



Youth voices feedback for VVU listening 2021-2022 (October 2021- February 2022)

The Violence & vulnerability unit in Essex are passionate about listening to people’s views around how safe they feel in Essex (especially around Gangs & knife crime) and want to make sure that young people’s views are at the heart and soul of any work commissioned or carried out by the VVU. The listening project enables the VVU to hear directly from young people and helps to make sure that any future work carried out is insightful, driven and targeted to what young people are telling us they need in order to have a safer Essex.

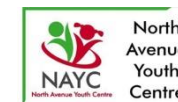
This year the listening took part through detached Youth work and youth centre settings in the 7 priority areas for Essex (Colchester, Tendring, Chelmsford, Basildon, Harlow, Thurrock and Southend). These areas are known to the VVU as having the highest levels of youth violence and are areas that the VVU are working hard to see positive change in.

Questions asked to young people that formed the basis of our listening project and research findings

- Are you worried about being exploited by gangs? Why?
- Do you feel safe when you are out with friends in the local area?
- What makes you feel unsafe?
- What activities would you like to see more available for you to take part in?
- Anything else that would help you feel safer?
- How can we increase safety for young people in these areas?
- Are you worried about being exploited by gangs? Why?
- What helps you to feel safe?
- What would a safe space for young people to hang out look like/ be like?
- How can we make sure there are more people available who you trust and can talk to?
- Google map activity; Where are the crime hotspots in your area?
- Is there anything else you would like to make the VVU aware of?

Which organisations ran the listening project?

District	Areas listening took place	Delivery partner
Colchester	Greenstead	Colchester Homestart
Tendring	Harwich & Dovercourt sixth form, Harwich and Jaywick	Colchester Homestart, Teen Talk
Chelmsford	youth groups in; Springfield, Great Baddow and Galleywood	*SYG in Springfield & Galleywood
	(Crime hotspot info also collected from Melbourne, Moulsham & the town centre)	North Ave youth centre & Essex YMCA
Basildon	Somercoates, Northlands park, Woodlands school,	Bar’n’Bus
Harlow	Xperience centre, Town centre and parks, Great Parndon,	Essex Youth Service
Thurrock	Tilbury (including koala park) & Grays	The Red Balloon Family
Southend	Kursaal Estate & park; Victoria, Victoria station, Skate park, St. Bernard High School, Milton, SYMCA school, storehouse play area, forum/ college, Warrior square	Southend YMCA

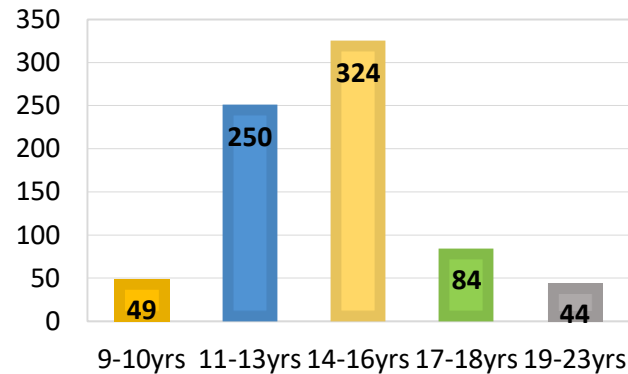


*A massive thank you to Springfield youth group who stepped in when detached partners in Chelmsford were unable to complete this work due to Covid.

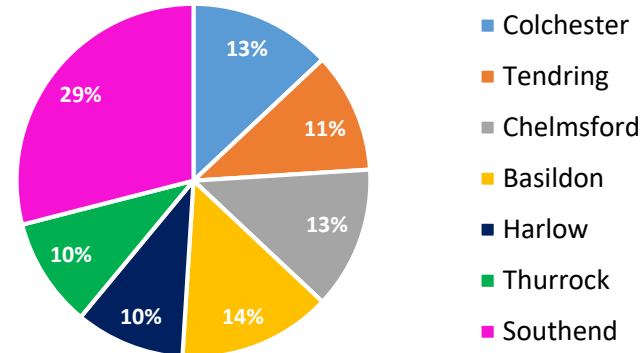
Ages of young people who took part in the listening project

	9yrs	10yrs	11yrs	12yrs	13yrs	14yrs	15yrs	16yrs	17yrs	18yrs	19yrs	20-23yrs	Total
Colchester		26	33	15	9	17							100
Tendring								40	11	15	18		84
Chelmsford			20	22	21	14	10	8	5				100
Basildon					24	28	9	45					106
Harlow		2	8	8	13	14	6	15	5	2			73
Thurrock	2			19	5	2	24	25				1	78
Southend	3	16	16	23	14	25	24	18	44	12	11	14	220
Total	5	44	77	87	86	100	73	151	65	29	29	15	761

