



My Norfolk, My Voice

Report 2023

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1. Foreword

The My Norfolk, My Voice survey marks an important stage in the delivery of the **Flourishing in Norfolk Children and Young People Partnership Strategy 2021-25**, in particular our commitment as the Children and Young People Strategic Alliance (CYPSA) to put the voice of children, young people and their families at the heart of everything we do.

There is already much excellent work already taking place across the system in Norfolk to embed children and young people's voices in all decisions on issues important to them, from listening and acting on their views and wishes throughout individual work to involving them in developing services and strategies.

Through this survey we wanted to take a step back and look at the basics – the how, why and when we involve children and young people in decision-making as a partnership, to make sure we are talking, listening and acting in a way that is meaningful and relevant to them.

We are delighted that so many children and young people shared their views with us, over 1,600 responded which is a fabulous number and our heartfelt thanks go out to all who took part. We will tell these young people what we're doing as a result of them taking part, so they can see the real difference their voices can make.

Going forward, CYPSA will use the results from My Norfolk, My Voice to guide our participation activity with children and young people across Norfolk. We will act on the recommendations and monitor our success through our dedicated multi-agency Stakeholder Engagement and Insight group, ensuring that all our participation activity works towards our shared ambition – that Norfolk is a county where all children and young people can flourish.



Sara Tough

Executive Director of Children's Services,
Norfolk County Council. Chair of the Children
and Young People Strategic Alliance.

2. Introduction & background to My Norfolk, My Voice

Although there is a wide range of engagement and participation work taking place with children and young people across the system in Norfolk, there has never been a system-wide investigation into how, when (and what about) children and young people want to be engaged with on issues relevant to their lives.

The My Norfolk, My Voice (MNMV) survey was developed to help us look at how we build an interactive and productive relationship between CYP SA and our target audience, the children and young people of Norfolk.

Its aim was to investigate, directly with children and young people, how best to involve them in discussions, co-production and participation in decision-making, leading to more effective engagement informing relevant, meaningful support and improved Flourish outcomes.

This report first looks at who responded to the survey, before reviewing what we found in each of the themes. It then looks at our learning from each of the stages in developing and delivering the survey. Finally, it sets out our next steps. For each section we review the findings before making recommendations, based on practical advice for those planning and undertaking engagement and participation with children and young people.

Further learning will be disseminated as we explore the findings more deeply with young people.



3. Survey Findings and recommendations

3.1. Who completed the survey

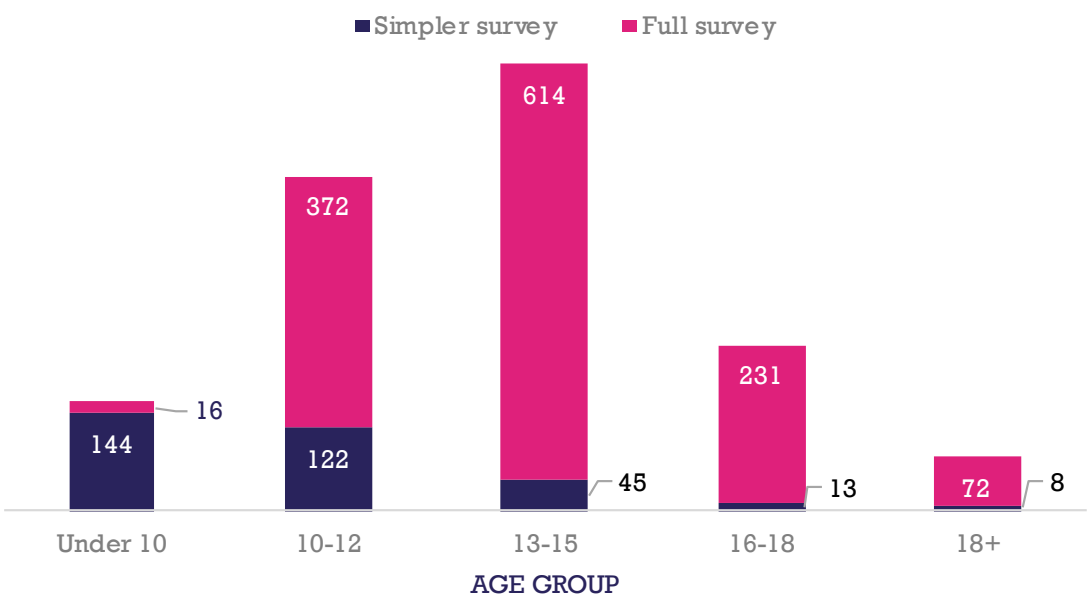
Included in the survey questions were a small number relating to basic demographic information (age for the simpler survey, age, gender, ethnicity and self-identified disability for the full survey).

Throughout the analysis of the responses, comparisons between data sets relating to the age, disability and gender identifiers of the responders has been conducted. This enables us to identify any significant differences between responses from different groups that might tell us we need to adapt our approaches going forward depending on who we want to speak to. These comparisons will only be referred to in this report where there are substantial differences in the responses from different groups of children and young people. In all other cases, when not mentioned, this indicates that after these filters have been applied there was no substantial difference (+/- 10% minimum) to the results already displayed.

3.1.1. Age – asked in both survey versions

For the full survey, respondents were mainly in the 11-18 age group, with ages 12-15 slightly over-represented within this group and ages 10 and under and 19+ significantly under-represented in comparison to Norfolk’s younger population as a whole.

Age of respondents to Full and Simpler surveys



For the simplified survey, which was targeted at primary age children and children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN), over 80% of respondents were aged 5-12 which indicates that the majority of children and young people completing this version of the survey did so through their primary school, which we anecdotally expected given the level of interest from schools.

We also asked, in the simpler survey, who was completing the survey. The aim of this was to establish the level of involvement of particularly parent carers, but also other professionals, in completing the survey on behalf of children or young people. Nearly all responses said the person completing the survey was a young person, with only 2.4% (8) stating the survey was completed by a parent carer or professional on behalf of a young person and 3.7% (12) saying the survey was completed by a young person with a parent carer or professional.

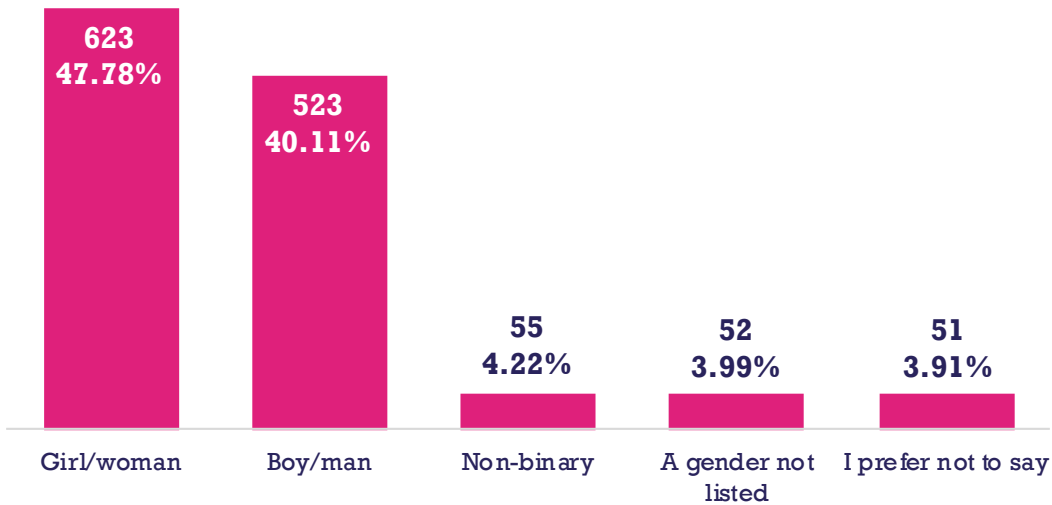
These findings would indicate that a smaller than expected number of older young people with SEN completed the survey designed with them in mind, although responses around disability (see below) would indicate that young people with SEN did complete the full survey. This has led us to consider whether multiple versions are actually necessary going forward, or whether we should concentrate on making all surveys as easy to engage with as possible.

3.1.2. Gender

A slightly higher proportion of girls completed the full survey than in the Norfolk population as a whole (54.4% of survey respondents responded as ‘girl/woman’, compared to 51% whose sex is declared as female in the census)

A higher proportion of survey respondents stated their gender as ‘non-binary’, or ‘a gender not stated’ or ‘Prefer not to say’ than in similar categories within the census.

What best describes your gender identity?

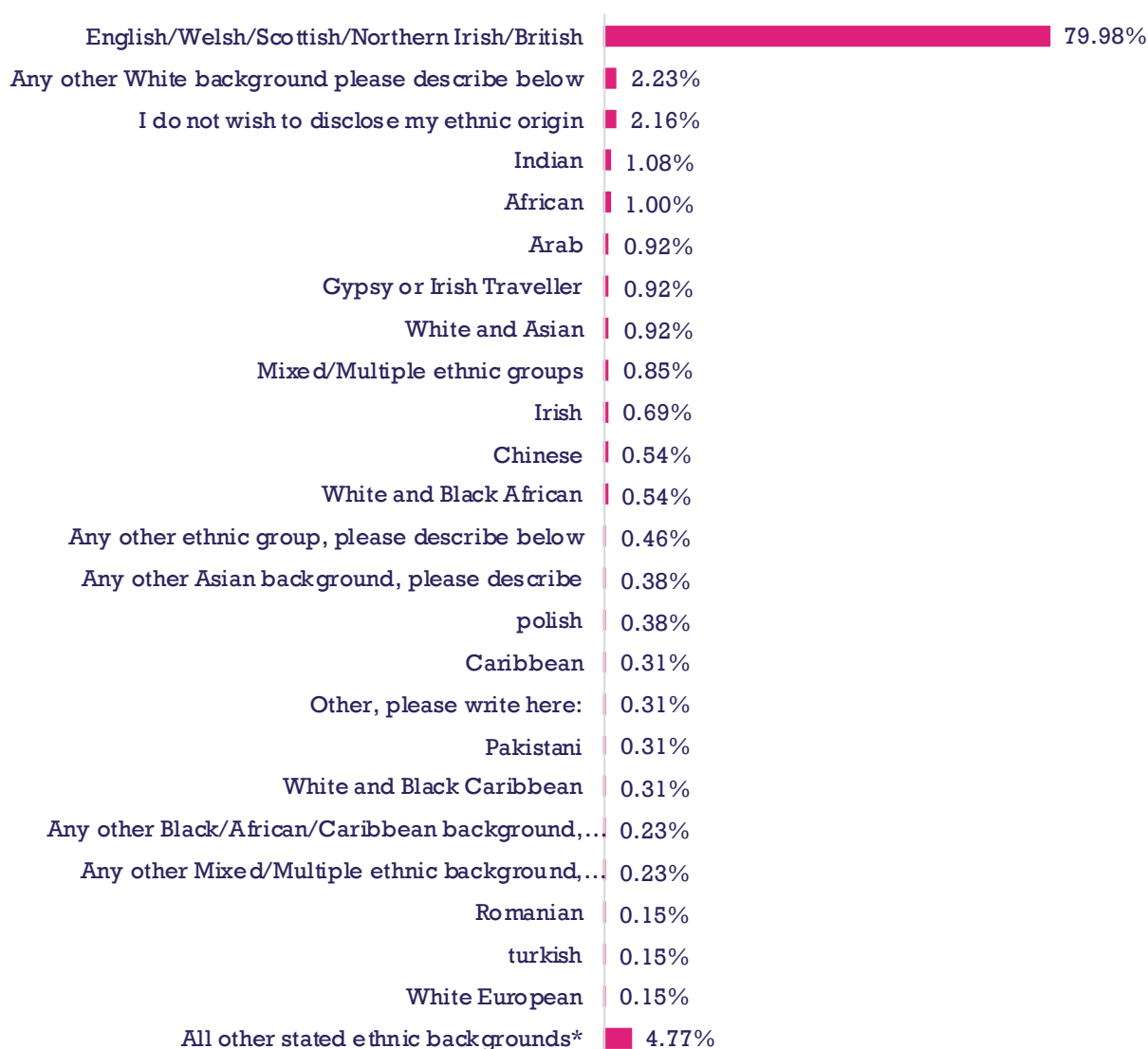


3.1.3. Ethnicity

The stated ethnicity of participants in the full survey broadly reflects the population as a whole. A similar proportion of respondents stated they were 'British' compared to the Norfolk population (88% of respondents; 89% of population).

