



# YOUTH VOICE DAY 2025

‘SAFETY  
IN ESSEX’  
11TH OCTOBER  
2025

IN COLLABORATION WITH:





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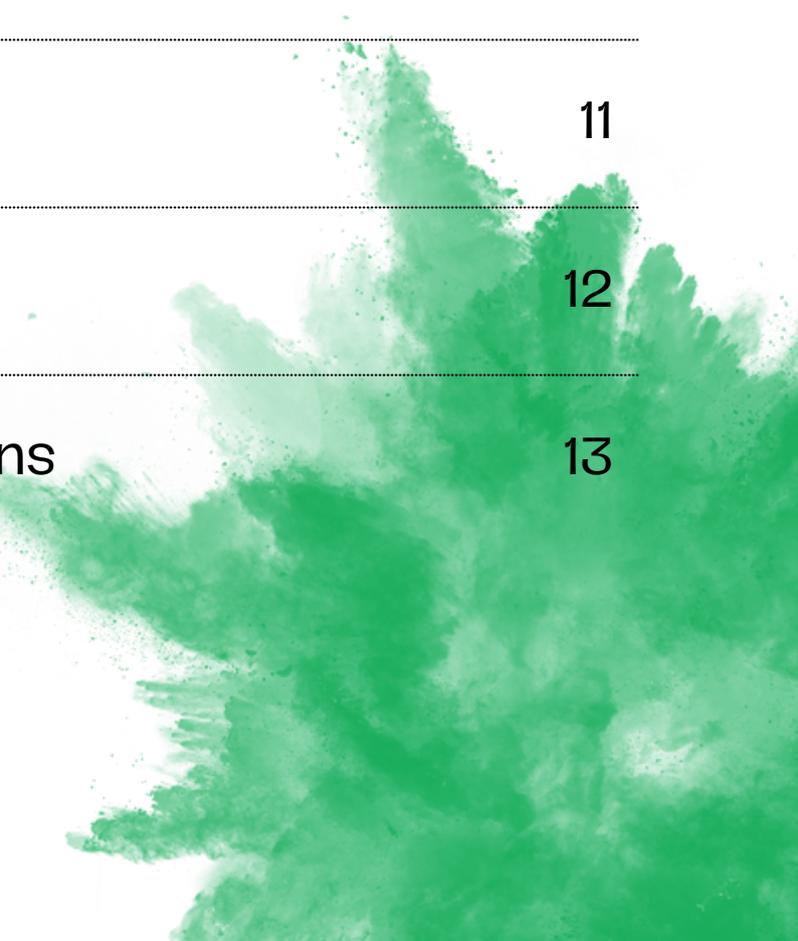
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# AN OVERVIEW