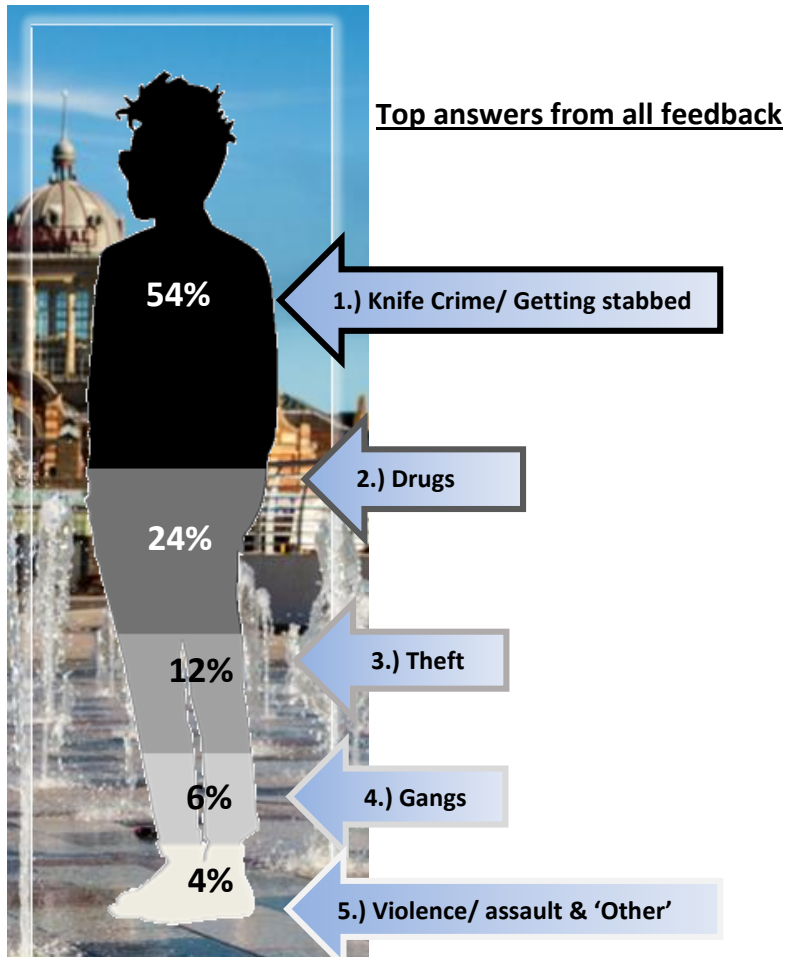
Total ages of young people who took part



Percentage of total young people by District



What is the biggest concern for young people in Essex, Southend & Thurrock regarding youth violence in their local areas?



'Knife crime/ getting stabbed' has been the biggest concern around youth violence in Essex for the last three years.

Over the last three years our reports show that 'Drugs' has become an ever increasing concern for young people in regards to youth violence.

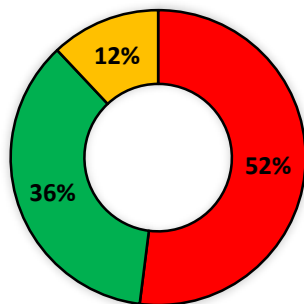
Although the combined results show that 'Knife crime/ getting stabbed' is the overall top concern, each District is different and has its own top concern-

Number one top concern for each District

Colchester: Knife crime/ getting stabbed
Tendring: *Harwich*- Harassment, violence & assault (including sexual assault)
Jaywick- Knife crime/ getting stabbed
Chelmsford: Knife crime/ getting stabbed
Basildon: Knife crime/ getting stabbed
Harlow: Drugs
Thurrock: Knife crime/ getting stabbed
Southend: Knife crime/ getting stabbed

What is the biggest concern for young people regarding youth violence in their local areas? Feedback by District;