There were respondents from almost all of the other ethnic groups within the census. The respondent numbers were so small for many of these, however, it would not be appropriate to draw firm conclusions about how representative the survey is of a particular ethnic group.

Ethnic background of respondents



*All other stated ethnic backgrounds includes all categories or stated ethnicities attributed to only one respondent.

3.1.4. Disability

A higher proportion of respondents to the full survey stated that they have a disability of some type (19.49%) than the estimated prevalence in Norfolk’s children and young people population of 7.3% (0-18). The estimated figure relates to a set definition of disability, however, and the survey did not seek to set a definition.

It is also estimated that 16.9% of Norfolk children and young people have special educational needs (SEN) and individuals in this cohort may have defined themselves as having a disability. Nearly 10% (126) of respondents to the full survey stated that they have a disability that affects the way they understand and communicate. This would indicate that more young people with SEN completed the full survey than the simplified version.

Feedback from a Youth Advisory Board who were completing the survey pointed out that young people could quite commonly have a disability that affects their mobility and learning/communication skills and they would have liked this as an option. We will take this learning forward for future projects.



Recommendations

- Consider the age groups you want to engage with and target these. For both the older and younger age groups, a more specialist approach may be needed, with older young people potentially more open to direct engagement and younger children probably needing additional support and encouragement to engage. A generic approach across age ranges may not reach these groups effectively.
- Where possible, and to be balanced with the above recommendation, use a single set of accessible questions. This enables more accurate analysis of all participants' insight and reduces prejudice based on perceptions of capacity linked to age or circumstances. There is a risk that younger children and those with SEN may find this more challenging and require extra support and older young people may find a simple approach patronising, so how the exercise is explained and publicised is key.
- A higher number of children and young people completing the survey self-identified as having a disability than generally understood data would indicate. All engagement should cater for those with physical and learning/communication challenges to maximise engagement. The CYPSEA Stakeholder Engagement and Insight subgroup is working with subject matter experts to produce and link to helpful online resources to aid accessible engagement, and advice and resources can also be found at [Best practice participation guidance for professionals - Norfolk County Council](#) and [Coproduction resources for professionals in Norfolk - Norfolk County Council](#).
- Children and young people could have disabilities that affect both their learning and communication and their mobility. This option should be provided as part of any demographic question where disability status is something you are seeking to understand about your audience.

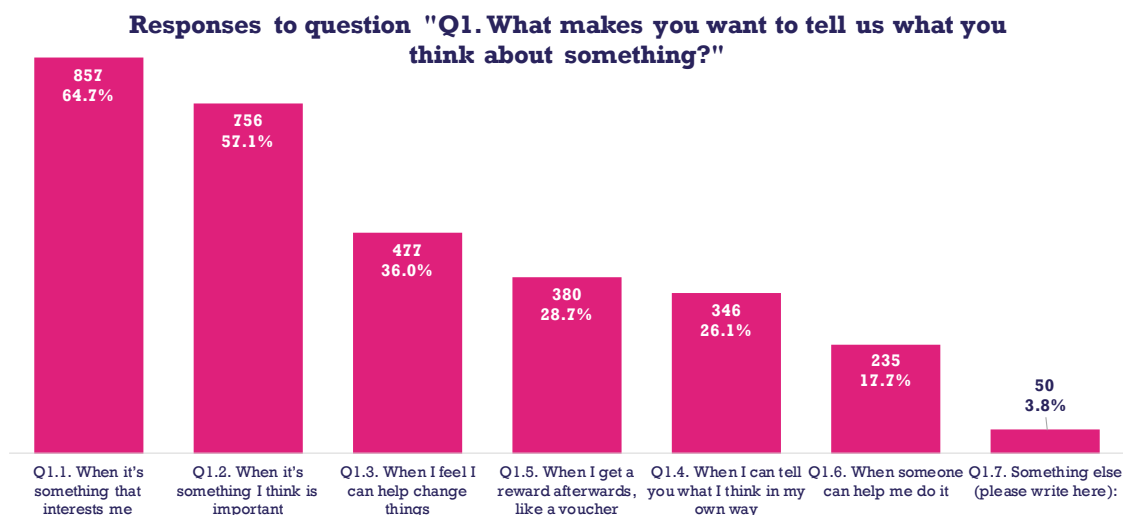


3.2. Section 1 – What gets me interested

This section was designed to find out what works (and doesn't) to get children and young people interested in engaging and giving their views on a topic.

3.2.1. Q1 – What makes you want to tell us what you think about something?

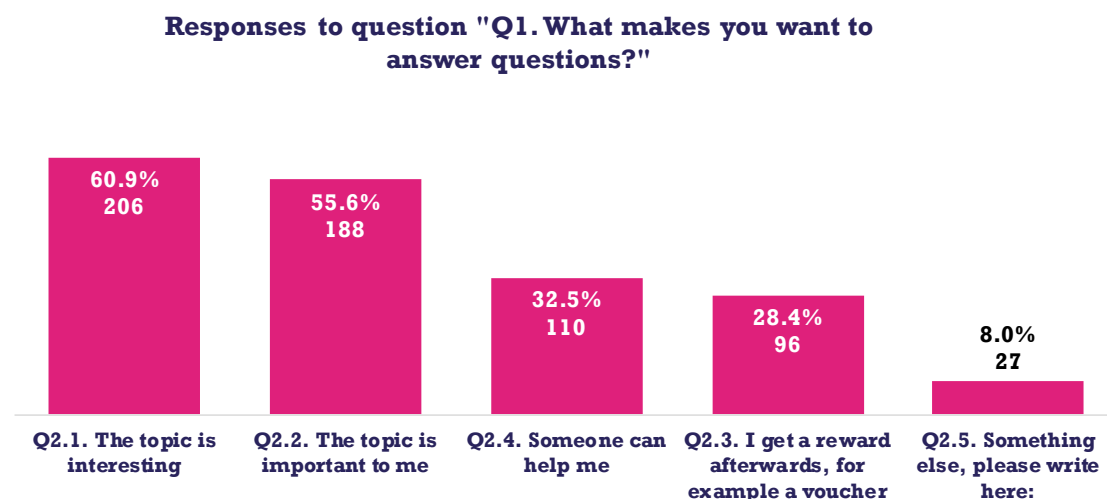
Full Survey



This question looked at what motivates children and young people to take part in an engagement opportunity. The main point to report is the level of value placed on the perceived importance of, and interest in, the topic of an engagement activity.

This pattern of response is mirrored in the simpler version (below), although the percentage of younger children and young people with SEN who said that having someone to help them engage would motivate them to take part was almost twice that from the full survey.

Simpler Survey



For some of the responses, there were some noticeable differences based on age of the respondent. For the option relating to perceived importance as a motivating factor, less than a third of children under 10 selected this option compared with an average of nearly two thirds of young people over 10, with the percentage for this response gradually increasing with the age of the participant. We will look into this further, but believe it to be a reflection of the difference in social awareness of issues as children and young people get older, and that awareness of a topic and its impact on their lives helps decide their personal interest in that issue.

There was also a difference for the response “When I can tell you something in my own way” in terms of disability. Young people who identified as having a disability that “affects the way I understand and/or communicate” selected this option in over two thirds of responses compared with an average of just over a quarter of responses for the alternative identifiers. This, combined with the larger motivator of having someone to help in the simpler survey, highlights the importance of tailoring engagement activities to meet the different needs and ages of the children and young people taking part.

In a follow up workshop with young people in February 2023, participants confirmed that understanding and personal importance of topic were key reasons that they would want to give their views. They also said that they want to feel empowered about the topic they are speaking about, so education and learning about a topic would always be welcome before engaging.

The interest children and young people have in something and how they value a topic are very hard to control or influence when approaching engagement work without any existing knowledge of a group or cohort. With this in mind, reaching young people via trusted professionals and supporting those professionals to work with them on the topic before engaging should help significantly with engagement levels and quality.

There is also some indication that children and young people respond well when they feel that their engagement will lead to some form of impact or change in the subject matter. This confirms initial feedback during the co-production of the survey that clearly establishing at the outset what the intentions are for their voice, and where this voice will go, can have a positive impact on engagement.

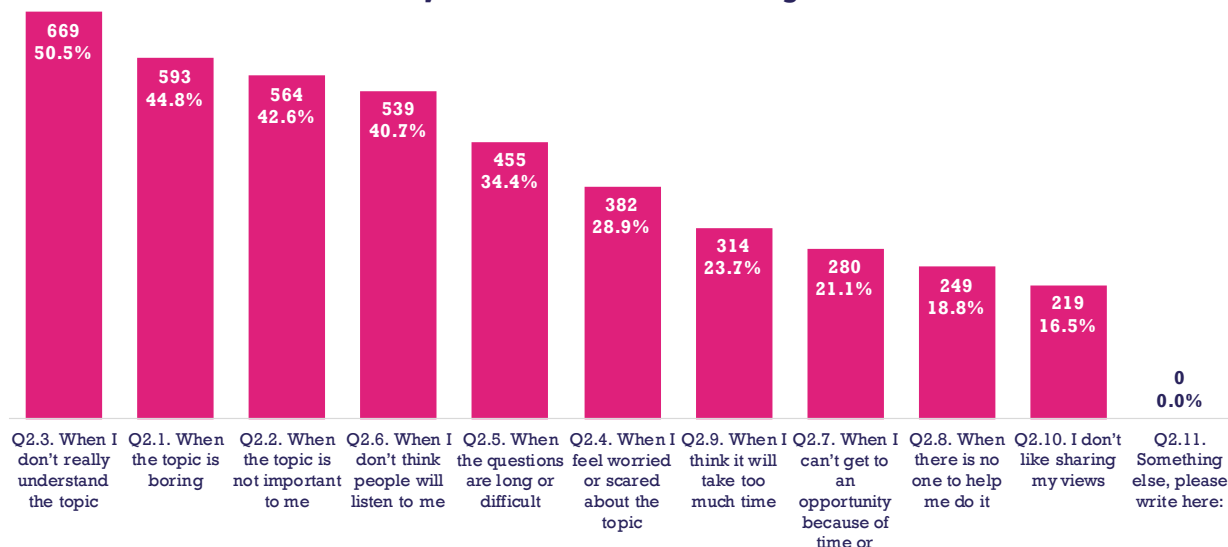
3.2.2. Q2 - What makes you not want to tell us what you think about something?

This question aimed to give insight on the barriers children and young people feel they have to taking part in an engagement opportunity. The results highlight that a lack of understanding of what they are being asked about is the biggest potential barrier to them wanting to contribute their voice, which builds what young people said about empowerment with regards Q1. This barrier is closely followed response-wise by the perception that a topic is boring or of low importance to children and young people, backing up the key motivators from Q1.

Also of note in these results is the impact on engagement that the feeling of not being listened to has, with over a third of responses to both surveys selecting this as a barrier to engagement, and also the questions being long and difficult, which mirrors what young people told us during co-production of the survey.

Full Survey

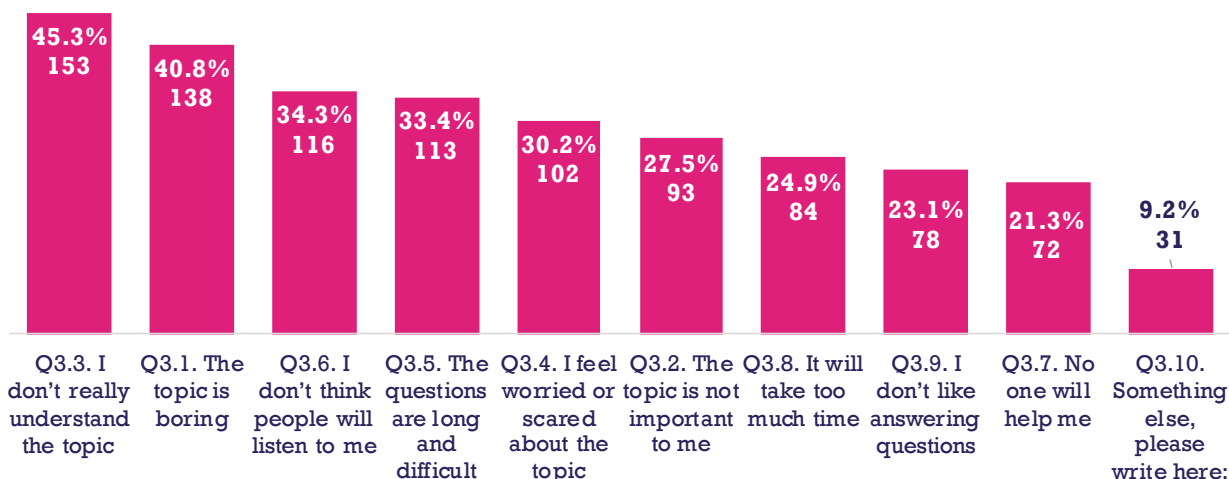
Responses to question "Q2. What makes you not want to tell us what you think about something?"



