

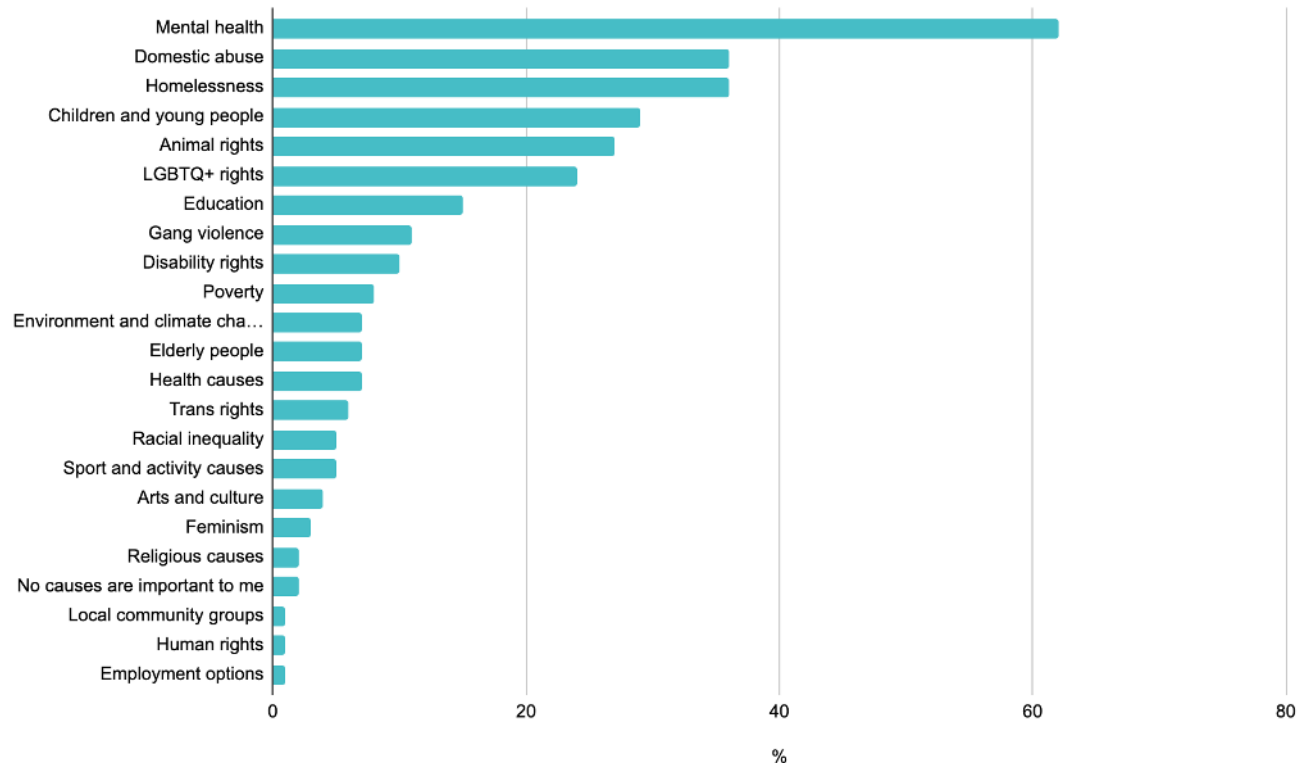
The Big Questions November 2021

The Big Questions is the Foyer Federation’s bi-annual survey on young people living in our member Foyers/supported accommodation services. We received 100 responses from 10 Foyers: Braintree, Bridge, CHADD, Coops, Crewe YMCA, Enfield, Heather Court, Ravenhead, Swan House, Verve Place.

For the previous survey in February, we received responses from 22 Foyers. The sample size for this survey is much smaller and will likely be less representative of the overall network as a result. 40% of the services are from Your Housing Group, 20% from Swan Housing, 70% from our Investor members, and all scoring very highly on our FOR Youth quality development and accreditation programme.