<p>Colchester</p>	<p>1.) Knife crime/ getting stabbed 2.) Drugs 3.) Theft</p> <p>4.) Peer Pressure 5.) Assault 6.) Vapes/Smoking/ alcohol</p> <p>All the young people said that ‘drugs play a major factor in the amount of young people carrying knives in Colchester’ All young people said ‘knives are an issue and we are constantly worried to come up against someone carrying’</p>	<p>Harlow</p>	<p>1.) Drugs 2.) Gangs 3.) Knife crime/ getting stabbed</p> <p>Harlow was the only District where ‘Drugs’ was the main top answer. It was also 5 times more common than the next answer</p>
<p>Tendring</p>	<p>Harwich: 1.) Harassment, domestic violence & assault (including sexual assault) 2.) Trespassing 3.) Drugs</p> <p>4.) Online exploitation & grooming 5.) Graffiti, vandalism and theft 6.) Bad driving</p> <p>Harwich is the only area to mention ‘assault’ as the top concern, and the only one not to mention knives at all. (Almost half ‘assault’ answers were specifically about sexual assault). Trespassing was also a very common answer, and one that young people in other Districts didn’t mention at all</p> <p>Jaywick: 1.) Knife crime/ getting stabbed</p> <p>Youth worker ‘Knives are an issue, but may seem more prominent because the knife bin is located just outside the community centre’</p>	<p>Thurrock</p>	<p>1.) Knife crime/ getting stabbed 2.) Theft 3.) Big groups of people</p> <p>4.) Shootings 5.) Being raped</p> <p>The majority of young people in Thurrock mentioned ‘knife crime/getting stabbed’ as the main issue. However, quite a few also said they didn’t feel there was much youth violence in Thurrock.</p>
<p>Chelmsford</p>	<p>1.) Knife crime/getting stabbed 2.) Gangs 3.) Theft</p> <p>These answers were all very high responses and almost a tie in terms of what ranked highest</p>	<p>Southend</p>	<p>1.) Knife crime getting stabbed 2.) being a victim of crime (theft/mugged/ assaulted) 3.) Gangs</p> <p>4.) Drugs 5.) Drunk people</p> <p>EVERY young person mentioned Knife crime/ Getting stabbed as their top concern, and it was mentioned over 3x more than the next answer</p>
<p>Basildon</p>	<p>1.) Knife crime/getting stabbed 2.) Drugs 3.) Lack of activities</p> <p>4.) Gangs 5.) poverty/ social inequality</p> <p>Knives & drugs were overwhelming the highest responses. Basildon is the only District that mentions ‘lack of activities’ and ‘Poverty’ as issues in their highest answers.</p>		



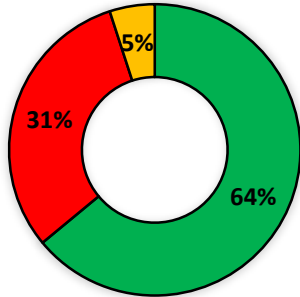
Are young people worried about being exploited by gangs?

52% of young people overall said 'YES' they are worried
36% of young people overall 'No' they are not worried
12% of young people overall said they are 'Not sure'



<u>Are young people worried about being exploited by gangs? Feedback by District:</u>			
Colchester Yes: 8% No: 56% Not Sure: 36%	'I'm worried about the younger ones getting drawn in' 'I don't know any gangs so I am not worried'	Harlow Yes: 20% No: 80%	'Not really, as I don't know any gangs' 'Yes, there is so much violence, gangs around, and theft in schools' 'It changes lives in a really bad way and you never know what will happen' 'It's definitely out there, even though I can't see it'
Tendring Yes: 53% No: 35% Not Sure: 12%	'Gangs in Bathside recruit you from the age of 5' 'In Harwich you get short lived gangs, but not many. Family groups that act like a gangs worry us more' 'It doesn't feel like gangs is an issue as its hidden here' 'Yes, because of the amount of drugs in the local area and the vandalism that happens in our town' 'I'm more worried about the next generation' 'Gangs leave you alone if you don't get in their way' 'Gangs from other places come here for drug deals'	Thurrock Yes: 50% No: 43% Not Sure: 6%	'Yes, especially my younger siblings' 'No, there was a gang here but it's now free from gangs' 'Yes, because it's an easy source of money' 'Yes, I'm scared I might get kidnapped because of men approaching me and trying to get my Snapchat. It's scary to say no because of what the men might say or do after rejection'
Chelmsford Yes: 66% No: 21% Not Sure: 13%	'Yes, as it's easy to be exploited if you are put in a situation; and we even more vulnerable if we are out on our own'	Southend Yes: 100%	'I'm worried that younger children or my friends and family will get hurt' 'Early deaths and violence are becoming a trend and more common' 'I'm more worried about under 14yr olds getting involved in gangs and not being able to escape' 'Yes because you won't know you are being exploited. Gangs make you feel welcome and have lots of power over you , but really they are taking you away from your family'
Basildon Yes: 67% No: 25% Not Sure: 8%	'Yes because there is nothing to do' 'Gangs aren't about as much as they used to be' 'Yes as we are less protected by adults at night, and gangs offer care and love'		

Do young people feel safe when they are out with friends in the local area?