Similar results were obtained in the simpler version of the question:

Simpler Survey

Responses to question "Q2. What makes you not want to answer questions?"



There were some notable differences in key barriers identified by certain groups. Nearly two thirds of children under 10 selected “when the topic is boring” compared with an average of just over 40% of over 10s. Coupled with the findings from Q1 that the perceived importance of a topic is less of a motivator for younger children, this is an indication of the need to approach

participation in particularly interesting and entertaining ways with this group rather than relying on self-motivation as a driver for them to take part.

Possibly not unexpectedly, “When I can’t get to an opportunity because of time or transport” was identified as a barrier to participation by almost a third of children and young people who identify as having a disability, compared with under 20% of those who identify as not having a disability. This clearly tells us that extra care and consideration must be given to enabling children and young people with a disability to take part.

Overcoming and removing (or reducing at least) the top barriers of perceived unimportance, lack of interest and understanding, and not feeling you will be heard is not a simple task. This work requires the building of trusting relationships with the children and young people taking part so they believe they will be listened to, as well as informing, empowering and engaging with them around the topics we wish to talk with them about and ensuring they have the practical assistance they need.

Lastly, we must appreciate and respect that some children and young people simply do not wish to engage and give their views. The reasons behind this would benefit from further exploration (although this may be particularly difficult given the nature of the response) and engagement encouraged as much as possible, but it is absolutely their right not to take part.

Recommendations

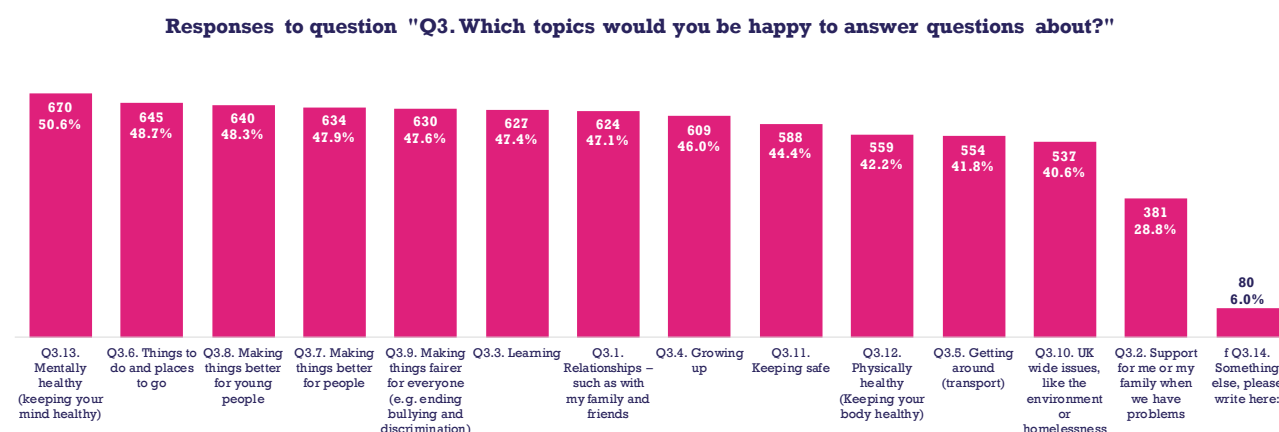
- Information, education and support around a topic should be provided before or with an engagement that helps develop understanding or raise awareness of the topic(s) being covered. This will help children and young people to feel empowered to engage (or not) with a piece of work.
- The building of relationships is key to the success of an engagement. When working with children and young people it is vital that they understand:
 - who they are engaging with
 - what the engagement is about
 - why their engagement is important and;
 - how to complete/take part in the engagement
- Demonstrating that engagement will lead to action is vital in the process of building children and young people’s trust and confidence that their time and voice are being valued. Treating the engagement as an ongoing conversation can help to do this. Timely updates on the journey of their voice into action will be appreciated and help develop repeat engagement.
- The development of relationships with trusted adults already involved in children and young people’s lives is a positive way to increase understanding and interest, through providing guidance and information about an engagement to help adults encourage and support successful participation.
- Younger children, who are less motivated by the interest in and importance of the topic, may benefit from specific separate engagement work to get them involved in accessible, interactive and fun (but still educational) ways.

- Additional support may be needed to help children and young people with disabilities to engage with your exercise. Consider practical assistance (e.g. transport, parking, venue accessibility, aids) and also providing different ways for them to express their views. Co-producing these ways with children and young people with lived experience and parent carers as part of the development process is advised for best results.
- Long, difficult or complicated questions can be really off-putting to children and young people (as for many people of all ages). Keep your engagement as short, simple and focused as possible

3.3. Section 2 – What I'm interested in

3.3.1. Q3 - Which topics would you be happy to answer questions about?

Full Survey



The findings from this question indicate a general willingness to engage with a wide variety of topics. All but two of the topics listed are within the 40-50% range. The two out of this range were Mental Health (52.06%) and Family Support (29.65% - although relationships with family and friends scored more highly). The topics in this question were aligned to the Flourish domains, eight areas of life that children and young people have told us are important to them, and the findings appear to indicate that this holds true.

This close range of results, compared with the motivators and barriers responses, could indicate that the understanding of and interest in the topic will have more of an influence on whether children and young people take part than just the title of the topic alone.

Again, there were some interesting findings when we looked at responses from different groups. In particular there are three areas where gender identification seems to have an impact on selection of topics:

- 60% of children and young people who identified as non-binary selected “Relationships, such as with my family and friends” as a topic of interest, compared with less than half of responses from other gender identities.
- “Making things better for young people” was selected by over 70% of non-binary young people compared to less than half of other gender identities.
- In response to “Making things fairer for everyone (e.g. ending bullying and discrimination)” children and young people identifying as non-binary selected this option in over two thirds of responses compared with less than half of respondents with other gender identities.

These three topics are clearly of great importance to children and young people who identify as non-binary. This may be a reflection of some of the issues they have faced or have particular experience of in their lives. When we explored this finding at our February workshop with some young people with lived experience they agreed with this analysis, stating that they are very passionate about personal issues that they have experience of and want to make things better for others who share this passion/experience.

Interest in wider social issues increases with age. Responses to “Making things fairer for everyone (e.g. ending bullying and discrimination)” increases incrementally from a quarter of responses from under 10s to over three quarters from over 18s. A very similar pattern is seen in the response to “UK wide issues, like the environment or homelessness” where under a fifth of under 10s have selected this option, increasing to nearly 70% of 18 year olds. This could be an indicator of the need for topic understanding and context to be in place before a child or young person feels able to offer their opinion on a matter. Younger children in many cases may have had less exposure to or spent less time considering larger scale social issues compared with older age groups of their peers.

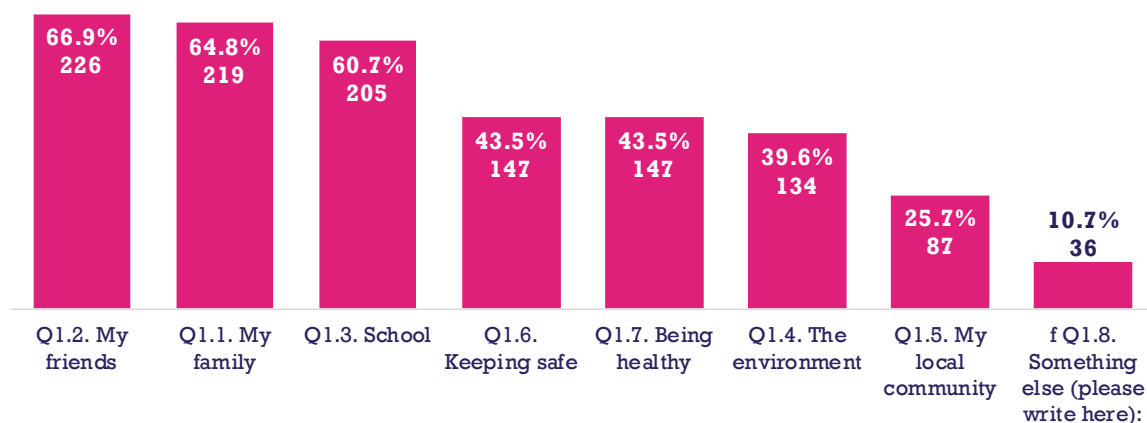
This also raises the issue of how suitable some subjects are to address with children and young people, particularly those who are younger and/or more vulnerable. In Q2, around 30% of respondents to both surveys said that when a topic is worrying or scary they are less likely to engage and we must carefully balance our genuine need for information with any potential negative impacts of seeking this, and mitigate/avoid as much as possible.

In terms of findings for children and young people who identify as having a disability, there is a noticeable difference in response to identifying “Support for me or my family when we have problems” as a topic of interest. For those who identify as having no disability this option was selected by just over a quarter of respondents compared with nearly 40% of those who identify as having some form of disability. Again, we believe this is likely an outcome based on life experience, with young people identifying as having a disability potentially having required more support during their lives and therefore feeling better placed to and more interested in engaging on the issue.

The topics offered in the simpler read version differed from the full version and focused on areas where younger children and those with SEN may feel they have more confidence in answering. In the graph below you will see the most popular answers were on the everyday, more familiar topics including friends, family and school rather than the larger topics such as local community, safety, health and the environment. Coupled with the motivators and barriers findings, we believe this is a result of perceived knowledge, confidence and interest in particular areas within this group.

Simpler Survey

Responses to question "Q3. Which topics would you like to answer questions about?"



LGBTQ+ issues are mentioned along with animals/wildlife and sport in the 'Something else' response, however these are not frequent when compared to overall responses. The most common response in Something else category was 'Nothing'.

Recommendations

- Involving children and young people with lived experience in the areas you are interested in hearing their voices can lead to really effective participation, as they are more likely to be motivated and passionate about discussing the subject. For those who are less interested/informed, information and education on the subject along with support to understand it can improve engagement.
- Where a subject may be worrying or scary to children or young people, careful consideration needs to be given to how this is approached. Running engagement events in collaboration with trusted adults can help mitigate negative effects, as support is on hand from people who know the individuals. Balanced information can also help demystify a topic, along with supported access to additional advice and help. Open surveys can be challenging for sensitive topics, as it is not possible to control who accesses them, or support them to cope if affected.

- Talking to younger children about wider topics outside their own direct life experience and interests will require additional work to inform and engage them on the subject(s). Consideration should be given as to what value engaging this group on such subjects will give to both the results and the children themselves.

