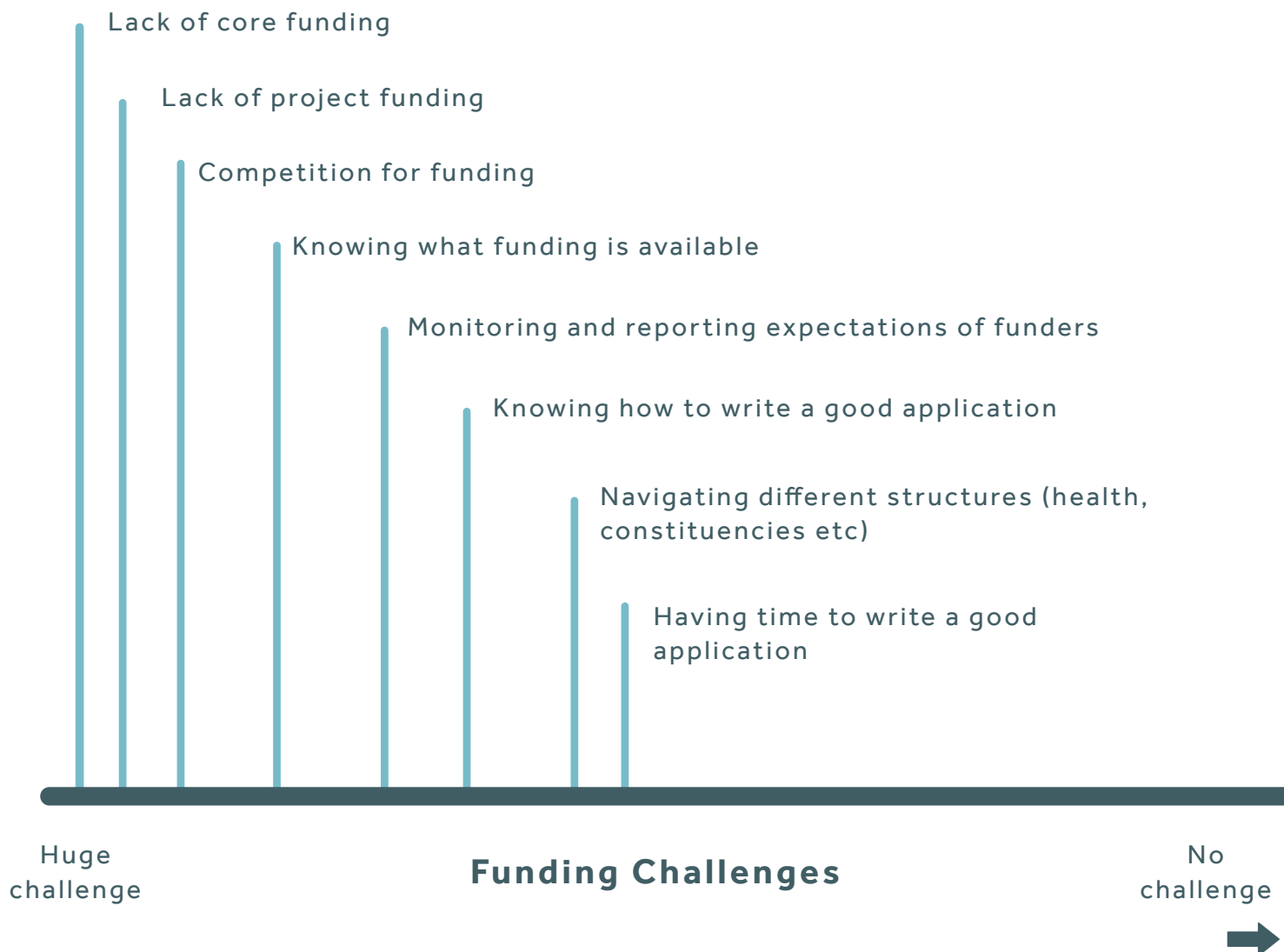
1. Funding insecurity

There is widespread concern about the limitations of short-term, project-based funding, with limited core funding, making it challenging for some to retain staff, plan long-term, invest in infrastructure or attend strategic meetings. Organisations reported significant time spent chasing grants - and then reporting on them (often long forms for small amounts). Competition for funding and knowing what funding is available and how to access it (including the complexity of portals, guidelines etc.) were also highlighted as significant challenges by survey respondents.

This funding climate creates anxiety about sustainability and service continuity, which impacts on the potential to scale successful initiatives. Monitoring and reporting expectations of funders, knowing how to write a good application, having time to write a good application and understanding and navigating different structures (health, constituencies etc.) in order to apply were other challenges that prevail.

Individual comments were also made about the challenge of not having financial reserves, access to statutory funding and the need to prove track record to secure funding for a new organisations, even when the individuals have decades of experience.