## CONFERENCE TIMETABLE:

**9.15 - 9.30:**  
**Arrival and Sign-In**

**9.35 - 9.50:**  
**Welcome and Introduction**

**10.00 - 10.45:**  
**Workshop 1**

**11.00 - 11.45:**  
**Workshop 2**

**11.45 - 13.00:**  
**Lunch**

**13.00 - 13.50:**  
**Presentation Workshop & ECVYS  
presentation to Essex Leaders**

**14.00 - 15.30:**  
**Presentations to Essex Leaders**

## WORKSHOPS:

**Knife Crime and County Lines**

**The Effects of Doomscrolling and  
Feeling Isolated**

**Harassment**

**The Ripple Effect - Keeping  
Yourself and Others Safe**

**Young People in Essex**

## CREATION STATIONS:

**Voice Through Music**

**Voice Through Art**

**Voice Through Good Mental  
Wellbeing**

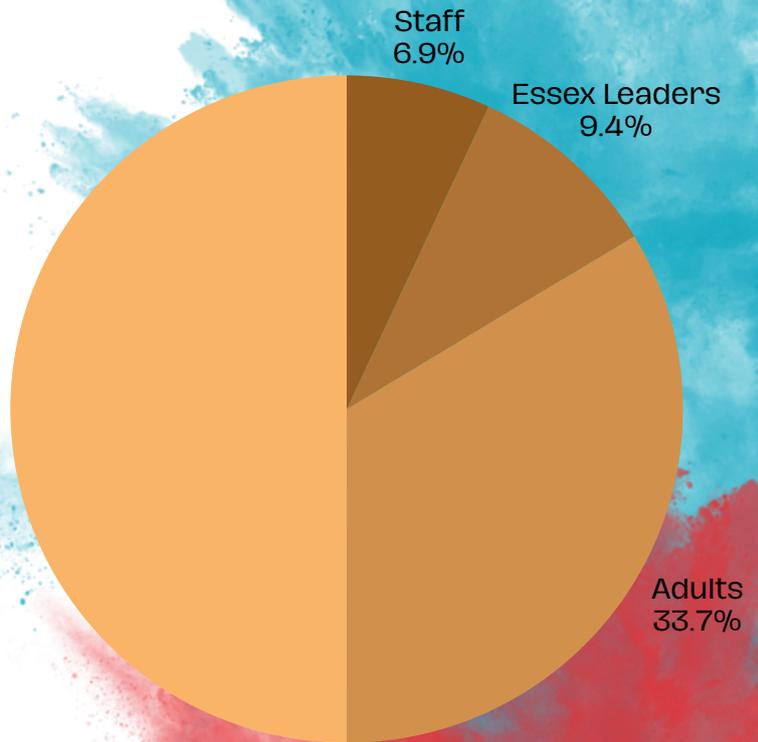
# People in Attendance

Data taken from our sign-in sheet on the day. Of the 202 attendees, there were:

- 101 Young People
- 68 Adults
- 19 Essex Leaders
- 14 Staff Members



Young People  
50%



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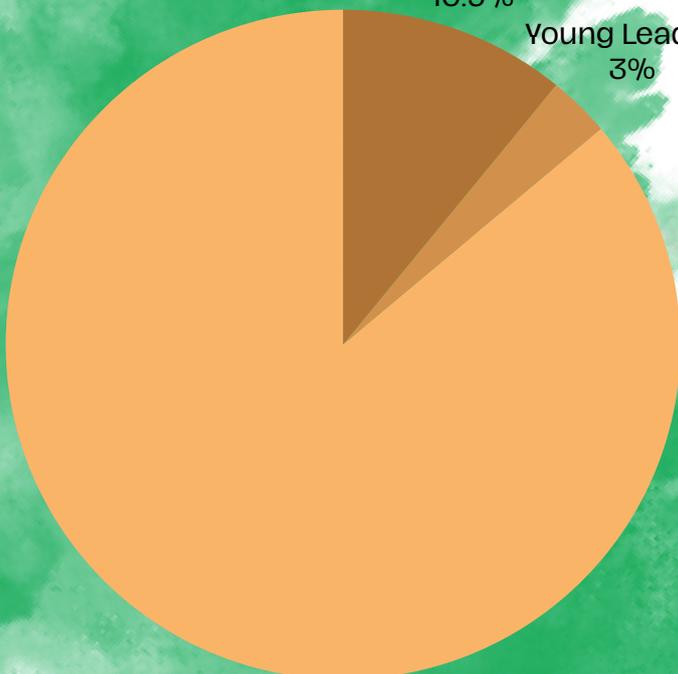
## Young People in Attendance

Data taken from our sign-in sheet on the day. Of the 101 young people:

- 87 attended with their youth club
- 11 attended on their own
- 3 attended as a young leader

On Own  
10.9%

Young Leaders  
3%



With A Club  
86.1%



# ARRIVAL AND SIGN IN



Once our sign-in staff had greeted the attendees, they were given two pieces of paper: a 'Youth Voice Day Raffle' ticket and an ECVYS 'Find Your Voice' card.

## The Youth Voice Day Raffle Tickets

These were small tickets for all attendees to fill out. This allowed them to enter our raffle. The prize was a £20 Amazon Voucher.

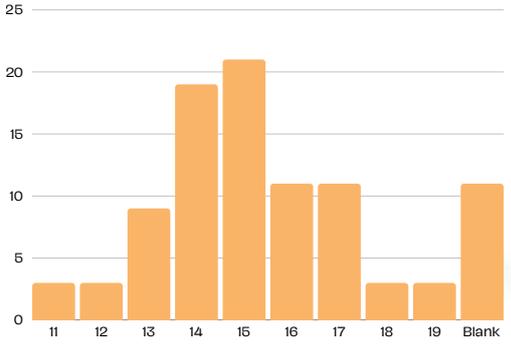
Our question was "If you could do one thing to make Essex safer, what would it be?". Here are the 111 answers, the biggest words were mentioned the most.