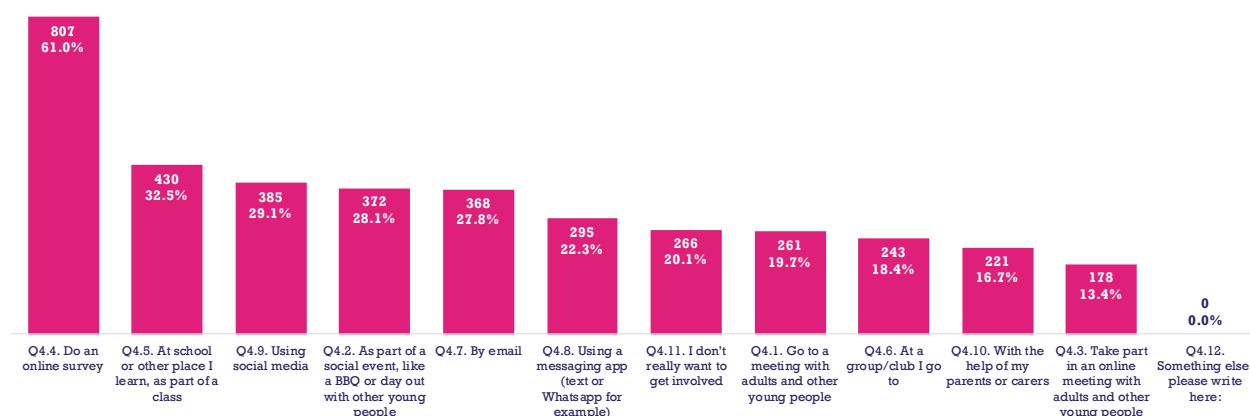
3.4. Section 3 – How I would like to get involved

3.4.1. Q4 – How would you like to tell us what you think?

The intention for this question was to investigate the methods through which children and young people would prefer to engage. There is a strong outlier here in the form of the online survey. This option was selected by over 60% of all respondents to the full survey and nearly half of those completing the simpler version, clearly indicating this method as the most popular amongst children and young people. In the simpler version, the top two responses also give a clear indication that online surveys are a popular option with completing a survey with support being the most popular choice.

Full Survey

Responses to question "Q4. How would you like to tell us what you think?"



Online surveys are a highly flexible method, particularly with regards access and convenience, and this result would suggest that children and young people appreciate this. This result, however, needs to be looked at in a wider context. In our experience, online surveys on their own can often be ignored or poorly/partially completed without additional encouragement and support, so this method of engagement requires effort to ensure the best insight.

The My Norfolk, My Voice surveys were encouraged to be completed with the support of professionals and other trusted adults, and guidance was provided to the supporting adults, leading to a significantly higher response rate than previous attempts to engage young people with online surveys.

We would caution the sole use of online surveys to engage with children and young people, as this method comes with some significant risks. There are a small but significant number of children and young people without easy access to the internet, often among the most vulnerable and those from specific cultural

groups. Using online surveys risks missing input from these young people, although this can be mitigated in part by encouraging engagement where access is easier, such as education settings. “At school or other place I learn, as part of a class” was the third most popular option in the full survey and the most popular option in the simpler version, indicating that this is a potentially significant route to fuller engagement.

The use of any surveys, online or not, is also limited in scope in the richness of insight they are able to offer. Surveys will often tell you ‘what’ people think, with further, more in-depth investigation through discussion and exploration being needed to understand ‘why’ they think it. Please see ‘Next Steps’ for how we intend to do this for My Norfolk, My Voice.

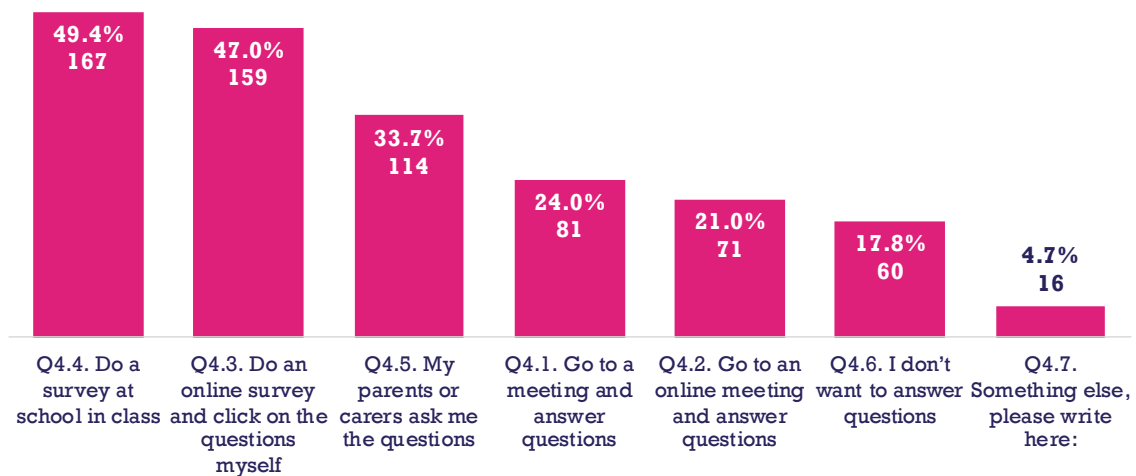
The least popular option from this question in the full survey was “Take part in an online meeting with adults and other young people” with less than one in seven selecting this option. This may be at least partially because of the Covid pandemic, where this method was the only option available for children and young people to engage with many aspects of their lives, including education. The extended length of time where this was the only way in which to engage and interact with others may have contributed to building a level of fatigue amongst young people, and they have told us previously that they are ‘Zoomed out’. We must also consider the possibility that young people simply do not like this method of interacting and we will explore this further.

Selection of the most popular option overall “Do an online survey” differs considerably when looking at the age of respondents. Just over a third of children under 10 selected this method, which jumps to very nearly half of 11-year-olds and then continues to increase with age to a peak of over 85% of 18-year-olds. Nearly two thirds of children aged 5–9 selected “Do a survey at school in class” compared with just over two fifths who want to complete a survey independently. Support from adults to complete a survey appears to be very much appreciated by younger children. The least popular option from the simpler survey was again “Go to an online meeting and answer questions”.

These responses highlight again the potential need for separate targeted and specific engagement work to be carried out with younger children and may also reflect the ease, confidence and appropriateness of younger children autonomously accessing the internet, alongside the general interest in doing online surveys from this age group.

Again, these answers show that some children and young people simply do not wish to engage and give their views, with a fifth of those completing the full survey and a not dissimilar percentage of respondents to the simpler version giving this answer. There are undoubtedly ways to tackle some of the reasons for this and improve this response and we will do our best to maximise participation, but we must also respect this finding and behave accordingly.

Responses to question "Q4. How would you like to answer questions?"



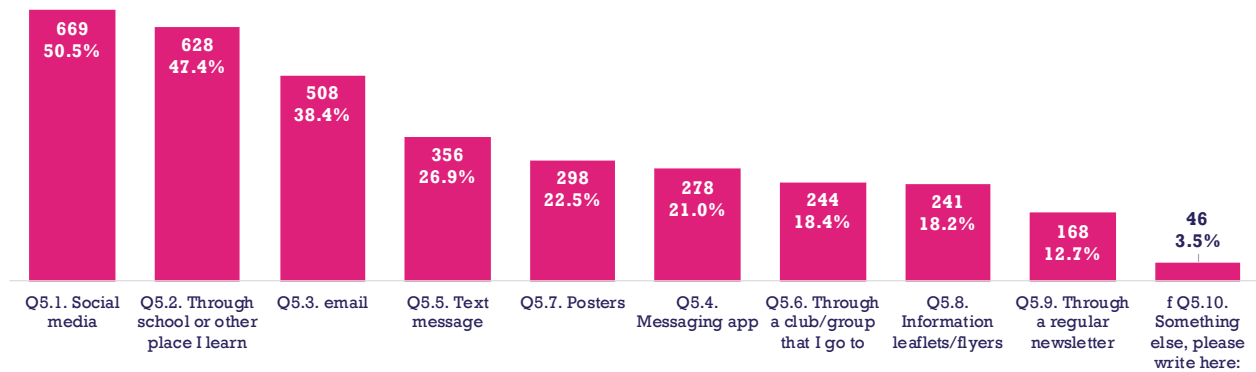
3.4.2. Q5 – What's the best way to tell you about opportunities for you to tell us what you think?

This question was designed to identify the preferred methods for engaging with children and young people about opportunities for them to get involved and share their views. The most selected response was "Social Media" with half of the full survey respondents choosing this option. Social media is widely used by young people and this method offers convenience and control to the user about the subjects and quantity of information they interact with. This subject is explored in more detail later in this report.

Another popular response was "through school or other place I learn" This option allows children and young people to rely on their trusted adults in these institutions to bring opportunities to their attention, building on the findings earlier in this report. The least popular option was "through a regular newsletter" with only less than one in eight respondents selecting this.

Full Survey

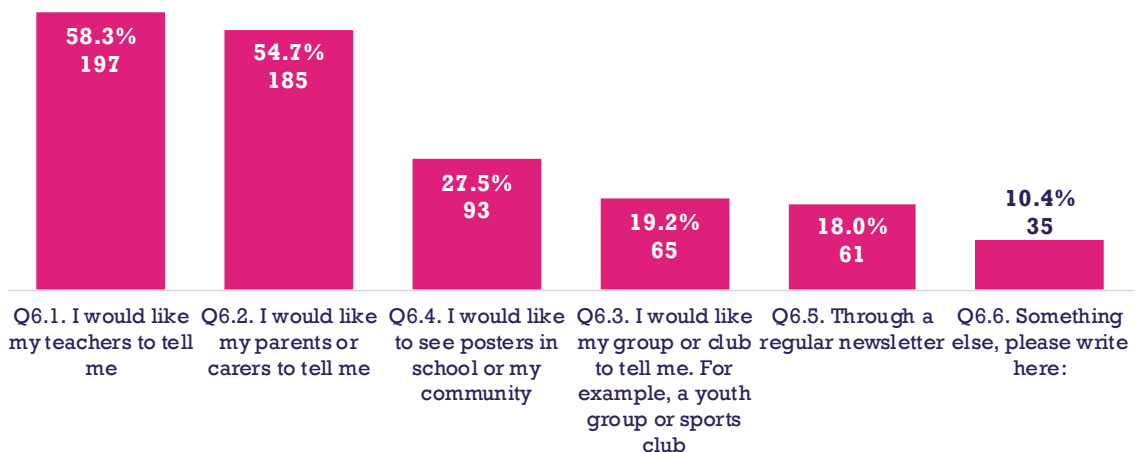
Responses to question "Q5. What's the best way to tell you about opportunities for you to tell us what you think?"



In the simpler version of this question, the most popular methods for receiving information involve trusted adults/professionals delivering this information to them either at school or at home. Social media was not offered as an option in this survey, as it was aimed predominantly at children below the legal age to engage with such applications, and although we are aware that younger children do use social media it is not an avenue we can or should explore to engage directly with them (although we can look at this for family engagement).

Simpler Survey

Responses to Q5. What are the best ways to tell you about the questions we have?

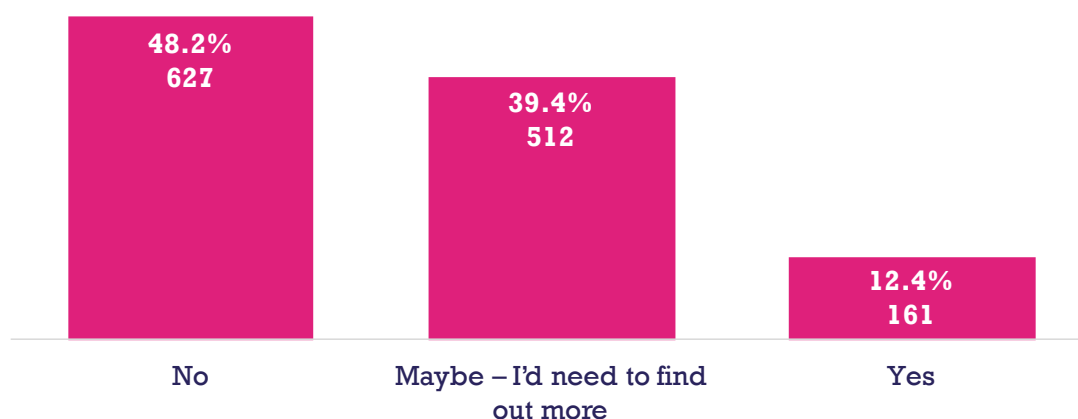


3.4.3. Q6 – Would you be interested in joining our Norfolk young people's group?

Question 6 was included to gauge the level of potential interest from children and young people in joining a 'panel' of Norfolk young people that would be set up to directly engage with children and young people across the county. We didn't include much information in this question, as this would have made the question too long and we just wanted a 'flavour' of whether there was enough interest to pursue this idea.