One suggestion was for annual/impact reports to be accepted as monitoring evidence to avoid duplication of reporting.



NB. This is a visual representation not an exact representation

2 Volunteer, staff and board capacity and workforce pressures

Lack of staff and volunteers capacity was cited as a major concern in every interview by 54% of survey respondents

Volunteers

Widespread volunteer shortages and difficulty attracting new volunteers (especially younger people) were highlighted, with interviewees explaining that the rising cost of living, competing commitments and dispersed geography all contribute to this. Over reliance on volunteers (which can lead to issues such as sessions being cancelled at short notice due to volunteer illness), a lack of time or resources to invest in supporting volunteers and volunteer fatigue all contribute to the sector-wide challenge of recruiting and retaining volunteers.

Staff

Lack of adequate funding leads to limited staff capacity so that at times delivery competes with admin and development, and staff are overstretched or wearing multiple hats. Within some organisations there is a concern about the precarity of organisational sustainability if a key staff member leaves. It is difficult to recruit and retain staff, particularly in rural areas, and it is costly to recruit and train internally - a point raised by 43% of interviewees. The large geography of the area also impacts staff capacity, as in small teams some staff travel long distances to deliver projects and in multiple areas.

Early intervention is sighted across many publications ^{4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13} as necessary youth offer across the region in order to tackle issues. Access to training is limited by time and capacity.

“ The cost of living is impacting people’s ability to volunteer, from needing to work to supporting family childcare needs. This is having an impact on the capacity of the youth voluntary sector. ”

Board

With a smaller, dispersed population, recruiting trustees with relevant skills can be challenging. This can impact on the internal structures needed for compliance and the doubling up of trustees as managers, a point raised by 43% of interviewees. Across the geography we heard of key people holding projects together, including those who would love to step down after many years but who are struggling to find successors.

The need for improved access to training opportunities across the region was highlighted in every interview. Challenges noted in accessing training at all levels of the workforce include a lack of free or affordable training, evening/weekend training availability and a lack of specific training (e.g. neurodiversity, gender identity, inclusion, mental health, reflecting particular local issues, internal development)¹⁴.

“ Youth provision is closing, not opening up new opportunities. If that's not worrying, I don't know what is. ”



3. Intersection with other organisations/services/sectors

71% of interviewees report their organisations feeling the impact of stretched statutory services, such as long CAMHS waiting lists, referral pathways, insufficient support for children with additional needs, including neurodiversity and physical disability e.g. sight loss. This was at times experienced as the statutory sector requesting unpaid support from the Third Sector, or Third Sector organisations stepping in to meet gaps without sufficient support or funding.

Silo working and competition within the sector was cited as a barrier to preventing optimisation of resources and potential, including a lack of recognition for the contribution made by smaller organisations.

An overall need for improved coordination across the voluntary youth sector in East Riding was reported.

One suggestion was the development of a region-wide youth sector infrastructure body (similar to that explored previously¹⁵).

The challenge of working with schools, colleges and community partners was highlighted (due to stretched capacity across the board) and some reported a lack of trust in and from local statutory sector organisations (e.g. school, Town Council).

4. Rural isolation and hidden need

Small organisations in rural areas are particularly vulnerable to some of the funding and workforce challenges as they do not feature in deprivation statistics¹⁶. There is plenty of need amongst young people behind the apparent affluence¹⁷, including a lack of social opportunities and safe places to gather within accessible distance, the challenge of accessing specialist services (which are located further away and young people are reluctant to go alone) and cost impact of being part of large families.

For organisations in rural areas, it can be harder to access funding, secure support from businesses, recruit local volunteers and travel to training, meetings and networking opportunities due to time constraints, limiting potential for collaboration. Poor public transport, long travel distances, and limited safe spaces for young people reduce access to provision and increase delivery costs.

The East Ridings Youth Coalition report (2021)⁹ reported that rurality in East Yorkshire has, (in the past) lead to gaps in communication across the youth sector, leading to duplication in some youth projects, lack of coordination of youth activities, lack of referrals being made, barriers to successful delivery of projects and difficulties in progressing actions.

“ There are too many hoops to jump through for small voluntary organisations like us . Funding is restricted, costs are escalating and we cannot get new volunteers to come on board.

It is tough, people are very busy and money is tight.

”



5. Rising complexity of young people's needs

In interviews, some organisations report mental health issues, neurodiversity, trauma and SEND needs are increasing amongst the young people they work with. However, this is challenged in other interviewees with some observing that mental health presentations and /or personality preferences can be conflated with undiagnosed SEND.

The impact of the rising cost of living (including food insecurity) on communities and families means parents/carers are struggling, young people can't afford to access opportunities on offer which can contribute towards tensions in the home.