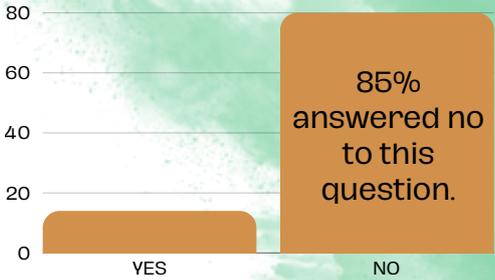
## ECVYS Find Your Voice Cards

These were small cards printed by ECVYS as part of their Listening Report. They were handed out to young people, who were required to answer the 5 questions in order to get a goodie bag. We had 94 answers to the questions...

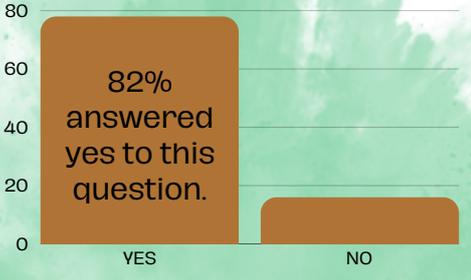
1) Ages of the Young People



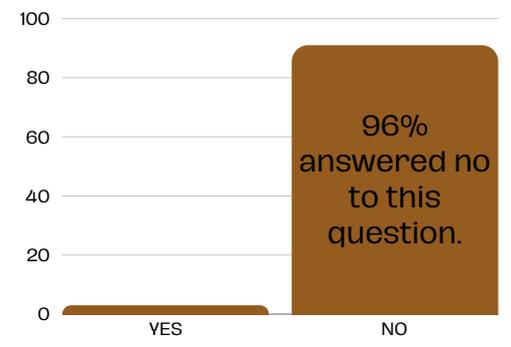
2) Are you worried about being exploited by a gang in your local area?



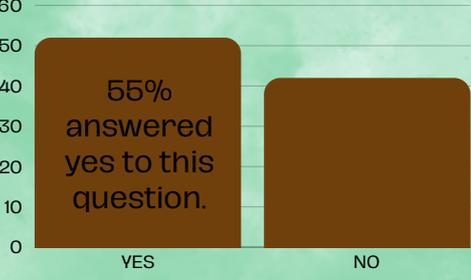
3) Do you feel safe when out with your friends in your local area?



4) Have you been a victim of violent crime in the last year?



5) Have you seen serious violence on social media?





# Workshop 1 Responses: Knife Crime and County Lines

Delivered by: Rainbow Services

## **An Overview:**

Looking at concerns around knife crime, violence, and county lines, discussing why young people feel fearful, grooming and gangs, what are the truths and myths, preventative measures, personal responsibility, consequences, solutions, and support.

### **1: Why do you feel fearful about this topic?**

The young people in the workshop mentioned being fearful of knife crime and county lines because of the lasting effects on mental health (mainly mentioning PTSD and anxiety). They also mentioned how “no one is safe” because the victims are not planned or premeditated. They fear the lack of response from local authorities and how they don’t want to go outside or interact with large groups of people.

### **2: How does this topic affect your daily life?**

Young people mentioned how knife crime and gang violence restricts their daily life. They talked about how they feel they cannot go into certain areas or take certain routes home because of their fear. They mentioned how they are now conscious of what’s happening around them and how they subconsciously worry about these issues because they can see the repercussions of it in their communities.

### **3: What are your concerns about youth violence?**

Their main concerns around Youth Violence in this workshop were: gangs, vaping, drugs, violence against women and girls, knife crime on social media, mental health and depression. They also mentioned worries around flashbacks and PTSD, and talked about how someone who commits knife crime would have a label against them for the rest of their lives.



# Workshop 2 Responses: The Effects of Doomscrolling

Delivered by: The Children's Society

## An Overview:

Looking at the effects of doom scrolling, fake news, and social media algorithms. How does this impact young people who feel isolated, lonely, and scared of what they are reading or watching? How can we break the cycle of endless scrolling and empower young people to take a step back and reflect on the effects of our phones?