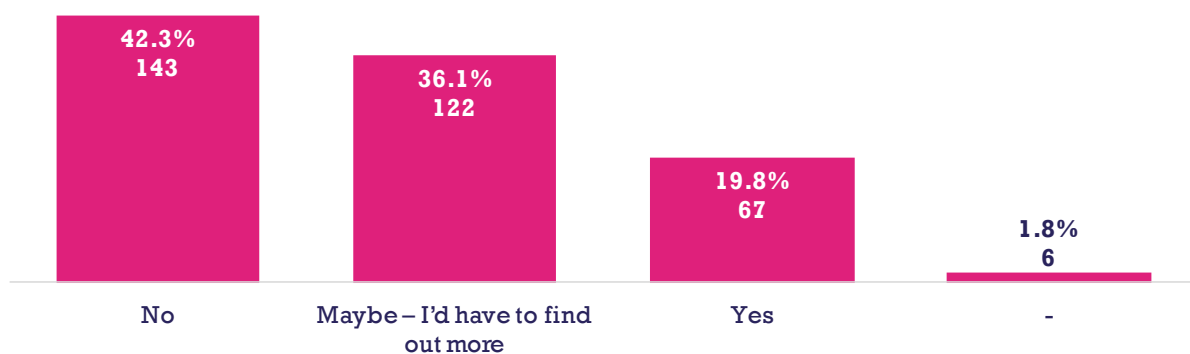
Full Survey

Responses to question "Q6. Would you be interested in joining our Norfolk young people's group?"



Simple Survey

Responses to question "Q6. Would you be interested in joining our Norfolk young people's panel?"



The results show that the majority of children and young people who answered were not immediately interested in such a panel based on the principle of it alone, probably understandably as we didn't tell them much, and nearly half responded that they would not be interested. There were, however, nearly 130 children and young people who said 'Yes' and over 600 who might be interested given further information, which indicates the idea is worth exploring further.

The only clear difference between responses to this question is in the age of the responders who selected 'Yes' and 'Maybe' compared to 'No'. The percentage of over 16s who selected 'Yes' (22% average) or 'Maybe' (47% average) is higher than those aged under 16 (11.9% & 32.3% respectively). This was reversed in the 'No' responses, with the average percentages much higher for under 16s (53% average) and lower over 16 (30.5% average). This is perhaps reflective of increased social awareness and perceived understanding and interest that may develop with age, and the forming of opinions and ideals that young people feel passionate about. This is further evidence of the need to support and educate younger children to empower them to feel able to share their voice on issues in their lives, and to look at different ways of engaging them that speak to their interests.

We can infer from this result that the development of a new panel for engagement opportunities may not be the most effective and efficient method for reaching significant numbers of children and young people across all ages. This method would, however, potentially be effective in finding children and young people keen on being involved and perhaps useful for targeted work with small cohorts (something that already exists across a number of dedicated children and young people groups operating in Norfolk).

Recommendations

- Online surveys are the most popular engagement option with young people, but do need extra effort to produce good results. When developing this method, consider:
 - Support and encouragement for young people to fully engage, particularly younger children
 - Accompanying information including the who, what, why and how and some information around the subject
 - Accessibility, particularly for those without easy access to the internet
 - How to follow up, if necessary, with more in depth work with children and young people to understand the 'why' behind the 'what', possibly through focus groups or a spot on an established group's agenda. The Participation Workers Network can help you engage with existing young people's groups, contact cypsa.participation@norfolk.gov.uk for more information
- Consider engaging with children and young people through schools and other educational settings. This can have multiple benefits, including:
 - time already set aside for learning
 - support, encouragement and promotion through established relationships
 - participation can contribute towards the active citizenship curriculum
 - equitable access to internet-based options for all children and young people
 - a popular option with younger children

- Online meetings are not a popular option and should be avoided as a main avenue for engagement, for the time being at least. They can have their uses, however, for smaller focus groups where young people have volunteered to participate or to help young people engage 'in person' where barriers exist to attending physical events.
- Respect that not all children and young people want to engage and give their views or may disengage part way through an exercise, for a range of reasons. Although encouragement and support can and should be offered, their rights should be appreciated and respected at every stage.
- Social media should be explored as a way to tell young people about engagement opportunities, but preparation is key to make this a successful route, including building relationships so that your invitations are trusted. See s.4.6 'Social media' for more information around this.
- Newsletters are an unpopular option with children and young people, but more popular with professionals and potentially parents. Engagement opportunities can be publicised this way for them to pass on. A collaborative professionals' newsletter 'The Power of Participation' is produced by Norfolk County Council on behalf of partners and can be accessed and signed up to at [Power of Participation newsletter - Norfolk County Council](#). Contributions are very welcome.
- The concept of a young persons' reference group or panel should be explored further. There is potential to use such a group, alongside wider participation activity, to focus on co-production and consultation on specific initiatives and strategic decision-making and to delve deeper into the 'why' of quantitative findings.

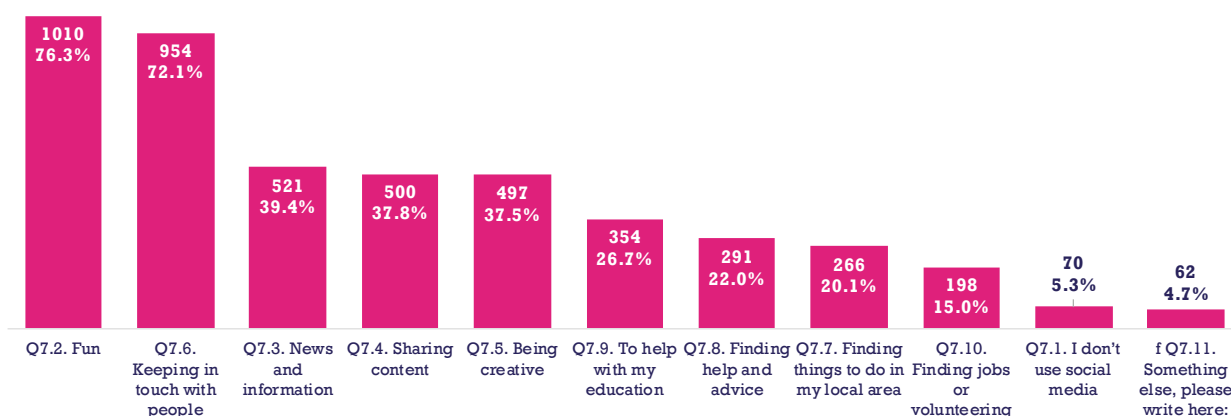


3.5. Social Media

This section, which was only included in the full survey, was designed to gather information about how young people use social media and whether social media is a good forum for engagement, building on the indicator in Q5 that gave social media as the top choice for ways to tell young people about engagement opportunities.

3.5.1. Q7 – What do you use social media for?

Responses to question "Q7. What do you use social media for?"



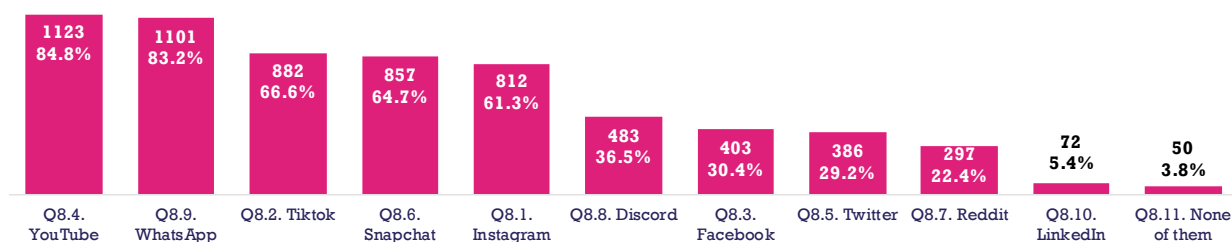
The main use of social media highlighted here is for 'fun', showing that young people associate their social media use with positive and entertaining content, as many people of all ages do. 'Fun' is closely followed by 'Keeping in touch with people', which may reflect not only peer relationships, but that social media apps are increasingly used by people of all ages, providing an accessible way to keep in touch with family. One of the more surprising findings is that only a fifth of respondents said they use social media to find things to do in their local area. This response will need to be looked into further as to why this is the case and what, if anything, we can or should do to increase this.

There is a sharp drop in the percentage figures (by nearly half) for responses after these top two reasons. It is in these other categories where CYP SA partner organisations may naturally find ourselves in terms of what we produce for social media content. It may be of benefit for organisations wanting to increase the level of interaction with young people through their social media output to try to build more of a relationship with potential users and come up with some fun, shareable content. This concept is backed up by young people taking part in our follow up workshop, who suggested that organisations should use social media in the same way as young people do, by sharing content that is interesting and engaging before advertising or asking for things from their audience. They also told us that one of the reasons social media is so popular is that young people have control over what and when they view, share and interact with.

There is scope and opportunity for some genuine co-production and collaboration with young people on how to grow a presence, produce and share content effectively. Our workshop suggested that young people should be included as experts in the developing of social media profiles and can help spread/share information with peers. This has been attempted previously for the Norfolk County Council #WeGotThis campaign during the pandemic, with limited success, but is definitely worth revisiting with a fresh approach outside pandemic restrictions.

3.5.2. Q8 – Which social media platforms do you use?

Responses to question "Q8. Which social media platforms do you use?"



The leaders here are YouTube and WhatsApp, followed by TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram with not many percentage points between these three platforms. It is clear that video/visual content is more appealing than text-based content for young people when selecting what to engage with, and highly interactive applications such as WhatsApp and Snapchat are also popular (Facebook less so), backing up the findings from Q7 around keeping in touch being a top reason for using social media.

When looking at social media platform use and age differences we have only compared and considered young people who are of the required age to use social media (13+ years old). With the Instagram platform there is a significant increase in use in older young people, with the average selection of this platform for those aged 13 and 14 at 64% compared with over 80% of young people 15 or over. There is a similar trend with Facebook, where nearly three quarters of young people aged over 18 said they use this platform, compared to just over a third of young people aged 13-17. The most popular platforms for young people aged 13 and 14 were: YouTube (selected by 85.9% 13yr and 87.6% 14yr), WhatsApp (selected by 83.6% 13yr and 85.8% 14yr), TikTok (selected by 70% 13yr and 76.5% 14yr) and SnapChat (selected by 68.2% 13yr and 71.2% 14yr).

There are also some large differences when comparing preferred platforms between genders. Instagram was selected by two thirds of young people who identify as girl/woman compared with just over half of those identifying as boy/man. Over three quarters of young people who identify as non-binary selected this platform.

There is a similar difference with Tiktok, where nearly three quarters of girls/women selected this platform compared with less than two thirds of boys/men, with non-binary young people coming in the middle at just over 70%. The most popular platform for boys/men was YouTube, selected in 89.5% responses.

This information can help organisations identify where is most efficient to allocate time and energy in terms of social media output for the attention of young people in Norfolk. Social media is popular with many young people as a space to spend time online, however this may not translate into meaningful communication between them and an organisation. As we have learnt in previous questions, young people mainly use social media for fun and social interaction, not as a main source of receiving information. Furthermore, a platform is only popular and useful as a tool for an organisation if that organisation's content/output is followed and/or viewed by the young people it is designed for.

The nature of each platform and what can be achieved with them is another careful consideration for an organisation when evaluating each platform and its merits, alongside the resources available to produce, maintain, manage and follow up on content and audience interactions.

3.5.3. Q9 – What makes you want to follow a person or organisation on social media?



'Fun' is again the main factor as you would expect, as it is the main reason that young people use social media in the first instance. This is closely followed by the content being interesting/important to the young person. This is a theme we have seen in earlier questions as to reasons young people would take part or not in an engagement, although a slight contradiction to previous findings that young people don't use social media as much for news and information. This will need further unpacking with young people.

The response "They talk about what's interesting/important to me" generated some substantial differences when responses are filtered by age. Young people aged 13-14 selected this option on average in just under two thirds of responses, compared to over four fifths of 15 – 18+ year olds. This further highlights that

the understanding of and/or interest in a topic or content is vital to the level of engagement. Older young people seem to value this more highly, perhaps due to the greater social awareness and understanding/experience of wider topics that comes with growing up.