What’s Important to You

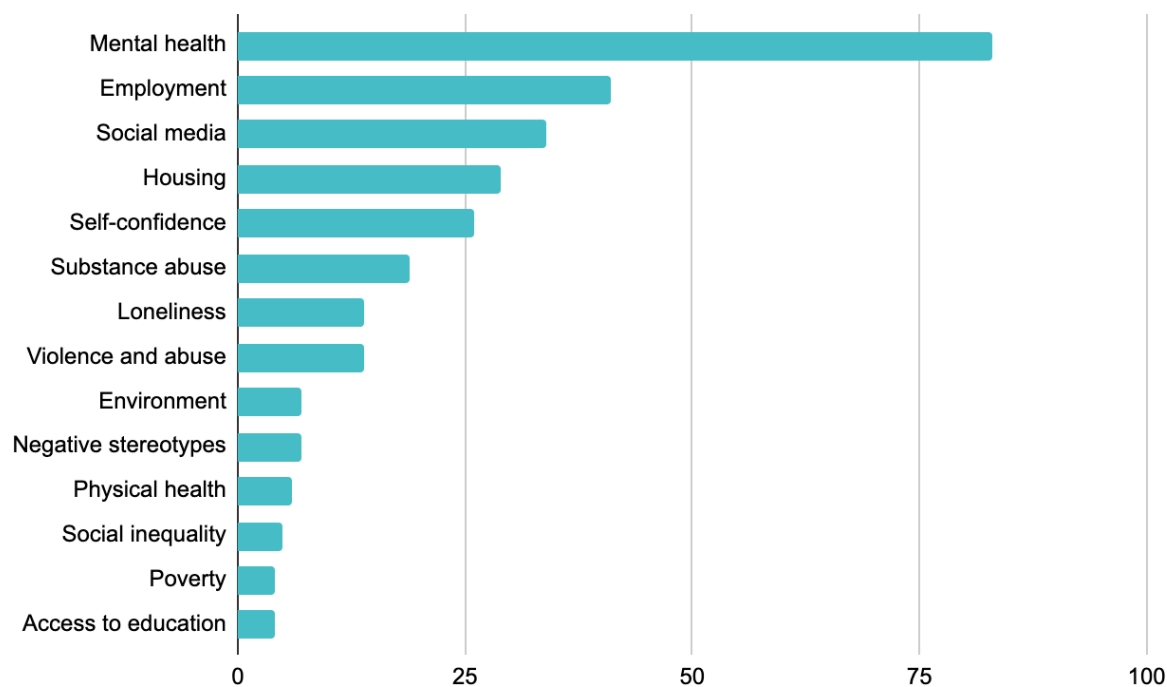
1. We want to ensure the voices of young people in Foyers are heard on the issues they care about most. Which THREE causes are most important to you?



Mental health is consistently reported as the most important cause for young people living in Foyers (62% – formerly 66%).

Domestic abuse and homelessness (36%) are currently the second most important. Homelessness is consistently one of the three most important causes, and domestic abuse has consistently been in the top five.

2. We want to influence decision makers to improve the systems that affect young people. What are the THREE biggest challenges facing young people today?



Mental health is consistently reported as the greatest challenge facing young people today (83%, up from 80% in the last survey and 82% in summer 2020).

Employment is, for the third time, the second greatest challenge, though the percentage has dropped to 41% from 58% in summer 2020 and 46% in February 2021.

Social media (34%) was the fifth-highest reported challenge in both previous surveys, but is now number three, up from 30% in February.

Housing was the third greatest challenge in the previous two surveys, but this has stabilised for many young people over the pandemic. It was the fourth-most reported here, with 29% reporting it down from 58% in summer 2020 and 44% in February 2021.