“ Some of the kids aren't hungry, they're ravenous ”

6. Internal infrastructure limitations

A small number of organisations specifically cited increasing operational costs, such as bills, rent, maintenance and a lack of funding to invest in improving equipment and resources. This included outdated or insufficient IT equipment/software, a lack of social media and IT expertise, limiting efficiency, communication, data gathering and wider community and staff engagement.

Evidence consistently highlights that capacity challenges are systemic rather than isolated, with funding insecurity acting as the primary constraint underpinning many other issues.

The VCSE youth sector demonstrates high levels of resilience, commitment, and trusted relationships, but it is operating under sustained and increasing pressure. The sector shows strong readiness for collaboration, shared learning, and collective advocacy.

With more stable funding, improved coordination, and recognition of youth provisions as essential community infrastructure, the current organisations and workforce has significant potential to offer long term sustainable opportunities to meet the evolving needs of young people.

ASPIRATIONS

There were plenty of aspirations amongst all the participating organisations. Half of the organisations interviewed suggested that they would love to extend their provision, by increasing how often they run activities, branching into new areas or offering more creative/sports opportunities, as well as doing more 1-2-1 and group work that targets specific issues, such as youth justice and self harm.

Alongside **extending their own projects**, some organisations articulated a desire to expand the sector's reach and access, so that it is more **equitable across geography and also need** - SEND was an example.

There are **needs that must be met in order to be able to fulfil these aspirations**, and many of the aspirations people shared are the flip side of the needs/challenges coin. Alongside reaching more young people and continuing to meet their needs, the aspiration for **survival and sustainability** was commonplace, with the importance of increased and long term funding emphasised by 86% of interviewees, as well as the desire to increase and **diversify their volunteer base**.

Within the sector there is the aspiration amongst many to **extend partnerships**, opportunities and collaboration (amongst frontline workers as well as managers) both locally and regionally, including across sectors, and to collaborate together rather than compete; this was highlighted by 71% of interviewees. Two thirds of survey respondents report that **networking opportunities** would be either quite or hugely beneficial to their organisation. There is also an acknowledgement of the need for external support to build capacity, develop organisational resilience and provide access to **professional development opportunities** within the workforce.

Several organisations share a desire to **increase youth involvement** in the development and delivery of their projects and this is accompanied in places by a passion to **increase both the visibility** of the organisation, but also of the **value of youth work in general** - both locally within families and communities, and at policy level.

Various organisations clearly articulated a **desire to share their expertise** with others, both to design a training offer for other organisations within the sector and to build inclusive practice widely, within organisations, across the community and to increase understanding within families.

Almost half of survey respondents said that **acknowledgement and celebration** would be quite or hugely beneficial to their organisation. Wider recognition of the youth sector's contribution would be welcome, as would celebrating and promoting volunteering to strengthen civic pride; more than one person reflected on moments in time, such as the Olympics or Hull City of Culture, which led to an increase in volunteering, and identified an opportunity for a collective sector-wide recruitment **volunteer campaign**.

“We need an East Riding County wide independent youth action group to share practices, staff, intel, training and resources and strategically collaborate on future projects.”