***64%** of young people said they do feel when they are out with friends
31% of young people they do not feel safe when they are out with friends
5% of young people overall said they are 'Not sure'



Feedback by District:		
Colchester Yes: 97% No: 3%	Basildon Yes: 12% No: 60% Not sure: 28%	Thurrock Yes: 88% No: 6% Not sure: 6%
Tendring Yes: 50% No: 50%	Harlow Yes: 67% No: 33% Not sure: 12%	Southend Yes: 89% No: 11%
Chelmsford Yes: 47% No: 51% Not sure: 2%		

***The key thing to note is that young people felt safer with their friends. If we had asked them if they felt safe on their own, then our feedback shows that the majority of young people would have said no, or that they are only safe during daylight hours**

Positive activities
in a safe space
5%



My mobile
phone 5%



Police
on patrol
5%



Knowing the area
8%



Well-lit areas
15%



Knowing trusted
adults in the area
17%

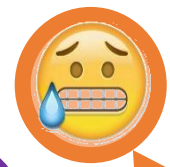
Other 2%
(See District
answers)

Being with friends
or in a group
43%



What helps
young people
to feel safe?

People that make us
feel uncomfortable
6%



Gangs
7%



Drunk people
9%



Drugs
12%



Large groups
of people
14%



Other 5%
(See District
answers)

Poorly lit areas
26%



Being alone
at night
21%

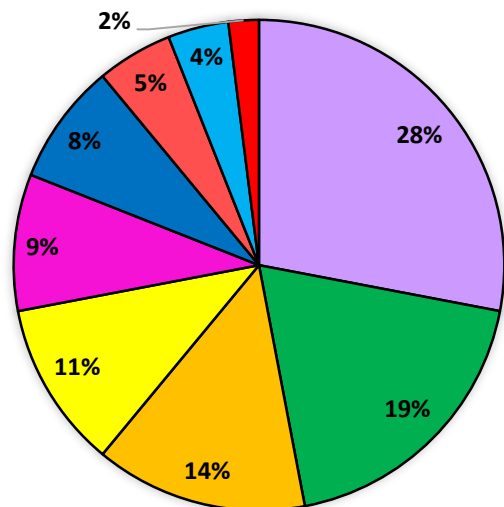


What make
young people
feel unsafe?

What makes you feel safe? Feedback by District			
Colchester	1.) Being with friends 2.) Being in a well-lit area 3.) Knowing trusted adults in the area 4.) Knowing how to get away from trouble quickly/alleyways etc 5.) My mobile phone 'Being with friends' was twice as common as the next top answer	Harlow	1.) Being with a group of people 2.) Being in youth friendly and safe environments 3.) When the police are around 'We especially don't like town as there are lots of people around that we don't know'
Tendring	1.) Being with family and friends or in a group 2.) Seeing police 3.) Being at home 4.) CCTV, knife bins and well-lit areas Harwich: 'We need more places you can go, as its too quiet and not much goes on'	Thurrock	1.) Being with friends or in a group 2.) Being in well-lit areas 3.) Knowing the area 4.) Knowing trusted adults in the area 5.) My mobile phone
Chelmsford	1.) Being with parent's/trusted adult's 2.) Being with friends or in a group 3.) Being in a well-lit housing area 'Being with parents/ trusted adults' was over twice as common as the next top answer	Southend	1.) Being with friends or in a group 2.) Knowing the area and where to avoid 3.) Being in well-lit areas 4.) My mobile phone 5.) Being close to home 6.) Trusted adults in the area 'Being with friends' was overwhelmingly the highest answer
Basildon	1.) Having positive activities to get involved in, 37 2.) Being in well-lit areas 3.) Good education about staying safe youth centre, things to do in the local area 'Having positive activities to get involved in' was an overwhelming highest answer		