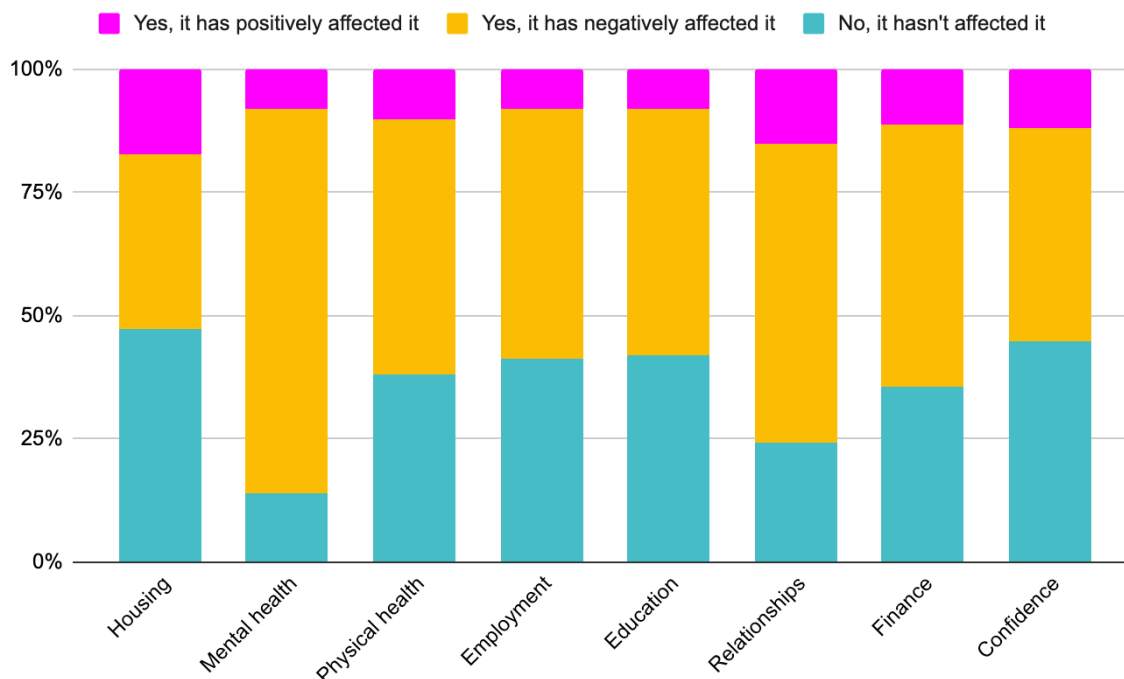
3. What do you think is positive for young people right now?

Although 13% of respondents reported finding nothing positive at the moment, 87% were able to identify something – up from 79% previously. 11% are positive about education opportunities, closely followed by 10% noting friends and family, and 10% feeling positive about the Foyer itself.

4. What do you think is worrying for young people right now?

Mental health was the greatest worry (16.5%), followed by violence and abuse (10%) and a lack of money (8.5%). The financial concerns were exacerbated by the loss of the £20 Universal Credit top-up. Covid made up 7% of worries, down from 26% in February 2021, and uncertainty about the future came up 4.5% of the time compared to 10% in February.

5. Has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your progress in any of the following areas?



There are still some areas of life that young people report as being largely untouched by the pandemic. 47.5% report no change to their housing, and 45.5% report no change to their confidence.

Positive effects are still being seen – notably in housing (17% – up from 12% in February) and relationships (15% – up from 9.5% in February).

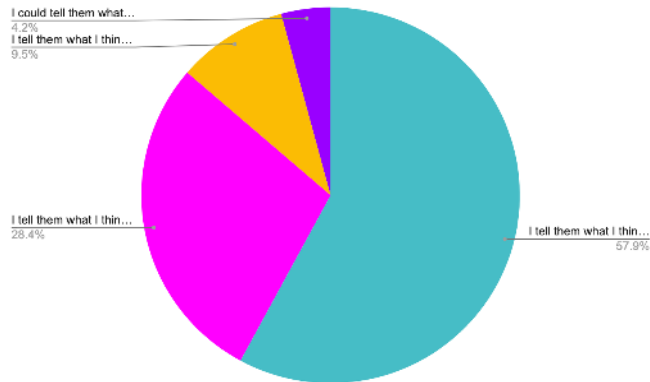
However, as with the previous survey, the negative impacts are the most significant:

- 79% have suffered negative effects on their mental health (up from 72%)
- 60.5% have suffered negative effects on their relationships (down from 69.5%)
- 50.5% have suffered negative effects on their employment (previously 51.5%) and physical health (up from 47.5%)
- 49.5% have suffered negative effects on their education (up from 39%)

Despite the worst of the lockdowns being over, the effects of the pandemic are still being felt and are, in many cases, deepening among young people. Initiatives like Kickstart are having a positive impact, and we must do more to ensure young people have the same opportunities they would have had if it were not for Covid.