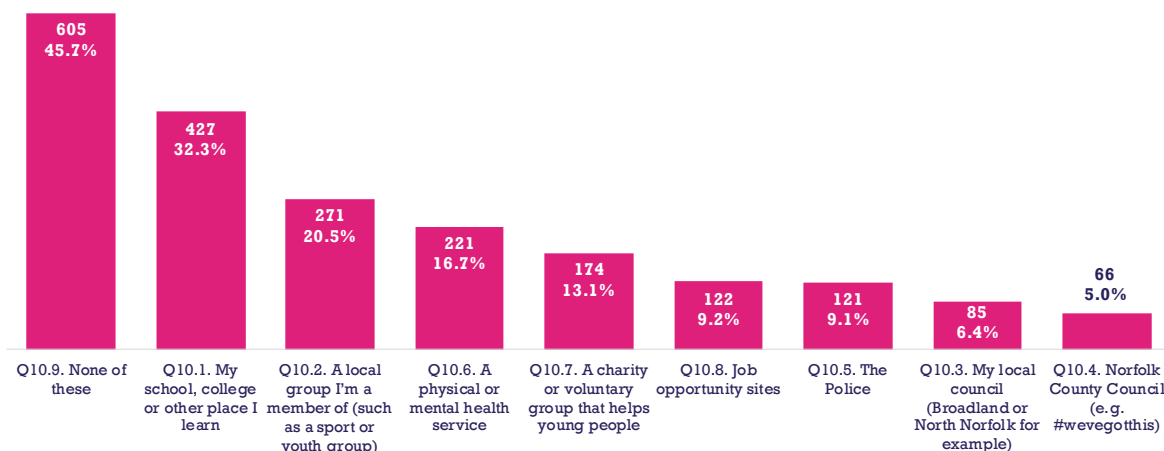
There is also a substantial difference in response to this same option when compared by gender identifiers. Young people identifying as boy/man and girl/woman selected this option on average in two thirds of responses, compared with 80% of responses from those identifying as non-binary. This may also be an indicator of the influence of life experiences on the value placed on certain reasons for following a person or organisation.

The establishment of the tone, style and design of content that an organisation uses will be key to the decisions young people make as to whether they will follow, subscribe or watch. A theme from the 'Something else' category that emerged as another reason to engage with a particular provider of content on social media was knowing the provider. Our follow up workshop also told us that the use of trusted adults/professionals as a link into engagement work is key, as young people will feel secure that what they are told will be the truth, which creates a more open environment for meaningful engagement. This is applicable to wider engagement activity but also particularly relevant to social media, as trusted professionals with established profiles and followers could introduce new content providers or share content on their behalf.

3.5.4. Q10 – Do you follow any of these organisations on social media?

Question 10 aimed to gather some insight on the levels of engagement across existing social media platforms for key organisations across Norfolk that work with children and young people.

Responses to question "Q10. Do you follow any of these organisations on social media?"



The most common response was "None of these", a disappointing but possibly not unexpected outcome. Where organisations are followed, the most common selection was for learning establishments and then local groups that young

people are a member of. Of the statutory agencies, physical and mental health services are followed by the most young people, with local authorities coming a fairly clear last.

There was a substantial difference in the selection of “My school, college or other place I learn” when filtered by age. Young people aged 13-14 selected this option in under a quarter of responses, compared with nearly half of those aged 15 – 18+ . The split falls roughly on the change between lower and upper education, with 13 and 14 year olds mostly being in years 8 and 9 and 15–18+ year olds found in year 10 up to college age. Year 10 is when students usually begin their GCSE and other examined/assessed courses and this may call for greater interaction and communication between an institution and the student.

This data highlights the difficult task of harnessing the potential of social media as a tool for reaching and engaging large numbers of young people, particularly for organisations whose content could be seen as ‘dry’ and uninteresting compared to other content providers. There does, however, appear to be some potential to reach young people through their places of learning, perhaps through well placed introductions and shared content, and there is some scope to appeal to young people on issues they find important, by making the content relevant, engaging and (appropriately) entertaining.

Recommendations

- Social media is a really important part of many young people’s lives. Where social media is to be used as an engagement platform, for publicising or carrying out participation opportunities, the following should be considered:
 - How a trusting relationship can be built with children and young people prior to making a ‘request’ of them – including making links via collaboration with existing trusted online relationships
 - How content can be made fun and engaging
 - How young people can be directly involved in the co-production and promotion of content and profiles
 - How different platforms can be used to reach different groups of young people
 - The resources available to build, maintain and grow a social media following
- Enabling young people who don’t or can’t access social media to engage with participation opportunities is really important. By exploiting a wide range of engagement mechanisms, equity of opportunity can be optimised and all young people can be, and feel, included and their views valued.

4. Developing and delivering My Norfolk, My Voice

4.1. Our principles

The multi-agency Stakeholder Engagement and Insight (SEI) subgroup of CYPSEA worked together during 2022 to establish the priorities for this survey and develop a set of key principles for what we wanted the project to answer, these were:

1. What are the most effective methods/platforms through which to engage with children and young people?
2. What are the most effective times and places for engagement?
3. What do children and young people want to be engaged about?

We then built on these principles to establish specific areas we wanted to gather the views of children and young people on, these were:

- **Incentives and motivators** – what works and why?
- **Barriers** – what stops a child or young person from engaging?
- **Channels/platforms/locations** – where are the most effective, accessible and valued places for engagement?
- **When and how often** – when is the right time to engage? How much is too much?
- **Interest** - what areas are children and young people most interested in talking about?
- **Establishing a young person's panel** – is there interest? Could it be useful?

We then looked at whether we actually needed to ask these questions, or whether existing insight existed to provide the information, removing the need to revisit topics and making good use of work already carried out. We established that although there was some research in this area, it concentrated mostly on methodologies around engaging children and young people once you had them as an audience rather than looking at the principles of engagement itself, and we felt we could very much add value in this area by progressing the work.

With these principles and areas now established, the SEI group could begin the task of developing how this information could be obtained from as many children and young people in Norfolk as possible.

Learning from this stage

- Developing and agreeing a small number of key overarching principles that set out what you want your engagement to achieve, and referring to these throughout the project, helps keep the work focused and avoids 'mission drift'.
- For collaborative exercises, agreed key principles also help keep all partners' interests at the heart of the work when the actual development is being led by one of the collaborating organisations.
- Establishing whether the answers to your principle questions exist already in part or full can help reduce unnecessary work, alongside reducing requests to children, young people and/or families to repeatedly provide information we already have. A good start to this is checking the CYPsA Insight Library, contact cypsa.participation@norfolk.gov.uk for more information)

4.2. Developing the survey

At the earliest stage we knew the survey would only work if we involved young people in developing it from the start. We took our principles and areas of interest to the Broadland Youth Advisory Board and the DRAGONs (quality assurance group of young people with SEND) and, through some focused working groups, asked them how best to go about it.

The use of an online survey was chosen due to its potential reach a large number of children and young people, and the working groups gave us the following guidance around format and delivery:

- Use multiple choice questions wherever possible.
- Do not use too many questions – no more than 15 - 20.
- Make it clear who this is for, what it is about and why it matters.
- Make the language of the survey as accessible as possible.
- It would help to have some support to answer the questions.
- It would be good to be able to answer the questions in time we already have set aside.

We also spoke at some length with large national organisations with expertise in engaging with and gaining insight from children and young people at a significant scale, including The Children's Commissioner and #BeeWell. Their main advice was to start to develop a relationship with children and young people, use established trusted relationships with professionals to reach them, and ensure a 'You Said, We Did' approach was embedded so that participants could see the difference their voices were making and would be encouraged to participate in an ongoing way.

Learning from this stage

- The development of the style, format and methodology of an engagement should be guided wherever possible by members of the engagement's target audience to ensure relevance and accessibility and therefore maximum participation.
- As well as being easy to engage with, the exercise must be understood by those taking part. Take time to answer who is seeking engagement, why, why it matters and what difference it will make. If you struggle to answer this, go back to your principles and redesign these if necessary.
- Learn from others wherever possible. Speak to experts in the field of participation or the audience you want to interact with, they can offer invaluable tips for success and are usually more than happy to help – you are talking to them about what they are passionate about, after all.

4.3. Designing the survey

Accessibility was at the heart of the design of the survey, with the aim being to enable as many children and young people as possible to take part, across a wide range of ages and personal circumstances.

We were set the task by our young people's working groups to develop a survey that not only answered our key principles but also met their requirements and needs. This balance was vital to the success of the engagement. Too long, detailed and complex would reduce the level of engagement and completion of the survey. Too little detail and over-simplification could lead to us not gathering the insight to meet our core principles.

Through our young people's working groups and SEI group workshops, we decided to create two surveys, a full survey for older young people (11+) and a simpler, more accessible version for younger children and those with Special Educational Needs (SEN). The reasoning behind this was to gather as much information as possible within the constraints of ensuring maximum participation across all ages and circumstances and we also wanted to explore social media use, which is only applicable to the older age group.

We collaborated with young people and parent carers to simplify the language used in both surveys to be more accessible while still retaining enough detail to give valuable insight. We also secured support from a qualified speech and language therapist, whose input helped us to develop the language used in the surveys.

We developed a set of Widget visuals to use for the simpler survey, which would aid understanding for children and young people with difficulties with text or communicating. Unfortunately, the platform available to us (SmartSurvey) does not support their use, so we were unable to include this aid this time.

The questions for both surveys were multiple choice with additional text spaces for answers not covered in our options. The questions allowed children and young people to make multiple selections and, in accordance with young

people's advice, there were no "hidden" extra branching questions. The full version consisted of 14 questions (including demographics) and the simplified version contained nine.

Once drafted, we asked the DRAGONs to test both versions of the survey, which they kindly did. From their feedback we made some small final amendments and were ready to launch.

Learning from this stage

- The engagement should be developed from the start to be as flexible, simple to follow and convenient as possible, in order to maximise participation. Carefully balance what you need to know with the complexity of your request, as one affects the other.
- If developing questions, the key consideration should be the accessibility of the language used. Can the question be understood for its intended purpose by the audience it is aimed at? If not, does it need changing or what support and guidance is required to enable this understanding?
- Keep to the minimum number of 'asks' of participants as possible to get the information you need. Avoid where possible overcomplicating your engagement with extras such as branching questions and questions that require free text answers.
- Refer back to your principles to keep on track. This really helps when refining the size of your engagement. It is natural for something like a survey to get bigger (too big) to start off with as everyone puts their ideas forward, but refinement is key to a successful, succinct approach.
- Wherever possible, use platforms that enable the use of assistive technology and methods.
- Wherever possible, test your developing and proposed final model/approach with representatives from your target audience. They will identify areas for improvement and help assure accessibility.

4.4. Supporting professionals

The young people who helped us develop the survey and expert professionals we spoke to were clear that the best way to reach as many children and young people as possible is through their existing relationships and contacts with trusted adults that work with them or are in regular contact, so support and encouragement can be provided. Young people also told us that they were more likely to take part in the survey during time already committed, such as lesson or form time at school or college, or at a group they attend. As you will see below, this is echoed throughout the response we received from children and young people.

The SEI group agreed that contacts in schools and colleges should be a priority. The use of citizenship contacts in schools was identified as a unique way to gain access to professionals with a shared interest in the gathering and use of children and young people's voices. We were aiming to create an opportunity

for schools and their citizenship departments to enable their students to take part in active real-world citizenship.

Contact was made with various Norfolk schools and colleges through the NCC Citizenship/PSHE Subject Network. We asked them what would be of most use to them in supporting their students to take part, building on the feedback from the young people's working groups. They told us that resources they could use in groups included a sample lesson plan, some background reading and some slides. These would help them support students to understand the following questions and empower them to take part in the survey:

- Who is asking me these questions?
- Why are they asking me these questions?
- Why is it important that I answer these questions?
- How do I answer these questions?

We also spoke to multi-agency leads specialising in participation through the Participation Workers Network and with parent carer representatives via Family Voice Norfolk, who are active members of the SEI subgroup. Both agreed with the above approach, requesting that resources be made flexible enough to be used by any professionals working with children and young people and by parents, with the aim of informing and empowering children and young people to take part.