Young People's Perspectives

*“ Youth Club
has helped
me develop
as a person ”*

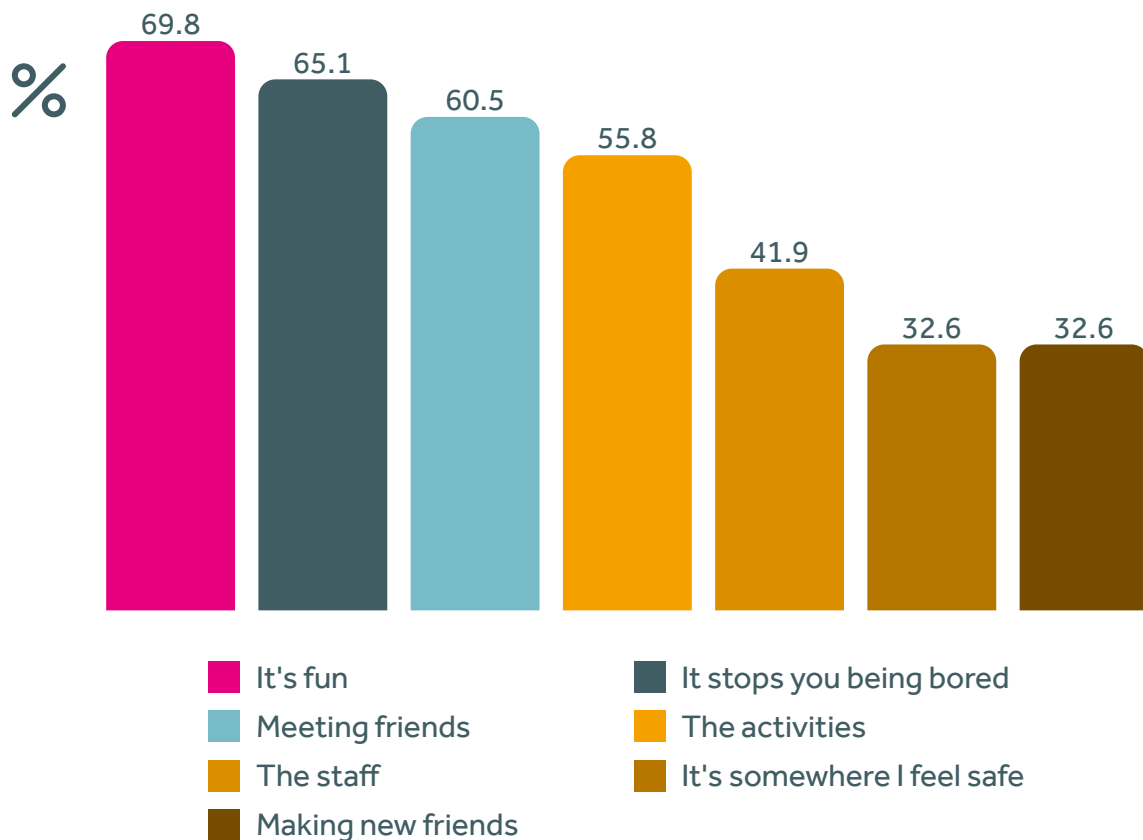
*“ We need
more for
older kids ”*

Informal data collection via youth groups was collated and sense-checked through a young people's survey.

Young people were asked:

What is the best thing about the youth activity that you attend?

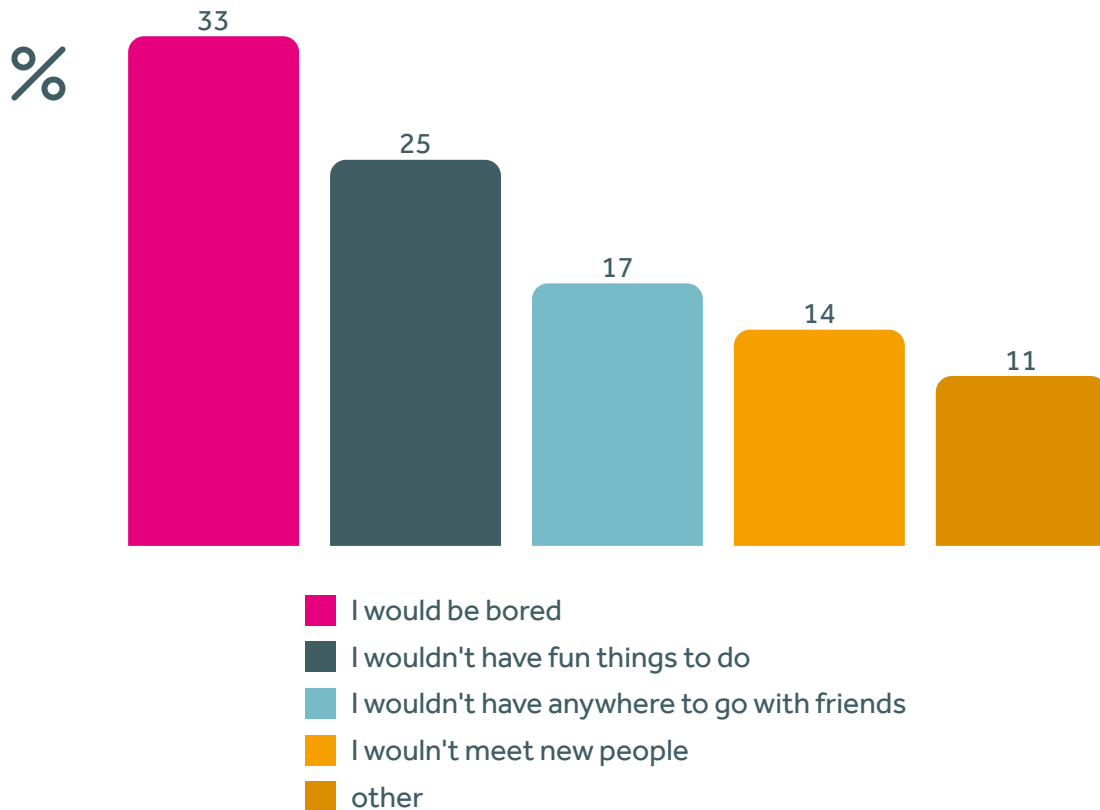
They could tell us up to 5 reasons; the top 7 were:



Young people were asked:

Without youth club - how would your life be different?