What makes you feel unsafe? Feedback by District:			
Colchester	1.) Poorly lit areas 2.) Large groups of people, with hoods/masks 3.) Smell of weed 4.) Loud drunk people The top two answers were very close in commonality	Harlow	1.) Drug deals and drug runners 2.) There are loads of Vans in Harlow, 3.) The Motorbikes over the fields Knives are not mentioned, but 'drugs' came up in Basildon more than any other District
Tendring	Harwich: 1.) Poorly lit areas (particularly alleyways & the beach) 2.) People drunk/ on drugs 3.) The lack of police 4.) knife crime & gangs 5.) Not much to do 6.) People damaging Property 'Harwich is not looked after and there are lots of neglected places' Jaywick: 1.) The sea front/wall 2.) Worried my mobile phone will be stolen Jaywick 'People stereotype youths and they use social media to blame things on us that we haven't done'	Thurrock	Tilbury 1.) Poorly lit areas 2.) Large groups of people 3.) Enclosed spaces when walking alone Men Grays 1.) Being alone at night 2.) Gangs 3.) The woods, Groups of boys, Men 'Many of the kids fight in the Koala park'
Chelmsford	1.) Being alone at night 2.) Poorly lit areas 3.) Gang's/drug dealer's 20% of the answer 'Being alone at night' made specific reference to being a female '	Southend	1.) Being alone at night 2.) Poorly lit areas 3.) Large groups of people 4.) People drunk/ on drugs 5.) *People that make us feel uncomfortable (strangers/weirdos/pedophiles/men) 6.) Gangs & Knife Crime 'Being alone at night' was a third more common than the next answer around 'Poorly lit areas'. However, 'Poorly lit areas' was also a very common answer. * Of 'people that made us feel uncomfortable', half of the group specifically mentioned men, or that 'being female' contributed to their fear.
Basildon	1.) Poorly lit areas 2.) Drugs 3.) Lack of safe places to hang out in the evening 4.) Gangs coming from other areas 5.) People carrying knives for protection All answers were very common, and were almost of equal importance		

What would a safe space for young people to hang out look like/ be like?



Top answers from all feedback

- 28% Inside a warm building
- 19% At Youth clubs to hang out, with lots of activities
- 14% Free wifi & charging points
- 11% Welcoming, comfortable, inclusive and open for longer
- 9% Safe and secure indoor and outdoor spaces (outdoor spaces must also have some shelters & be well-lit)
- 8% Music and gaming
- 7% Snacks
- 4% Adults you can talk to that you trust and wont judge
- 2% Other

What would a safe space for young people to hang out look like/ be like? <i>Answers by District:</i>			
Colchester	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Inside a warm building 2.) Free wifi and charging points 3.) Sofas 4.) Snacks 5.) Music and gaming 	Harlow	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Youth clubs 2.) Parks that have shelter 3.) More uniformed organisations 4.) Cheap leisure centre access
Tendring	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Somewhere warm to sit and be sociable 2.) Sheltered and well-lit outside areas to sit and chat 3.) A youth centre (like the hub but for 15-18yr olds, with a mental health clinic 4.) Having a place with CCTV and a police station 5.) places you feel welcome like Teen Talk 	Thurrock	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) A Youth club as we don't have one 2.) More parks 3.) More organisations like Red Balloon
Chelmsford	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) A dedicated youth building/centre with lots of activities for young people 2.) Different youth clubs 3.) Sports clubs 	Southend	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Youth clubs to chill/hang out and play games with free activities x 69 2.) Safe and secure indoor and outdoor spaces x34 3.) Comfortable, welcoming, inclusive and warm 30 4.) Free Wifi and charging points 17 5.) Adults you can talk to that you trust and wont judge x16 6.) Somewhere local, open after school every day (even weekends)
Basildon	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Warm Indoor places with lots of activities (as its safer than being outdoors) 2.) Youth centre 3.) Outside spaces that are safe, well lit and have positive activities 		

What activities would you like to see more of for young people to take part in?

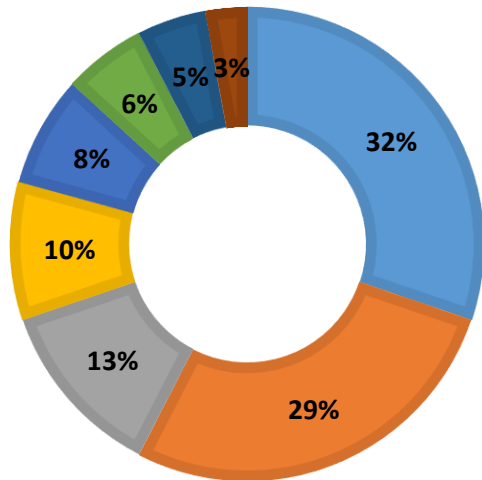


(The bigger a word appears; the more times it was said by the young people taking part)

The overwhelming top answer from young people was more football!

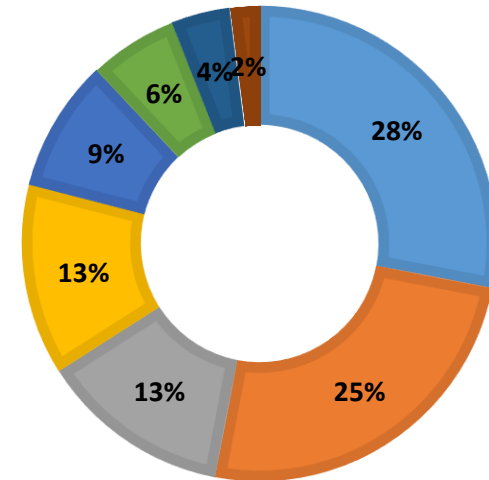
Young people would also like to see various other sports more readily available, and more youth clubs with activities & trips

How can we make sure there are more people available for young people to trust and talk to?