### 1: Why do you feel fearful about this topic?

Young people mentioned feeling fearful because of graphic online videos; they mentioned Charlie Kirk, a politics-based media personality who became famous for right-wing extremist views, whose death video became viral earlier that month. They also mentioned how this type of violence online was "normalised" and made them feel unproductive and sluggish.

### 2: How does this topic affect your daily life?

They especially noted that doomscrolling had a significant impact on their lives, saying they were too focused on social media and couldn't think about anything else outside their phones. Some explained that they often see different videos that invoke strong emotion one after the other, "happy video to sad video", and how most algorithms mess with the viewers emotions purposefully in order to keep your attention. The group worried that they could not tell the difference between AI and a normal video and that when they felt bad about something they would go back to scrolling. A few young people also explained how they can't watch a movie anymore or listen to a whole song because of how used to scrolling they have become.

### 3: What are your concerns about youth violence?

This group's main points were related to AI, gore videos, and the radicalisation of young boys on the internet. They spoke about the spread of negative ideas about women and minorities in particular, and how bullying plays into that.

— Education on why it's bad to be hateful, rude, less on just telling people to not do things - explanations more and on minorities, algorithms - mood changes, affect on mental health, fake news, radicalisation



# Workshop 3 Responses: Harassment

Delivered by: Essex Police

## **An Overview:**

Looking at ways in which young people can feel at harm, the fear factor, serious crime, and/or violence. Discuss the various places and reasons where and why young people feel harassed or in danger. Look at vulnerable groups, how to protect yourself, trusted relationships, and where to go for support.

### **1: Why do you feel fearful about this topic?**

These young people were mainly fearful about men's attitudes regarding what is ok and what isn't, and how a majority of harassment seems to come from men and boys. They noted that men don't think about the "knock-on effect" after their actions, and how it seems to be normalised to the point where they don't feel they can talk about it when it happens to them. They quoted a popular phrase, "boys will be boys", and explained that a lot of people don't report harassment when it happens because they fear their report won't be taken seriously enough. They also talked about how harassment happens more online because it is "easier", due to the constant access to each other.

### **2: How does this topic affect your daily life?**

The young people mainly talked about the anger they felt regarding this topic, and how they felt peer-pressured to fit in. Many young people shared experiences of how they are catcalled in their school uniforms and how it makes them not want to walk to school anymore because they feel unsafe. They said that because harassment is harder to prove, the school won't give out consequences in response to their reports. One young person stated that they feel like there is no "better future".

### **3: What are your concerns about youth violence?**

Most of their conversations centered around unsolicited pictures, and again, how schools do not take the sharing of these seriously enough. They were concerned about the pipelines young men join when they go online, how they are angry at the world and need something to take it out on. They highlighted a few quotes they had all heard: "Just having a laugh" and "it means he likes you," which they agreed were harmful and spread the normalisation of harassment. The young people were concerned about how people treat each other (bullying / antisocial behaviour)



# Workshop 4 Responses: The Ripple Effect

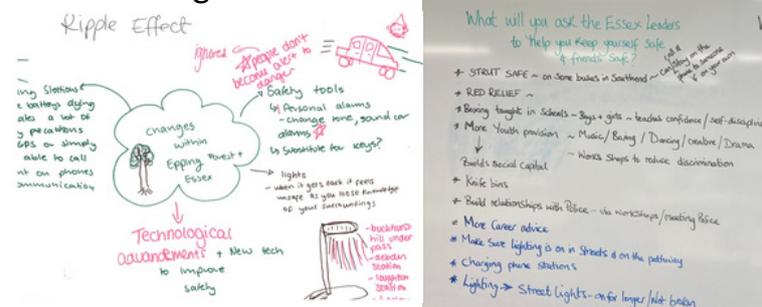
Delivered by: Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services & Essex Violence & Vulnerability Unit

## An Overview:

Looking at personal responsibility and how to keep yourself and others safe. Discuss what it means to be involved either directly or as a bystander in a crime. Challenge ways to help young people feel safe and form solutions both personally and in your own community.