They could pick up to 5 things; the top answers are:



Loneliness is not a new or an old experience, but it is evolving. Some research states that young people are the loneliest age in the UK, they experience it because a) they do not get to see friends and b) their friendship relationships have become worse.

Friendship is particularly important for 8 – 19-year-olds because of the role friends play in learning, support and personal development. UK Youth state that 73% of youth workers report that the young people they work with do not seek support for loneliness¹⁸.

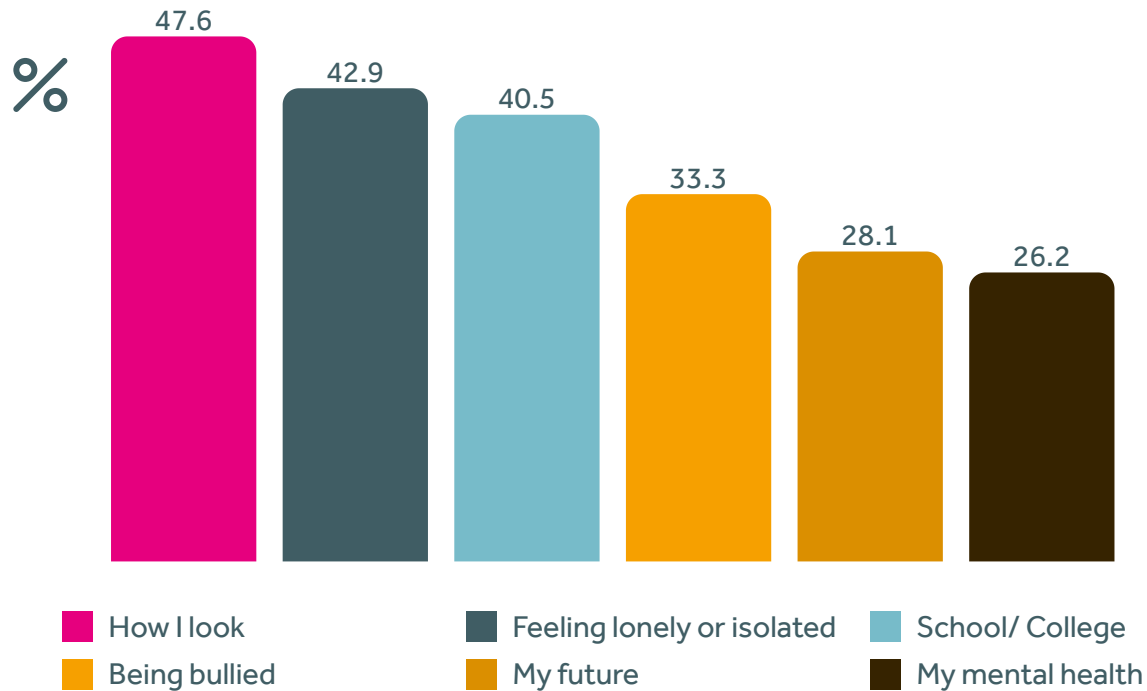
“Without youth club I wouldn't have the friends I have now”

”

Young people were asked:

What are things you worry about?

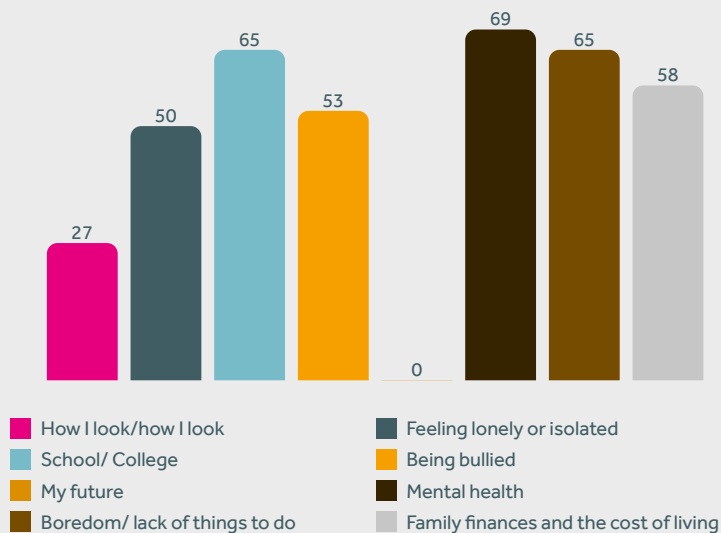
They could pick up to 5 things from a list of 14. The top answers are:



Practitioners were asked:

What are the most prominent worries for the young people you work with?

They selected from an almost identical list, their top answers:



Many of the findings are similar, but it is important to note that body image is the top worry for young people and it was cited by only a quarter of professionals as one of the eight most prominent worries they see in the young people they work with.