Leadership and Influence

6. How well does your Foyer listen to what you think?

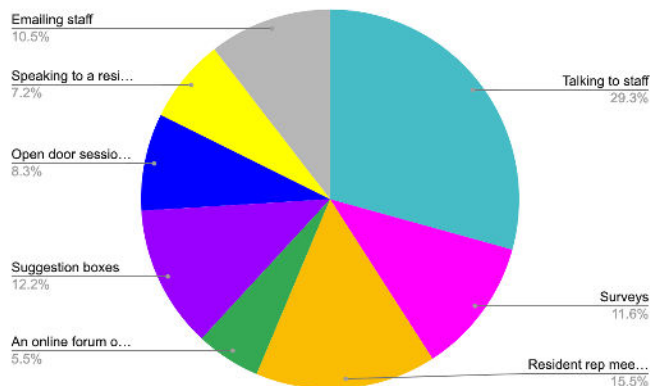


Overall, the percentage of young people who are confident to tell Foyers what they think has gone up since February – from 89.6% in February 2021 to 95.7% in October 2021. The number who don't think their Foyer wants to listen has dropped to zero. This is an extremely positive result, and something we would hope to see from highly accredited Foyers.

The number of young people who report either change taking a long time or things rarely changing has risen from 23.2% to 37.9%. For services working to grow their listening and service involvement activities with young people, this is the next key area to focus on – closing the feedback loop.

Not every suggestion can be implemented, but ensuring any follow-up actions and decisions are shared with young people shows their views are taken seriously, respected and followed up on.

7. How would you most like to make your voice heard or offer help in your Foyer?

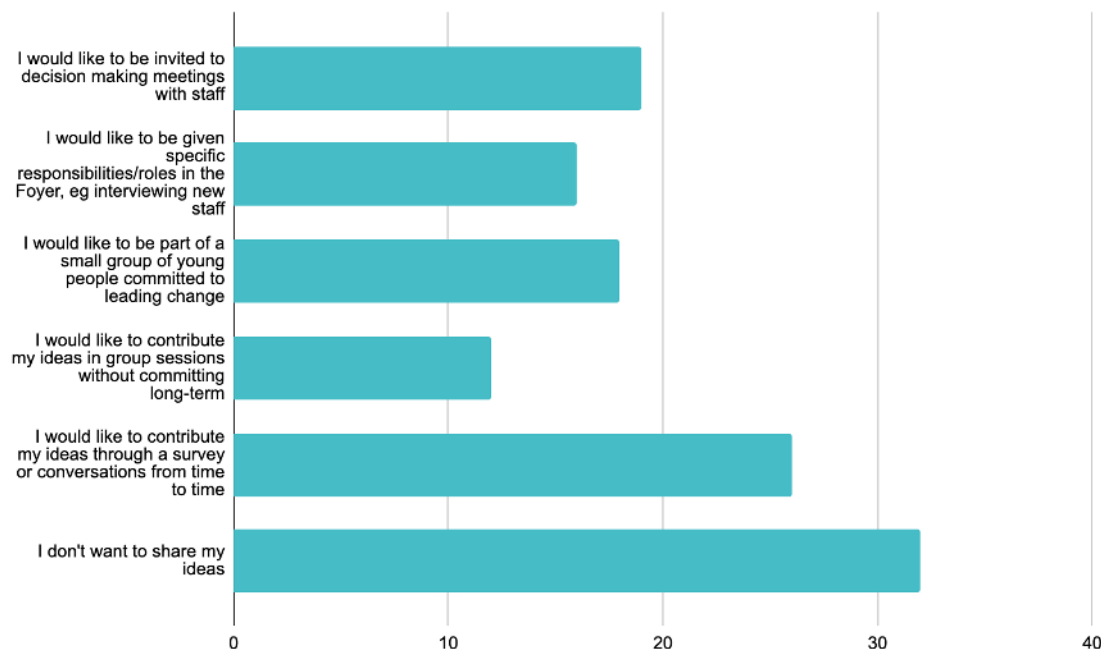


The most popular method of sharing views or offering help is, by far, speaking with members of staff. This goes to show how important the trusting relationships are between young people and coaches.

The second most popular was participating in resident rep meetings, then suggestion boxes and surveys.

Each method suggested on the form received a good number of responses. This highlights the importance of having a range of ways for young people to share their views so that each person has access to a method that best suits their personality and confidence level.