- 32%** Have community run youth clubs in all areas (not run by authorities/ schools)
- 29%** Trained, non-judgemental people in school/community to talk to
- 13%** Have more youth workers
- 10%** Have a phone number to text/call
- 8%** More support for family members so they know how to talk to us
- 6%** Quick and easy access to early help with no waiting lists
- 5%** More police
- 3%** Online/apps for easier access to help

Is there anything else that would help young people feel safer?



- 28%** More/ Better street lighting
- 25%** More Police on patrol
- 13%** More positive activities for us to do
- 13%** A safe place to hang out indoors
- 9%** Somewhere to go if in trouble (that's not home)
- 6%** Less drugs
- 4%** More CCTV
- 2%** Other

Anything else that would help you feel safer? Feedback by District

<p>Colchester</p>	<p>1.) Street lights staying on/more lights 2.) Somewhere to go if in trouble that's not home 3.) Stuff to do 4.) Less drugs 5.) More Police on patrol 'Better street lights' was an overwhelming top answer</p>	<p>Harlow</p>	<p>1.) More police on patrol 2.) More CCTV</p>
<p>Tendring</p>	<p>1.) More Police on patrol</p>	<p>Thurrock</p>	<p>1.) A youth club 2.) Somewhere safe to hang out inside 3.) More/ better street lights 'There's nowhere to hang except the park. We need a place indoors, especially in Winter' Young people in Thurrock expressed an overwhelming desire for their own youth club</p>
<p>Chelmsford</p>	<p>1.) Our own youth buildings 2.) More police presence 3.) Better lighting 4.) More CCTV 'Our own buildings' and 'More Police' were the clear top answers</p>	<p>Southend</p>	<p>1.) More Police on patrol 2.) More/ Better street lighting 3.) CCTV 12 (especially under the blocks and stair wells) 4.) More indoor places 5.) Educate about consequences of gangs, knife crime, mental health, diversity and racism 6.) More youth workers for 16-18yr olds Young people in Southend expressed an overwhelming need to have more Police on patrol and 'More/better street lighting'</p>
<p>Basildon</p>	<p>1.) Having more positive activities to do 2.) Bring more activities to the park, 3.) Refurbish Northlands' skate park 'Having more positive activities to do' was a very clear winner for Basildon young people</p>		

Where are the crime hotspots near you? *Feedback by District;*



Colchester	Greenstead 1.) The Shops (Hawthorne Avenue around the front and the back, and by the community centre) 2.) Maggie fields and White City park ('It gets really dark and the older kids go there to smoke weed, and adults sit there drinking alcohol'. 3.) Woodland next to the White city park ('Its scares us because we have heard of stabbings'). 4.) Salary Brook trail ('There's murders and people getting robbed and jumped down there in the dark') 5.) Affleck and Forest road ('Because of the stabbings, drugs and murders').		
Tendring	Harwich: 1.) The Bathside area of Harwich an area they don't feel safe 2.) Around Harwich town centre & high street 3.) Parkston 4.) Around Harwich and Dovercourt high schools <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Almost all young people said 'Bathside'</i></p>	Jaywick: 1.) The alleyway that runs through the whole of the Brooklands estate ('Its badly lit, narrow and mopeds/motorcross bikes ride through it really fast'). 2.) The roads are usually a dead end so the Bottom of the following roads; Austin avenue, Triumph Avenue, Vauxhall Avenue, Sunbeam Avenue, Hillman Avenue and Alvis Avenue. ('Most dodgy things go on down the ends of the roads as they are not very well lit') 3.) Crossways Park ('Its not well lit and older kids ride mopeds/motorbikes through it') 4.) Jaywick shops ('near the post office and pharmacy as someone was murdered there') 5.) Near the 'Never say die pub' ('People are always sitting outside it drinking and shouting')	
Chelmsford	Springfield and Galleywood- 1.) Baddow Wreck 2.) Baddow pump track 3.) Parks at night (Chelmer/ Jubilee/ Beardsly drive/Cornflower/ Aaron/ Hunters 4.) Channels skate park 5.) Pollards sports fields 6.) Beaulieu shops 7.) Springfield green 8.) All alleyways	Melbourne- (with thanks to North Ave youth centre) 1.) Melbourne park 2.) Melbourne woods 3.) The back of Melbourne shops 4.) Alleyways (next Parkwood academy/ Newlands spring primary 5.) Some parks at night (Tennysons, Wickhams Crescent) <p style="text-align: center;">Young people generally feel safer at St Andrews Park, Brownings Park and Kings road shops as the lighting is better</p>	Moulsham and the Town Centre (with thanks to Essex YMCA) Warmer weather hotspots; 1.) Oaklands Park 2.) Princes Road (Chelmsford College/ Moulsham) 3.) Moulsham Street (top end) In the colder months; 1.) The town centre has more anti-social behaviour and substance misuse between Riverside and the retail park (McDonalds)
Basildon	1.) All of Basildon 2.) Northlands park 2.) Somercoates- shop and Green 3.) Gloucester park skate park (Evenings there are gangs in masks threatening) 4.) Markhams Chase Rec		
Harlow	1.) Town centre 5.) The Hides 2.) Staple tye 6.) The skate park (at night) 3.) The Stow 4.) Sumners 7.) Town park (at night) 8.) The underpass by church Langley and potter street		
Thurrock	Tilbury 1.) Parks 2.) Near Town Square	Grays 1.) Grays town Centre 4.) Lakeside 2.) Seasbrook rise 5.) Alleyways 3.) Grays park	
Southend	Kursaal 1.) Kursaal estate	Victoria 1.) Skate park	Milton 1.) Warrior square/ green