We developed a resource pack containing:

- Written guidance and information, including the practicalities of completing the survey and an email link for further support if needed
- A short set of slides for professionals to use in sessions with children and young people
- Content to use on social media and in newsletters, including QR codes to enable young people to take part on their phones
- Learning from this stage
- Collaboration with the trusted adults in children and young people's lives is key. Engage with them as early as possible, share what you are doing and ask them what would help them to support children and young people to take part. The Stakeholder Engagement and Insight CYPSA subgroup and Participation Workers Network can provide useful links into these networks. Contact **cypsa.participation@norfolk.gov.uk** to find out more.
- Developing a set of resources for adults to use with children and young people can make participation more likely and easier for everyone. These can include publicity packs with social media/newsletter ideas and things like QR codes, so people can help spread the word through their networks. If applicable, think about how parents might use these, as well as professionals.

4.5. Delivering the survey

My Norfolk, My Voice went live and open for children and young people to complete on 31 October 2022, closing 31 December 2022. The timing of the survey was based on feedback from schools and other professionals that, for schools, the second part of the autumn term is a good time to engage with students as they are settled into the year and it avoids exam preparation time. Professionals also fed back that surveys with a short open window (under a month) are difficult to fit in to their work with children and young people, and a longer window enables flexibility in their approaches to completion, with a greater chance of engagement.

The survey was launched with a press release which was featured in the Eastern Daily Press on November 15, 2022. This was accompanied by a social media campaign on NCC's platforms, with social media and newsletter resources also distributed to partner organisations so they could help with publicity.

Our contacts with schools, colleges, participation leads and parent carer organisations were sent the resource pack and a dedicated email address set up to provide any additional support or information that would help people to take part.

Although the survey was targeted through professionals working with children and young people, it was open to anyone aged 5-25 to take part and hosted on a public page of the NCC website, alongside information about CYPSEA and Flourish.

During the period that My Norfolk, My Voice was open, a series of encouraging reminders and social media posts were sent out across our contacts, including the schools 'eCourier' e-newsletter and a small number of paid for Facebook advertisements. In total, our Facebook campaign was viewed 28,000 times, with the link to the survey being followed 559 times.

My Norfolk, My Voice was also picked up by Radio Norfolk, who visited Northgate High School on November 30, 2022 to talk to students taking part in the survey. This was broadcast on December 15 2022, and featured students talking about the opportunity to have their voices heard and what they hoped would come of it, which included making it easier for children and young people to influence decisions being made in Norfolk.

In total the survey received 1660 full responses (1322 full version, 338 simplified version). The survey also received 336 partial responses that we have not included in our analysis as they provide minimal useful information and could potentially skew our findings.

Learning from this stage

- Within reason, make the window of completion/engagement with your exercise as long as possible and/or provide as much notice as possible. This enables professionals working with children and young people to identify and timetable space to take part, whether it is completing a survey, arranging a focus group or something else you are requesting.

- Involve Communications colleagues at an early stage and create a ‘comms plan’ for your engagement. Decide your best channels of publicity and use contacts within the media if you want your exercise to have a large reach. If you can involve young people directly in this then it is more likely to be picked up, as the story is more interesting to media outlets.
- Providing an email address for queries helps reduce potential barriers to engagement and also assists in building friendly relationships.
- Regular reminders and updates via your chosen platforms can help keep your engagement in people’s minds and increase participation.

4.6. How we carried out the analysis

Data was taken from all respondents and analysed objectively to answer key questions about engaging with children and young people. Initial analysis and a report of headline figures were shared in January 2023 with key stakeholders including the Stakeholder Engagement and Insight Group, participation leads and CYPsA. This gave a timely overview of what children and young people had told us. The final and fuller analysis in this report looks in more detail at the responses.

To find out more about why children and young people responded the way they did, we held a small workshop in February 2023 to ask young people why they thought we received these answers. This will be followed up by more work with young people to gain a deeper understanding of the findings (see ‘Next Steps’).

Learning from this stage

- Providing a timely ‘initial findings’ document provides colleagues with a chance to digest the headlines and piques interest for the main report
- Asking key demographic information (bearing length and complexity in mind) enables analysis of differences in response from different groups of young people, enabling consideration of how to engage them going forward
- Holding follow up workshops with representatives of your target audience helps deepen understanding of the results from your engagement
- Involve colleagues who will be analysing the output from the exercise from the start and involve professional analysts if you can. Look ahead at the analysis of potential answers/outputs and ask what will this give you? What can be done with the information you receive? Will this help you answer your principle questions?

5. Next steps

We hope this report will be useful to a wide range of people planning and undertaking engagement and participation activity with children and young people. Alongside using the recommendations to shape individual organisations' activity, the SEI subgroup of CYPSEA will be taking the recommendations forward at a system level through actions including:

- Feeding back to as many children and young people as possible who took part, so they can start to see the difference their voices will be making
- Disseminating the report across our professional networks and also making it accessible via Norfolk County Council's website.
- Speaking to children and young people to further understand the reasons behind the answers given in the survey and look at how we can improve our engagement practice.
- Build a more formal network of 'trusted adults', the professionals working with children and young people in Norfolk, to collaborate with on future engagements across the children and young people system
- Creating joined-up, collaborative engagement opportunities across partner organisations to reduce duplication and the 'ask' of children and young people and to ensure activities meet the needs of as many organisations as possible
- Consider the best way to involve interested children and young people in a 'panel' or group to directly feed into decision-making
- Develop a suite of participation best practice resources for professionals, including a library of local and national insight reports
- Work with colleagues and young people to look at how we develop a relatable, effective and engaging social media presence that will appeal to young people

6. Thanks and acknowledgements

We firstly want to thank all the children and young people who took the time to complete My Norfolk, My Voice. Your views will help us get better at listening to you and acting on what you tell us. Thanks for your time, thought and honesty – we look forward to keeping the conversation going!

We couldn't have made this survey as good as it was without the advice and help of the young people from the Broadland Youth Advisory Board (YAB) and the DRAGONS, who gave their time, effort and expertise to co-produce and test the survey with us. We must also thank Olivia, our Speech and Language specialist, who kindly worked with us to make the wording of the surveys as accessible as possible, and Emma, Amy and Francesca from the Children's Commissioner and #BeeWell for your helpful advice.

We would also like to thank our schools' colleagues, who helped us develop the approach and resources that so many trusted adults used to engage children and young people with the survey. Thank you Simon, Louise and Ed from Northgate High School and Dereham Sixth Form College, Thorpe St Andrew School and Sixth Form and Wymondham High School.

Finally, our sincere thanks to all the professionals and other trusted adults who took time in your busy days to encourage and support so many children and young people to take part.

CYPSA Stakeholder Engagement & Insight subgroup

7. Further Information

If you would like to find out more about My Norfolk, My Voice or are interested in the work of the CYPSA SEI subgroup, please contact **cypsa.participation@norfolk.gov.uk**

8. Learning and Recommendations summary

Recommendations from the findings of My Norfolk, My Voice

Understanding demographics

- Consider the age groups you want to engage with and target these. For both the older and younger age groups, a more specialist approach may be needed, with older young people potentially more open to direct engagement and younger children probably needing additional support and encouragement to engage. A generic approach across age ranges may not reach these groups effectively.
- Where possible, and to be balanced with the above recommendation, use a single set of accessible questions. This enables more accurate analysis of all participants' insight and reduces prejudice based on perceptions of capacity linked to age or circumstances. There is a risk that younger children and those with SEN may find this more challenging and require extra support and older young people may find a simple approach patronising, so how the exercise is explained and publicised is key.
- A higher number of children and young people completing the survey self-identified as having a disability than generally understood data would indicate. All engagement should cater for those with physical and learning/communication challenges to maximise engagement. The CYPSEA Stakeholder Engagement and Insight subgroup is working with subject matter experts to produce and link to helpful online resources to aid accessible engagement, and advice and resources can also be found at [Best practice participation guidance for professionals - Norfolk County Council](#) and [Coproduction resources for professionals in Norfolk - Norfolk County Council](#)
- Children and young people could have disabilities that affect both their learning and communication and their mobility. This option should be provided as part of any demographic question where disability status is something you are seeking to understand about your audience.

Getting children and young people interested

- Information, education and support around a topic should be provided before or with an engagement that helps develop understanding or raise awareness of the topic(s) being covered. This will help children and young people to feel empowered to engage (or not) with a piece of work.
- The building of relationships is key to the success of an engagement. When working with children and young people it is vital that they understand:
 - who they are engaging with
 - what the engagement is about
 - why their engagement is important and;
 - how to complete/take part in the engagement

- Demonstrating that engagement will lead to action is vital in the process of building children and young people's trust and confidence that their time and voice are being valued. Treating the engagement as an ongoing conversation can help to do this. Timely updates on the journey of their voice into action will be appreciated and help develop repeat engagement.
- The development of relationships with trusted adults already involved in children and young people's lives is a positive way to increase understanding and interest, through providing guidance and information about an engagement to help adults encourage and support successful participation.
- Younger children, who are less motivated by the interest in and importance of the topic, may benefit from specific separate engagement work to get them involved in accessible, interactive and fun (but still educational) ways.
- Additional support may be needed to help children and young people with disabilities to engage with your exercise. Consider practical assistance (e.g. transport, parking, venue accessibility, aids) and also providing different ways for them to express their views. Co-producing these ways with children and young people with lived experience and parent carers as part of the development process is advised for best results.
- Long, difficult or complicated questions can be really off-putting to children and young people (as for many people of all ages). Keep your engagement as short, simple and focused as possible

Talking to children and young people about what they're interested in

- Involving children and young people with lived experience in the areas you are interested in hearing their voices can lead to really effective participation, as they are more likely to be motivated and passionate about discussing the subject. For those who are less interested/informed, information and education on the subject along with support to understand it can improve engagement.
- Where a subject may be worrying or scary to children or young people, careful consideration needs to be given to how this is approached. Running engagement events in collaboration with trusted adults can help mitigate negative effects, as support is on hand from people who know the individuals. Balanced information can also help demystify a topic, along with supported access to additional advice and help. Open surveys can be challenging for sensitive topics, as it is not possible to control who accesses them, or support them to cope if affected.
- Talking to younger children about wider topics outside their own direct life experience and interests will require additional work to inform and engage them on the subject(s). Consideration should be given as to what value engaging this group on such subjects will give to both the results and the children themselves.

How children and young people would like to get involved

- Online surveys are the most popular engagement option with young people, but do need extra effort to produce good results. When developing this method, consider:
 - Support and encouragement for young people to fully engage, particularly younger children
 - Accompanying information including the who, what, why and how and some information around the subject
 - Accessibility, particularly for those without easy access to the internet
 - How to follow up, if necessary, with more in depth work with children and young people to understand the 'why' behind the 'what', possibly through focus groups or a spot on an established group's agenda. The Participation Workers Network can help you engage with existing young people's groups, contact **cypsa.participation@norfolk.gov.uk** for more information
- Consider engaging with children and young people through schools and other educational settings. This can have multiple benefits, including:
 - time already set aside for learning
 - support, encouragement and promotion through established relationships
 - participation can contribute towards the active citizenship curriculum
 - equitable access to internet-based options for all children and young people
- a popular option with younger children
- Online meetings are not a popular option and should be avoided as a main avenue for engagement, for the time being at least. They can have their uses, however, for smaller focus groups where young people have volunteered to participate or to help young people engage 'in person' where barriers exist to attending physical events.
- Respect that not all children and young people want to engage and give their views or may disengage part way through an exercise, for a range of reasons. Although encouragement and support can and should be offered, their rights should be appreciated and respected at every stage.
- Social media should be explored as a way to tell young people about engagement opportunities, but preparation is key to make this a successful route, including building relationships so that your invitations are trusted. See s.4.6 'Social media' for more information around this.
- Newsletters are an unpopular option with children and young people, but more popular with professionals and potentially parents. Engagement opportunities can be publicised this way for them to pass on. A collaborative professionals' newsletter 'The Power of Participation' is produced by Norfolk County Council on behalf of partners and can be accessed and signed up to at [Power of Participation newsletter - Norfolk County Council](#). Contributions are very welcome.

- The concept of a young persons' reference group or panel should be explored further. There is potential to use such a group, alongside wider participation activity, to focus on co-production and consultation on specific initiatives and strategic decision-making and to delve deeper into the 'why' of quantitative findings.