8. How much would you like to be involved in leadership in your Foyer?



26% of young people said they did not want to share their ideas with their service – a significant increase from 19% in February 2021.

This may be due to the current make-up of Foyer communities, which has changed significantly since February. Due to the pandemic holding up move-on accommodation, young people who were ready to move on – often the most confident, engaged and involved – remained in the Foyers longer than they usually would. Lots of these young people moved on in a similar period over summer and autumn, so Foyers now have a larger-than-normal proportion of residents who are very new to the service.

It is encouraging to see that 74% of young people do want to share their views. 43% want to be involved in making change happen – whether by taking part in decision-making meetings (15.4%), taking on specific responsibilities (13%) or as a group committed to leading change (14.6%).

Over time, through building trust by listening and closing feedback loops, young people may be encouraged to get more involved and feel confident that their voices will be heard – so there is good reason to share what they think.

9. When in your life do you feel powerful?

We were really pleased to see that 85% of young people were able to name at least one thing in their lives that makes them feel powerful. The responses that came up most often were listening to or making music (17%), playing sport or working out (13.6%), making an effort with hair, makeup or clothes (10%), and being with friends, partners and family (7%).

Every response was different, and each one was a fantastic reflection of the young person who shared it. We have included each unedited response below:

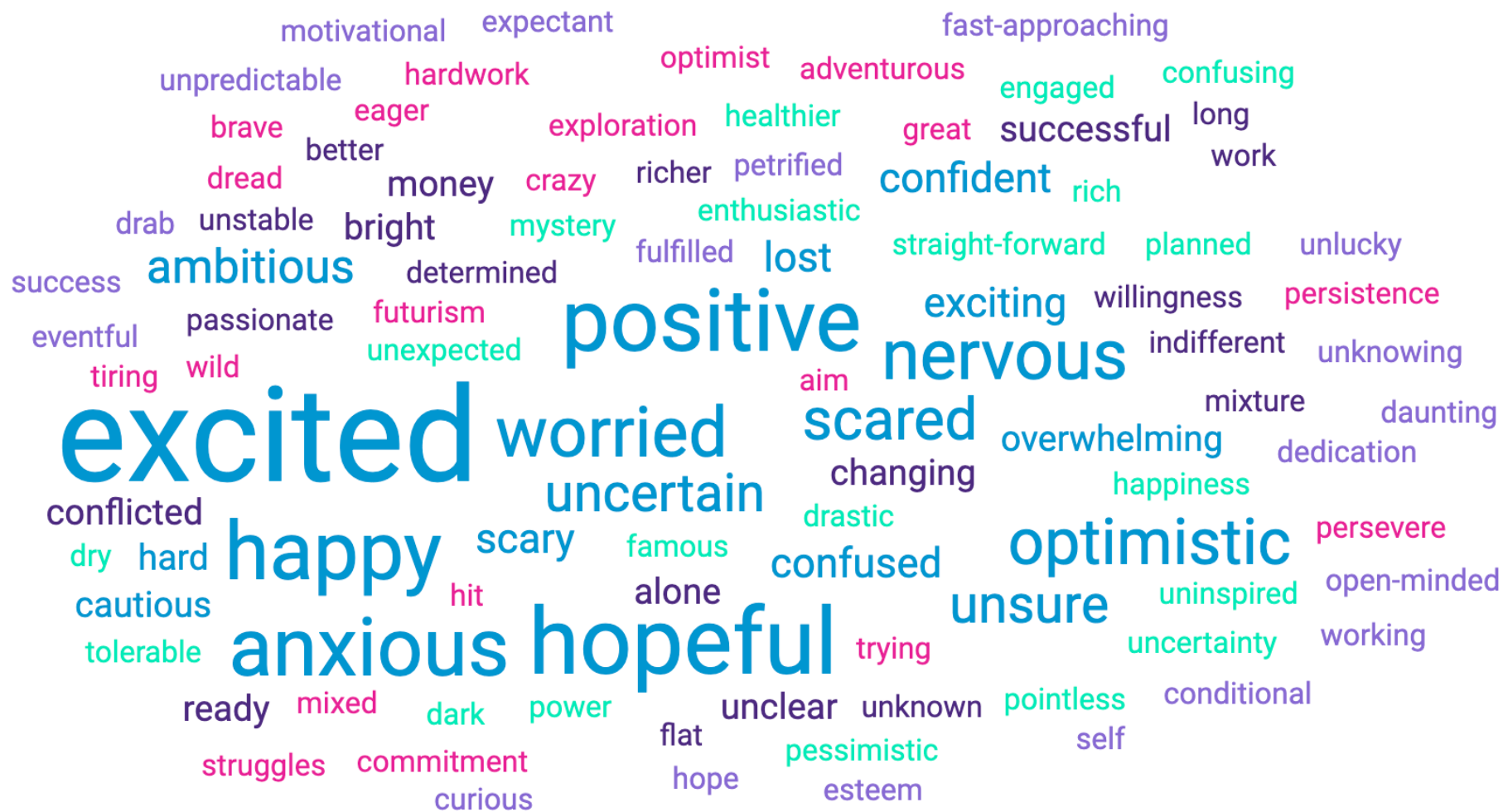
“Listening to music and playing football” “When I’m put in charge of something” “I felt powerful when I walked into the Foyer and wanted to accept help” “n/a” “When I’ve done my hair and makeup and feel good about myself” “When I do my makeup and form a god complex” “When I am doing creative writing” “When I listen to music” “When I do my rap songs” “When I play my rap music, when I do my rap songs” “When I am in work” “I like to rap and listen to lots of rap songs. I like to box in the gym to get anger out” “When people know who I am” “When I am with my boyfriend” “When I’m in the gym” “When I am able to set a goal and reach it (saving money)” “When I’m working out or doing sport or something I really enjoy it” “When I’m helping others” “I don’t my mental health makes that hard” “when I’m drunk or working out” “I don’t” “Trust your instinct and you do you, don’t care about anyone’s opinions” “When I’ve done my makeup and I’m ready to go out” “When I talk to someone and they listen” “I mostly feel powerful when