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

There are seven key themes that emerge from the data gathered to support the voluntary youth sector across East Riding, all of which are highlighted in more than one of the findings areas (strengths, challenges, aspirations)¹⁹:

1. Investment in core funding and sustainability
2. Workforce expansion, support, training and development
3. Stronger collaboration, networking and support
4. Build on trusted community and place-based relationships
5. Geographical equity in provision and hidden need
6. Stronger organisational infrastructure and systems
7. Centering young people's perspectives

1. Investment in core funding and sustainability

Longer-term, core funding that offers flexibility for organisations would offer much needed stability and protect trusted voluntary sector relationships.

The need is for flexible, multi-year funding to cover staffing (investing in the current workforce and growing as appropriate), overheads, and organisational development.

This would give organisations, particularly those operating on limited budgets, the ability to move beyond short term planning and delivery towards confident strategic development leading to long-term sustainability and impact.

2. Workforce expansion, support, training and development

There is the need and desire across all type and size of organisation, to attract and recruit more paid staff and volunteers (for project delivery and on boards). Accompanying the need to recruit is a desire to induct, train and support people well, to invest in developing their skills and to provide an experience which encourages them to stay.

Training opportunities need to be accessible in terms of cost, duration (a couple of hours as opposed to a whole day), location and time of day, as well as responding to the nuanced availability of different personnel. In addition, there need to be clear affordable pathways for people to work in the youth sector.

There is appetite for collaboration: some organisations are skilled in their fields and are keen to offer their expertise to others in the sector in a wide range of areas, including neurodiversity, inclusion, trauma-informed practice, self harm, mental health and youth justice; the suggestion of an East Riding-wide youth sector volunteer recruitment campaign would support the whole sector in its need to increase volunteer capacity.

This would lead to expanded capacity and a better networked, trained and supported sector across the varying geographies of East Riding, which would enable mutual resourcing within it, alongside opportunities to learn from outside the area.

3. Stronger collaboration, networking and support

Across the sector there is strong desire to be more networked, to explore meaningful opportunities for collaboration, and for organisations to be able to resource each other. Increased organisational capacity would offer time to focus on developing more relationships beyond the youth sector and local community, for example with statutory organisations.

There are practical considerations that will make this implementable:

- The dispersed geography of the sector across East Riding means that online or hybrid meeting options are beneficial, particularly to enable participation in strategic meetings but also for networking opportunities.
- Frontline workers would value opportunities to share learning and experience; this means delivering opportunities 'out of hours' at times that would suit workers with multiple jobs/ responsibilities.
- There is a request for more recognition of the value of youth provision and its contribution to young people's wellbeing (amongst funders and commissioners and also parents/carers and communities).

This would lead to the optimisation in the delivery of support for young people, most notably within the voluntary youth sector, but potentially in wider communities and organisations.

4. Build on trusted community and place-based relationships

Many organisations are deeply embedded within their local communities. Much of the workforce lives where it delivers and people understand their local context, which is nuanced, specific and important. Strong relationships of trust exist. This preventative, relational, community-based support offered by many organisations is needed alongside crisis intervention, not least because many young people struggle to access the support they need, whether its long waiting lists or the distance they need to travel for specialist support.

Some organisations shared good practice around inclusive provision, particularly for neurodiverse young people and those with SEND, but this was also highlighted as a key area of development by other organisations.

The value of providing local safe, inclusive, accepting spaces where young people can 'hang out', be with friends and be themselves must not be underestimated, particularly considering the rurality of the region.

5. Geographical equity in provision and hidden need

Most of East Riding does not feature high on the national Index of Multiple Deprivation, with 11% of Local Super Output Areas (LSOAs) featuring in the most deprived 20% nationwide. 69% of LSOAs are in the least deprived half of LSOAs nationwide. The areas which do feature in the top 10% of deprivation (such as Goole, Bridlington & Withernsea) feel that they can be overlooked by national funders who see the region-wide picture rather than focusing on the pockets of deprivation.

The apparent affluence also obscures a more complicated picture. All young people need places to socialise and in the rural communities across East Riding there are often only a handful of young people of the same age, they are dependent on transport (a parent/carer with a car, public transport) to get to a neighbouring village - if they are lucky enough for there to be youth activities there.

It can be harder for projects in these communities to attract support compared to in the towns - whether it be from funders, volunteers (as fewer people live in the community) or local businesses (of which there are also fewer). Seeking to support provision across the whole geography is an opportunity which could be capitalised on.

“ ‘We have a small but mighty team, deeply rooted in local life, and trusted by the people who live here.’ ”

6. Stronger organisational infrastructure and systems

Prioritising internal systems, structures, processes and infrastructure can be a real challenge to invest in when resources are spread extremely thin and yet there is a desire within organisations to do just this.