Using Social Media

- Social media is a really important part of many young people's lives. Where social media is to be used as an engagement platform, for publicising or carrying out participation opportunities, the following should be considered:
 - How a trusting relationship can be built with children and young people prior to making a 'request' of them – including making links via collaboration with existing trusted online relationships
 - How content can be made fun and engaging
 - How young people can be directly involved in the co-production and promotion of content and profiles
 - How different platforms can be used to reach different groups of young people
 - The resources available to build, maintain and grow a social media following
- Enabling young people who don't or can't access social media to engage with participation opportunities is really important. By exploiting a wide range of engagement mechanisms, equity of opportunity can be optimised and all young people can be, and feel, included and their views valued.

What we learned from developing and delivering My Norfolk, My Voice

First steps

- Developing and agreeing a small number of key overarching principles that set out what you want your engagement to achieve, and referring to these throughout the project, helps keep the work focused and avoids 'mission drift'.
- For collaborative exercises, agreed key principles also help keep all partners' interests at the heart of the work when the actual development is being led by one of the collaborating organisations.
- Establishing whether the answers to your principle questions exist already in part or full can help reduce unnecessary work, alongside reducing requests to children, young people and/or families to repeatedly provide information we already have. A good start to this is checking the CYPsA Insight Library, contact cypsa.participation@norfolk.gov.uk for more information)

Developing the survey

- The development of the style, format and methodology of an engagement should be guided wherever possible by members of the engagement's target audience to ensure relevance and accessibility and therefore maximum participation.
- As well as being easy to engage with, the exercise must be understood by those taking part. Take time to answer who is seeking engagement, why, why it matters and what difference it will make. If you struggle to answer this, go back to your principles and redesign these if necessary.
- Learn from others wherever possible. Speak to experts in the field of participation or the audience you want to interact with, they can offer invaluable tips for success and are usually more than happy to help – you are talking to them about what they are passionate about, after all.

Designing the survey

- The engagement should be developed from the start to be as flexible, simple to follow and convenient as possible, in order to maximise participation. Carefully balance what you need to know with the complexity of your request, as one affects the other.
- If developing questions, the key consideration should be the accessibility of the language used. Can the question be understood for its intended purpose by the audience it is aimed at? If not, does it need changing or what support and guidance is required to enable this understanding?
- Keep to the minimum number of 'asks' of participants as possible to get the information you need. Avoid where possible overcomplicating your engagement with extras such as branching questions and questions that require free text answers.
- Refer back to your principles to keep on track. This really helps when refining the size of your engagement. It is natural for something like a survey to get bigger (too big) to start off with as everyone puts their ideas forward, but refinement is key to a successful, succinct approach.
- Wherever possible, use platforms that enable the use of assistive technology and methods.
- Wherever possible, test your developing and proposed final model/approach with representatives from your target audience. They will identify areas for improvement and help assure accessibility.

Supporting professionals

- Collaboration with the trusted adults in children and young people's lives is key. Engage with them as early as possible, share what you are doing and ask them what would help them to support children and young people to take part. The Stakeholder Engagement and Insight CYPSA subgroup and Participation Workers Network can provide useful links into these networks. Contact cypsa.participation@norfolk.gov.uk to find out more.

- Developing a set of resources for adults to use with children and young people can make participation more likely and easier for everyone. These can include publicity packs with social media/newsletter ideas and things like QR codes, so people can help spread the word through their networks. If applicable, think about how parents might use these, as well as professionals.

Delivering the survey

- Within reason, make the window of completion/engagement with your exercise as long as possible and/or provide as much notice as possible. This enables professionals working with children and young people to identify and timetable space to take part, whether it is completing a survey, arranging a focus group or something else you are requesting.
- Involve Communications colleagues at an early stage and create a 'comms plan' for your engagement. Decide your best channels of publicity and use contacts within the media if you want your exercise to have a large reach. If you can involve young people directly in this then it is more likely to be picked up, as the story is more interesting to media outlets.
- Providing an email address for queries helps reduce potential barriers to engagement and also assists in building friendly relationships.
- Regular reminders and updates via your chosen platforms can help keep your engagement in people's minds and increase participation.

Carrying out the analysis

- Providing a timely 'initial findings' document provides colleagues with a chance to digest the headlines and piques interest for the main report
- Asking key demographic information (bearing length and complexity in mind) enables analysis of differences in response from different groups of young people, enabling consideration of how to engage them going forward
- Holding follow up workshops with representatives of your target audience helps deepen understanding of the results from your engagement
- Involve colleagues who will be analysing the output from the exercise from the start and involve professional analysts if you can. Look ahead at the analysis of potential answers/outputs and ask what will this give you? What can be done with the information you receive? Will this help you answer your principle questions?

Appendix

Graph Descriptions

Graph 1 - Age of respondents to full and simpler surveys

Bar Chart showing number of respondents to full and simpler survey in age groups U10, 10-12, 13-15, 16-18, 18+. Children U10 mostly completed the simpler survey. 13-15 was the age group with the highest response rate, 18+ had the lowest response rate. This indicates that children U10 mostly completed the simpler survey. 13-15 was the age group with the highest response rate and 18+ had the lowest response rate.

Graph 2 – What best describes you gender identity

Bar chart indicating the number and percentage of respondents in gender categories Girl/Woman, Boy/Man, Non-binary, a gender not listed, prefer not to say. This bar chart indicates that Girl/Woman was the highest response rate with 47.78% followed by Boy/Man with 40.11%. Non-binary returned 4.22%, a gender not listed 3.99% and I prefer not to say 3.91%.

Graph 3 – Ethnic background of respondents

Bar Chart detailing the ethnicity of respondents. The majority of respondents were White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British with 79.98% of all responses. Other ethnicities are represented but in much lower numbers.

Graph 4 – Do you have a disability?

Bar Chart showing disability status of respondents. Non disabled was the highest response rate with 66.88% of responses. 19.58% of respondents identified with a form of disability. The bar chart indicates that a higher-than-average number of respondents to the survey identified as having a disability.

Graph 5 - Responses to question “Q1. What makes you want to tell us what you think about something?”

The bar chart details the highest response rate for “when it is something that interests me” 64.7% followed by “when it is something I think is important” 57.1%. The other results were as follows: “when I feel I can help change things” 36%, “When I get a reward afterwards, like a voucher” 28.7%, “When I can tell you what I think in my own way” 26.1% and “when someone can help me do it” 17.7%.

Graph 6 - Responses to question “Q1. What makes you want to answer questions?”

Bar chart indicates that the most popular response was “the topic is interesting” 60.9% followed by “the topic is important to me” 55.6%. The other options received the following: “someone can help me” 32.5% and “I get a reward afterwards, for example a voucher” 28.4%. 8% of respondents selected to select “something else, please write here”.

Graph 7 - Responses to question “Q2. What makes you not want to tell us what you think about something?”

Bar chart shows the following results: When I don't really understand the topic 50.5%, when the topic is boring 44.8%, when the topic is not important to me 42.6%, when I don't think people will listen to me 40.7%, when the questions are long or difficult 34.4%, when I feel worried or scared about a topic 28.9%, when I think it will take too much time 23.7%, when I can't get to an opportunity because of time or transport 21.1 %, when there is no one to help me do it 18.8% and I don't like sharing my views 16.5%.

Graph 8 - Responses to simpler version question “Q2. What makes you not want to answer questions?”

Bar chart shows the following results: I don't really understand the topic 45.3%, the topic is boring 40.8%, , I don't think people will listen to me 34.3%, the questions are long and difficult 33.4%, I feel worried or scared about a topic 30.2%, when the topic is not important to me 27.5%, when I think it will take too much time 24.9%, I don't like answering questions 23.1% and when there is no one to help me do it 21.3%.

Graph 9 – Responses to Q3 Which topics would you be happy to answer questions about?

Bar chart shows the following results: Mental Health 50.6%, Things to do and places to go 48.7%, Making things better for young people 48.3%, Making things better for people 47.9%, Making things fairer for everyone (e.g ending bullying and discrimination) 47.6%, Learning 47.4%, Relationships such as with my family and friends 47.1%, Growing up 46%, Keeping safe 44.4%, Physical health 42.2%, Getting around (transport) 41.8%, UK wide issues like the environment or homelessness 40.6%, Support for me or my family when we have problems 28.8% and Something else 6%.

Graph 10 - Responses to simpler version question “Q3. Which topics would you like to answer questions about?”

Bar chart shows the following results: My friends 66.9%, My family 64.8%, School 60.7%, Keeping Safe 43.5%, Being Healthy 43.5%, The environment 39.6%, My local community 25.7% and something else 10.7%.

Graph 11 - Responses to question “Q4. How would you like to tell us what you think?”

Bar chart shows the following responses: do an online survey 61%, at school or other place I learn, as part of a class 32.5%, using social media 29.1%, as part of a social event like a BBQ or day out with other young people 28.1%, By email 27.8%, using a messaging app (text or Whatsapp for example) 22.3%, I don't really want to get involved 20.1%, go to a meeting with adults and other young people 19.7%, at a group/club I go to 18.4%, with the help of my parents or carers and take part in an online meeting with adults and other young people 13.4%.

Graph 12 - Responses to simpler version question “Q4. How would you like to answer questions?”

Bar chart shows the following responses: Do a survey at school in class 49.4%, Do an online survey and click on the questions myself 47%, my parents or carers ask me the questions 33.7%, go to a meeting and answer questions 24%, go to an online meeting and answer questions 21%, I don't want to answer questions 17.8% and something else 4.7%.

Graph 13 - Responses to question “Q5. What's the best way to tell you about opportunities for you to tell us what you think?”

Bar chart shows the following responses: social media 50.5%, through school or other place I learn 47.4%, email 38.4%, text message 26.9%, posters 22.5%, messaging app 21%, through a club/group that I go to 18.4%, information leaflets/flyers 18.2%, through a regular newsletter 12.7% and something else 3.5%.

Graph 14 - Responses to simpler survey Q5. What are the best ways to tell you about the questions we have?

Bar chart shows the following responses: I would like my teachers to tell me 58.3%, I would like my parents or carers to tell me 54.7%, I would like to see posters in school or my community 27.5%, I would like my group or club to tell me 19.2%, through a regular newsletter 18% and something else 10.4%.

Graph 15 - Responses to question “Q6. Would you be interested in joining our Norfolk young people's group?”

Bar chart shows the following responses: No 48.2%, Maybe I'd need to find out more 39.4% and Yes 12.4%.

Graph 16 - Responses to simpler survey question “Q6. Would you be interested in joining our Norfolk young people's group?”

Bar chart shows the following responses: No 42.3%, Maybe I'd need to find out more 36.1% and Yes 19.8%.

Graph 17 - Responses to question “Q7. What do you use social media for?”

Bar chart shows the following responses: fun 76.3%, Keeping in touch with people 72.1%, news and information 39.4%, sharing content 37.8%, being creative 37.5%, to help with my education 26.7%, finding help and advice 22%, finding things to do in my local area 20.1%, finding jobs or volunteering 15%, I don't use social media 5.3% and something else 4.7%.

Graph 18 - Responses to question “Q8. Which social media platforms do you use?”

Bar chart shows the following results: YouTube 84.8%, WhatsApp 83.2%, Tiktok 66.6%, Snapchat 64.7%, Instagram 61.3%, Discord 36.5%, Facebook 30.4%, Twitter 29.2%, Reddit 22.4%, LinkedIn 5.4% and None of them 3.8%.

Graph 19 - Responses to question “Q9. What makes you follow a person or organisation on social media?”

Bar chart shows the following results: They're fun 69.3%, They talk about what's interesting/important to me 65.3%, They give me useful information 46.8%, They help me with my life 31.7%, If my friends follow them 19.4% and something else 8.8%.

Graph 20 - Responses to question “Q10. Do you follow any of these organisations on social media?”

Bar chart shows the following results: none of these 45.7%, my school, college or other place I learn 32.3%, a physical or mental health service 16.7%, a charity or voluntary group that helps young people 13.1%, job opportunity sites 9.2%, the police 9.1%, my local council (Broadland or North Norfolk for example) 6.4% and Norfolk County Council 5%.



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