	<p>2.) Kursaal estate (under blocks/car parks/stairwells 3.) Skate park 4.) Town centre 4.) Seafront 5.) Warrior square 6.) Cluney square</p>	<p>2.) Warrior square 2.) Kursaal estate 3.) Seafront 4.) Behind Adventure Island 5.) High street 6.) Under the storehouse garages 7.) Victoria strain station Other answers- Hamlet Court Road & Leigh on sea, York road, grey hound estate, forum</p>	<p>2.) Southend High street/ town centre 3.) Skate park 4.) Seafront 5.) York Road 6.) Forum/College 7.) Behind Adventure Island 7.) Parks (at night) Other answers- Library (outside at night), shops, under bridges, Train stations, pubs, Kursaal estate, Hamlet court road, Salisbury Avenue/North road, Travel lodge area, Prince Ave. West Road, All McDonalds, Prittlewell, Shoebury green</p>
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How can we increase safety in these areas?

- 1.) More police patrolling
- 2.) More CCTV/ Security
- 3.) More positive activities for young people to get involved with
- 4.) Have more safe places for young people to go to
- 5.) Better/ More street lights
- 6.) Have trustworthy people in the area we can talk to
- 7.) Stop the gangs coming down from London!
- 8.) Harsher penalties/punishment



Overwhelming young people said that they would like to see more police on patrol in their local areas

Anything else your young people would like to let the VVU know about;			
Colchester	N/a	Thurrock	<i>From the Youth worker;</i> ‘We are in the process of recruiting other people from the area to sign a petition to improve the park and improve the skateboarding park’
Tendring	<p><i>From the youth worker:</i> ‘Young people would like to see more safe spaces for them to hang out. i.e pop up shops serving hot and cold drinks in parks and at the skate park. They don’t feel the youth centre is safe as they feel its where the more ill-behaved kids go. They would prefer quieter safe places’ ‘The police station not being open was brought up a lot, and young people feel that more crime would be reported and more would be done if this was open and wasn’t a wasted resource’ ‘Dangerous driving came up a lot as they find this scary and young people get blamed for it, but its normally people in their late 20/30s who are doing this’ ‘Young people said that in Harwich most people smoke drugs and do it openly. This won’t change as people aren’t going to report it because it’s so common. However, they are worried about getting approached by people to get involved in drug dealing’ ‘Most young people only cause problem when confronted with an adult. They feel there are lots of rude people in the area who don’t understand young people, and will swear and be aggressive to them first’</p> <p><i>From young people</i></p>		