Internally this ranges from developing more efficient IT infrastructure and digital systems, through to having a complete set of policies or improving data collection and monitoring.

Externally this ranges from increasing organisational visibility to communicating clearly with a range of potential partners, from businesses, to funders, to statutory providers.

Whilst there may be some of these needs that can be met by collective training opportunities, external bespoke support would be particularly appreciated and beneficial to enable this to really meet the specific needs of each organisation.

“ The youth sector in East Ridings is agile and creative. Maintaining diverse support and engaging activities despite sharing a shared experience of lack of funding. ”

7. Centring young people's perspectives

There were many aspirations for improvement and development within organisations. However, it feels pertinent to raise one in particular: the appetite amongst some organisations to increase youth voice and participation in the design and delivery of services. Some organisations highlighted this as a particular strength of their project and others said how they would love to learn and improve on this.



In a climate where there are significant needs which can not all be met due to resource limitations, this point seems more important than ever. As our findings highlight, whilst practitioners have a good level of understanding of the worries of young people, the most pressing issue for young people (body image) is not one that the majority of professionals are aware of.

How can young people's voices be not only heard but listened to, to influence and shape what is offered?

As outlined in the Introduction of the State of the Region peer research group report published by young people, there is a difference between consultation and voice. Although both have positives there are two major setbacks with consultation. 1) It's one-sided and doesn't require dialogue 2) It assumes decision-makers know what they're on about.' Consultation is very specific, often to a single issue, which seems perfectly logical. But what if that's not the biggest issue that young people are facing. Youth voice gives young people a chance to tell decision-makers what they want, why they want it and how it should be done'.²⁰

There is an opportunity for both young people themselves, and for organisations that demonstrate existing good practice, to support and lead the future for youth voice and influence in the sector, drawing on available expertise such as the Centre for Youth Voice.²¹

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to acknowledge that the national VCSE sector is facing capacity and funding challenges, so the recommendations have sought to find a balance between being both modest and ambitious. Some of the recommendations outline work that is or could be ongoing work, within Smile Foundation and/or elsewhere, but important to outline them nonetheless, to ensure their value is acknowledged.

1. Core cost funding

Prioritise core cost funding where possible to support organisations to keep the heat and lights on and doors open.

- 1.1 Provide funding that enables organisations to meet actual costs of running their organisation and projects, recognising the particular challenges of rurality.
- 1.2 Allocate resources for strategic development and participation in collaboration, including for voluntary and client facing workers who often lack access to these opportunities.
- 1.3 Fund flexibly, trusting organisations to be responsive to presenting needs including funding ongoing provision not just new initiatives.
- 1.4 Involve the voluntary and community sector in the co-design and delivery of funding, for example by funding organisations to come together to collectively shape how a funding pot is prioritised.

2. Proportionate reporting

Support the capacity of the sector by requiring proportionate and appropriate reporting (monitoring and evaluation).

- 2.1 Acknowledge the cumulative burden of excessive reporting, which risks overwhelming organisations and undermining delivery.
- 2.2 Introduce and advocate for minimal reporting requirements for small grants and small organisations, focusing only on absolutely essential data (measure what matters).
- 2.3 Advocate for, and model a systemic shift towards trust and relationship-based approaches rather than heavy compliance requirements.
- 2.4 Consider accepting other reports such as annual/impact reports in place of bespoke monitoring returns.

3. Volunteer Support

Strengthen the ability of organisations to recruit, support, and retain volunteers.

- 3.1 Offer training and support to organisations to raise their profile, to catalyse volunteer recruitment both for frontline delivery and throughout organisational governance.
- 3.2 Provide organisations with funding and support to build their capacity to support and retain volunteers.
- 3.3 Raise the profile of volunteering across the region by running a large-scale campaign promoting the opportunities and benefits of volunteering.

4. Workforce Development

Provide organisations with support for both practical development needs and specialist training themes.

- 4.1 Support the co-design of a sector-wide training programme that builds on the skills and specialisms present within the sector.
- 4.2 Ensure the sector continues to understand and covers issues experienced by young people, such as body image gender identity, SEND support, behavioural challenges, neurodiversity and group dynamics, as well as training to aid organisational smooth-running such as digital skills development.
- 4.3 Offer bursaries to enable participation, particularly where attendance requires backfilling staff time or covering lost income, and ensure training is offered at times accessible to frontline practitioners.

5. Network and collaboration

Increase the capacity to connect across the region as well as explore opportunities for local collaboration from other sectors.