### 1: Why do you feel fearful about this topic?

Most young people mentioned how dark spaces in communities made them feel unsafe, saying that more lighting on streets would help alleviate their fears. Many also noted that having youth clubs open more often and for longer would help address this fear. They said: "When it gets dark, it feels unsafe as you lose knowledge of your surroundings".



### 2: How does this topic affect your daily life?

Most young people in this group were upset because they weren't seeing a change in the number of trusted adults they could access: "You say you have more trusted adults, but we are not seeing any change". They also noted that they need more spaces to charge their phones safely while they are out, as they are reliant on their phones for communication. The young people in this group specifically stated that because most crime happens at night, the youth clubs should be open late to keep young people out of trouble.

### 3: What are your concerns about youth violence?

This group's main concerns seemed to be about the lighting in their areas, and how this made them feel unsafe. They also spoke about helping police build a better relationship with young people, so that they can feel safer on their day-to-day.



# Workshop 5 Responses: Young People in Essex

Delivered by: Chelmsford Boys & Girls Club

## **An Overview:**

Looking at different issues or concerns around Safety in Essex for young people, what affects our own personal journey, and how to combat feelings of fear, feeling unsafe, and where to go for support.

### **1: Why do you feel fearful about this topic?**

Many young people shared experiences of “creepy men on the bus” and how strangers often ask personal questions, which makes them uncomfortable. Some noted they didn’t know of any support for buses, especially ways to report crimes that occurred on buses. They were also fearful of busy towns, especially in the dark, video games promoting violence, how more young people express their anger physically instead of using their words, and how young people turn to crime because they don’t know what else to do. Some young people discussed the proposed lowering of the voting age and expressed a desire for more education about politics and voting. Another topic of concern was LGBTQIA+ rights, with a focus on medical and mental health.

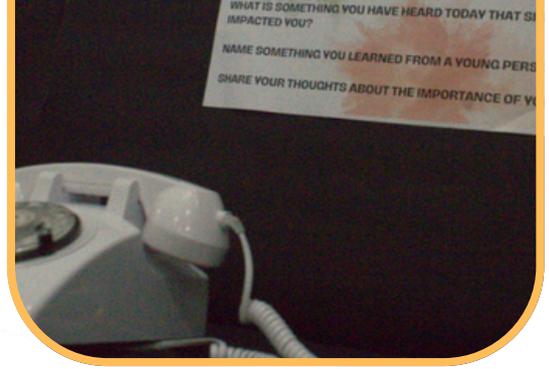
### **2: How does this topic affect your daily life?**

This group’s main concerns were around public transport. They noted that while trains are safe, because of the British Transport Police, buses felt more dangerous and harder to use. They also felt this was because there wasn’t a relationship between the bus driver and the passengers.

### **3: What are your concerns about youth violence?**

They mentioned many places where they felt unsafe, such as Basildon and Burnham on Crouch, saying that there are young people who live there who keep bricks in socks as weapons, as well as knives. They were also concerned about how bullying seems to be more physical rather than mental, talking as well about how most young people seem to be quite physical with their feelings and emotions currently.

# LUNCHTIME ACTIVITIES



During the lunch break, we had many activities, including an information fair, therapy dogs, arts and crafts, music workshops, mental health workshops, food, and the Youth Voice Day phone.

## The Youth Voice Day Phone

We set up a small phone voice recorder on a table, where people could answer some set questions or comment on the day. Their answers have been summarized.

- A workshop on violence against women and girls was requested for next year.
- Councillor Mark Durham supports youth services and acknowledges young people's contributions.
- Concerns about inadequate NHS mental health services for LGBTQ+ youth, including long wait times, have been raised.
- There's a call for support for gender-affirming care for trans youth and improved referral processes. Increased funding for mental health services is needed, with a focus on LGBTQ+ youth spaces. Better handling of harassment in schools affecting LGBTQ+ youth is needed, along with increased emergency services. Communication on LGBTQ+ and equal rights issues is essential. Raising awareness about transgender issues could help reduce homophobia and transphobia.
- More regulations for safer social media and parental education are necessary. Education on social issues and self-defence classes are suggested for enhanced safety in Essex.
- Political education for 16-year-olds is proposed to prepare them for voting. There's a call for increased awareness of social issues, including drug-related problems.
- The Big Smile Collective Youth Art Factory provides safe spaces for youth, emphasising the importance of amplifying youth voices. (Other services are also available: see the Essex Youth Map for more information, <https://bit.ly/TheEssexYouthMap>)

## Kids Inspire Responses

This question was asked to the young people in attendance: "Why might someone's mental health make it hard for them to feel safe?". Here is a summary and a few quotes...