	<p>'Violence against people in the LGBTQ+ community and homophobia is a real issue here as people are a little behind on the times and this also due to a lack of education in the area'</p> <p>'Drug dealing in Harwich is common and I wouldn't report it because I know nothing will be done. We need somewhere you can record low level crimes safely'</p>		
Harlow	<p>From the young people</p> <p>'The internet says that Harlow is the 2nd most dangerous town in Essex and that worries us'</p>	Basildon	<p>From the youth worker;</p> <p>'Most of the young people we spoke to don't think they have bright futures and feel they have just been left to their own devices'</p> <p>From young people;</p> <p>'We don't want to be ignored anymore. Listen to what we need'</p> <p>'In Basildon we don't have a suitable playground and need a safer building to meet up with our friends'</p> <p>'I don't feel safe here. For example, if you are a young black, white Asian or whatever man and if you want to go out you will ask yourself questions whether you feel safe going out, so the answer will be no, so how I am going to protect myself... ermm I will carry a knife'</p>
Chelmsford	<p>'There are too many gangs popping up all over Chelmsford, too much knife crime and too many drug dealers'</p> <p>'More education is needed about gangs in primary school as they target kids younger'</p> <p>'Put local police officers back in all villages and get police to interact with the young people to build relationships'</p> <p>'More help for parents to understand young people'</p> <p>From young people;</p> <p>'We need to be carrying knives for protection as no one else is protecting us'</p> <p>'Please listen and take on board what we are saying as no one listens to us anymore'</p> <p>'We feel safe in residential streets as the sense of community is quite big (Melbourne)'</p> <p>'Dangerous driving and speeding in the area is also an issue, but not as bad as other young people carrying knives and weapons'</p>		
Southend	<p>From the youth worker;</p> <p>'The YP don't like the random searches by the Police, as the Police are vague of what or whom they are looking for and the skaters are not the ones that are causing the trouble in the area'</p> <p>From the young people;</p> <p>'We need more undercover Police and knife boxes that are easy to access'</p> <p>'We need to reduce knife crime as the kids that are involved are getting younger!'</p> <p>'We want our voices heard!'</p> <p>'More teaching in school about LGBTQIA and more respect'</p> <p>'More support for young people to come out of a gang'</p>		

Summary

761 young people from the 7 priority areas took part in this listening project around young people's safety in Essex. Young people were keen to share their views and want to see change in their communities as a result.

'if you want to go out you will ask yourself whether you feel safe going out, so the answer will be no, so how I am going to protect myself... ermm I will carry a knife'

'Knife crime/ getting stabbed was a top concern in Essex for the third year running, and although this is high, it has remained steady. We can also see from the report that **'Drugs' is a major worry for young people** and it is an issue that over the last 3yrs of VVU listening projects we can see is a growing concern. Work around drug use is definitely an area that could be identified for future work in Essex, and one that young people are telling us **needs to be addressed now**. There are also more **local issues** that need addressing too; for example, in Harwich the young people didn't mention Knives at all, but they were very worried about 'assault'. The young people in Harlow were mostly worried about drugs, and Basildon young people were the only ones that mentioned poverty/ social inequality as an issue. This social inequality is also a reason young people may get into gangs as it's a way to have 'an easy source of money' and there's not much else to do.

'Gangs make you feel welcome and have lots of power over you, but really they are taking you away from your family'

52% of young people said they are worried about being exploited by gangs, but if you look closely at the data above, you can see that this is also more of an issue in some areas than others. **Young people are especially worried that children of primary school age being recruited** by gangs as they are easier to exploit and gangs can make them feel loved and cared for.

64% of young people said they feel safe if they are out with friends. However, this answer is majorly weighted to the fact that they are with their friends, and they don't feel safe at all if they are on their own. Many also said that although they may feel safe during daylight hours, it is a totally different story at night because areas that are designed to be sociable and welcoming during daylight hours, are not usually designed to feel safe at night. Adults on drink or drugs was a concern.

Being in a group helps young people to feel safe, but they need more safe spaces to belong. **Spaces inside** that **are** warm and welcoming, comfortable and affordable. These spaces need to be open for longer, have access to early help and have plenty of activities like football, various other sports and activities and trips to get involved in. Young people also need **more spaces outside** that are safer, have shelters and are well-lit. They also want **more trusted adults** in these spaces that they can talk to and confide in (like community youth workers). Having trusted adults around makes the young people feel safe.

Young people want to see more police patrolling as seeing the Police on patrol overwhelming made the young people feel safe. Having areas with **better street lighting** is also a factor that has come up in all of our VVU reports over the last 3yrs and should be taken seriously.

'We don't want to be ignored anymore. Listen to what we need'

Young people want their voices heard and they will want to know what is being done as a result of their views being shared in this report. We need to make sure that we are accountable to young people and members of the community to whom we are striving to serve by making communities safer.

The next step for the VVU will be to take a closer look at these findings alongside the PFCC, Safer Essex, Mace, and CSP's to think more about changes that can be made locally to help children and young people feel safer in their local communities. **Any new work commissioned or carried through into 2022 onwards will need to think carefully about, and demonstrate how the work meets clear priorities set out in this report.**

Thank you to the VVU for working with us on this listening project, to our youth work delivery partners and to their young people for taking part. EVERY view is important and will strive to impact change for your local areas through this piece of work.

- Rachel Brett
(ECVYS CEO)