- 5.1 Support a range of networking opportunities, including peer-to-peer, business engagement, statutory partners and opportunities to meet funders. Learn from effective practice in towns such as in Goole and Bridlington to foster peer support in smaller villages and rural communities.
- 5.3 Create inclusive networking opportunities for frontline practitioners as well as managers, incorporating elements of celebration, food, and enjoyment.
- 5.4 Offer bursaries or financial support to enable attendance at networking events and strategic cross-sector meetings/collaborations, recognising the time and cost implications for small organisations.

6. Organisational development

Improve awareness of existing support to strengthen organisations' operations, compliance, and effectiveness.

- 6.1 Don't assume people know what support is available, such as information, training and ongoing advisory support with compliance requirements, including GDPR, safeguarding, and financial governance.
- 6.2 Ensure support is easily accessible (i.e. simple website/ portal navigation).
- 6.3 Make learning and insight open source (wherever possible) so that the sector can build on shared learning and not duplicate efforts.

7. Raise the profile of the sector

Develop a collaborative approach to build wider recognition of the East Riding youth sector's value and impact, within and beyond the boundaries of the county.

- 7.1 Develop a coordinated communications approach that showcases the strengths, impact, and positive contribution of the youth sector to others, including funders, statutory services, business communities and other potential partners, including inspirational messaging, case studies, and storytelling.
- 7.2 Create high-profile opportunities for promotion and celebration, such as events and presentations at cross-sector forums, to strengthen recognition, influence, and understanding of the sector's value.

“

We would love to have much stronger networks, attend wonderful training, even show appreciation more to our volunteers but the core funding just isn't there, and so many projects create higher core costs which means we can't run them if the funder isn't willing to cover even a small percentage.

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END NOTES

1. In response to our survey question: What is the best thing about the youth activity that you attend? 70% responded: It's fun, 65% responded: It stops you from being bored and 60% responded: Meeting friends.
2. Our findings around workforce development and sector collaboration echo two of the six themes highlighted in the State of the Region's Youth Work Sector (2022) which covered Yorkshire and the Humber
<https://youthworkunit.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/State-of-the-Regions-Youth-Work-Sector.pdf>
3. These funding and training recommendations echo the Planning for the future recommendations outlined in the former East Riding Voluntary Action Service (ERVAS) report on the East Riding Youth Sector in 2021, p38:
<https://ervas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-Impact-of-Covid-19-on-young-people-and-youth-provision-in-East-Riding-one-year-on.pdf>
4. <https://ervas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-Impact-of-Covid-19-on-young-people-and-youth-provision-in-East-Riding-one-year-on.pdf#p2>
5. https://downloads.eastriding.org.uk/corporate/plans-and-policies/all-plans-policies-and-strategies/CFAS_Children_and_Families_Strategic_Plan_2025-2030.pdf
6. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/693950e233c7ace9c4a41efa/DCMS_Youth_Strategy_accessible_final.pdf
7. <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/good-childhood/policy-recommendations>
8. <https://www.centreforyounglives.org.uk/news-centre/centre-for-young-lives-report-puts-forward-a-fresh-vision-for-youth-provision-and-reveals-the-huge-financial-and-social-benefits-of-investing-in-youth-centres-youth-workers-and-activities-for-young-people>
9. Evaluation – East Ridings Youth Coalition Support Service 2018 - 2021
<https://chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://ervas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Evaluation-East-Riding-Youth-Coalitions-Support-Service.pdf>
10. Local Links - find local provision. <https://local-links.org.uk/>
11. Barnardos Voice Means Choice Discovery Research Evidence Report
<https://chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-01/Voices%20Mean%20Choices%20-%20Discovery%20Research%20Evidence%20Report%202023.pdf>
12. Youth voice consensus 2024
<https://chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/dev/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/2024-Youth-Voice-Census-Report-1-1.pdf>
13. Youth voice consensus 2025
<https://chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/dev/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/YVC25-Results-Report-1.pdf>
14. The need for an expanded training offer for volunteers was highlighted in the independent evaluation produced by ERVAS in 2021, p33
<https://ervas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-Impact-of-Covid-19-on-young-people-and-youth-provision-in-East-Riding-one-year-on.pdf>
15. Discussion Paper - Creation of East Riding Youth Action
16. 61 (c 30%) of East Riding's 201 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are within the top 50% most deprived in the country, with 13 in the top 10% (all in Bridlington, Driffield and Withernsea).
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2025>
17. Reported by 50% of interviewees.
18. <https://www.ukyouth.org/2024/06/belong-collective-tackling-youth-loneliness/>
19. The top findings are similar to the Post Covid Insight (March 2021) What youth providers need.
20. State of the Region, A report of the state of young people and youth services in Yorkshire and Humber,
<https://youthworkunit.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/State-of-the-Region-3.11.21.pdf>
21. <https://www.regionallyouthunits.com/centre-for-youth-voice>



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