Young people express that poor mental health significantly affects their sense of safety by impacting their confidence, trust, and self-perception. They often feel isolated or judged when struggling, leading to heightened anxiety and overthinking, which makes it challenging to relax even in familiar environments.

The presence of negative thoughts and low self-esteem further intensifies feelings of insecurity and fear. External pressures such as peer pressure, discrimination, or being labeled can increase mental health issues, fostering a sense of isolation. Without the support of trusted friends or understanding adults, sharing emotions becomes increasingly difficult. Overall, young people associate safety with feeling heard, understood, and valued, indicating that mental health issues profoundly affect both their emotional and physical safety, as well as their overall well-being.



**"Always thinking something bad will happen."**

**"They may never feel at peace."**

**"They don't have any trusted friends to talk to."**

**"It can make them feel paranoid, even in their own home."**

**"They may feel they are alone."**

**"Too anxious to ask for help."**

**"They are overwhelmed."**

# PRESENTATIONS

Every young person was invited to go back to the workshop they enjoyed most and create a presentation based on what they had learned or talked about that day. They then presented to a group of Essex Leaders.



# REFLECTIONS AND SOLUTIONS

Group Name	Reflections	Solutions
Knife Crime and County Lines	<p>People carry because others do.            Not being able to walk in the dark alone.            Not wanting to leave your home.            Fear of being stabbed or robbed.            You can't do much against it.            It's easy to get knives now.            People carry to scare others and don't think about the consequences of their actions.</p>	<p>Knife arch and bins.            Hand in knives for vouchers.            No knife bins near police stations.            Better control and placement of shops.            Early intervention.            CCTV.            Education on knife crime.            More things for young people to do.            Social media advertisements.            Laser serial number on all blades.</p>
The Effects of Doomscrolling	<p>Harmful content leads to desensitization and messes with emotions.            Hateful content leads to worse mental health and the spread of hateful ideals.            Fake news leads to swaying politics, misinformation and distrust.            Affects productivity due to instant gratification.</p>	<p>Ads on social media promoting mental health support.            More filtration on harmful content.            Education on why it's bad to be hateful and rude.            Forced AI disclaimer on videos.            Actual screen time limits that cannot be bypassed.</p>
Harassment	<p>The reporting process is unclear.            Racial harassment is not covered enough in schools.            Not enough young people know the difference between harassment and bullying.            Not just done by boys and men.            The umbrella term "harassment" causes confusion.            There is a barrier between the language used by police and the understanding young people and schools have of it.            Support isn't signposted effectively.</p>	<p>Racial harassment focused session.            Spread awareness and definitions to aid choices on how to deal with these situations.            Awareness delivered in schools.            Make definitions clearer.            Promotion of police services and other mental health support online and by mail.            Ban certain terms and words that create negative stigmas.            Reform the online safety act.</p>
The Ripple Effect	<p>Young people have a bad relationship with the police, and it needs to be improved.            Consensus on more lighting and surveillance being needed.            Phones are relied on for communicating and GPS.</p>	<p>More police presence in the area.            Better lighting in places such as bike paths and back roads.            More public surveillance.            Charging stations for phones.            Boxing and self defense taught in schools.            More youth provision.            More career advice.</p>
Young People in Essex	<p>Queer and trans youth are being neglected medically and mentally.            More mental health and gender affirming support is needed.            The government is against LGBTQIA+ young people.            Buses are not as safe as trains.            Young People turn to crime because they don't know what to do.</p>	<p>More CCTV and signage that it's there.            Share youth provisions with schools.            A text service to instantly report crimes.            A job centre for young people, helping write CVs etc.            More funding for NHS.            "Right to choose" scheme for gender affirming care.</p>



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