I listen to music because I’m alone and no one can disturb me and it helps clear my mind” “When I feel like my mental health is going good” “When I am able to cross-dress in public” “Football” “When I talk about my feelings and thoughts and when I sing and write songs” “I feel powerful the most when I do my hair and makeup the best I can” “When I achieve something for myself” “When I’m making music” “When I know things about others that no one knows I know, when I’m honest with my friends” “When I’ve submitted an essay” “When I win an argument with my boyfriend” “When I finish each shift of my job” “When I’m helping others / talking about things I enjoy and having people listen” “When I’ve done my nails” “When my father used to own a company and he let me fire people as a child” “When reading a great book with a powerful character in. It makes you want to be that person” “When I read books” “When I like to do things on my own” “When I’ve achieved something” “Listening to Elvis” “When i am with friends” “When I am working out or boxing” “When I guide and advise people into making healthier better decisions” “When I am listened to” “When I’ve made an effort with my appearance” “When I dress a certain way and listen to specific music” “When I’m dressed nice” “When I’m in the gym” “When I am playing rugby” “When I look my best” “When I’m attending the gym this makes me feel better inside” “When I’m playing football” “Completing coursework” “Going out with friends” “When I’m working out when I don’t feel like it” “When I’m listening to Black Sabbath” “Music and boxing” “When I learn something new” “When I meditate” “When I can provide help to those in need or make someone’s day more positive” “When I am honest about how I feel” “When I challenge myself” “I feel the most powerful in my life when my health is doing well as I’m able to be a normal teenager and go out” “I feel empowered when listening to certain music/bands” “When I’ve done my hair, makeup and tan” “When I’m working” “When listening to music” “When gaming” “When playing basketball” “I don’t at the moment” “My own personal identity and when in the workplace” “good music with good company” “When gaming” “When listening to music, when being social” “Sex” “Art and Pink Floyd” “Don’t feel powerful doing anything but feel good listening to music” “When I am working” “Wearing makeup” “When with friends” “When listening to music” “When I can motivate other people” “Listening to music, with girlfriend” “When I’ve done a good deed” When I have done my hair and makeup and dress up etc” “When I’m surrounded by friends and family”

The Future

10. How positive do you feel about the future?

On a scale of 1-10, young people responding to this survey reported an average of 6.45 on the positivity scale – about the same as in February (6.5).

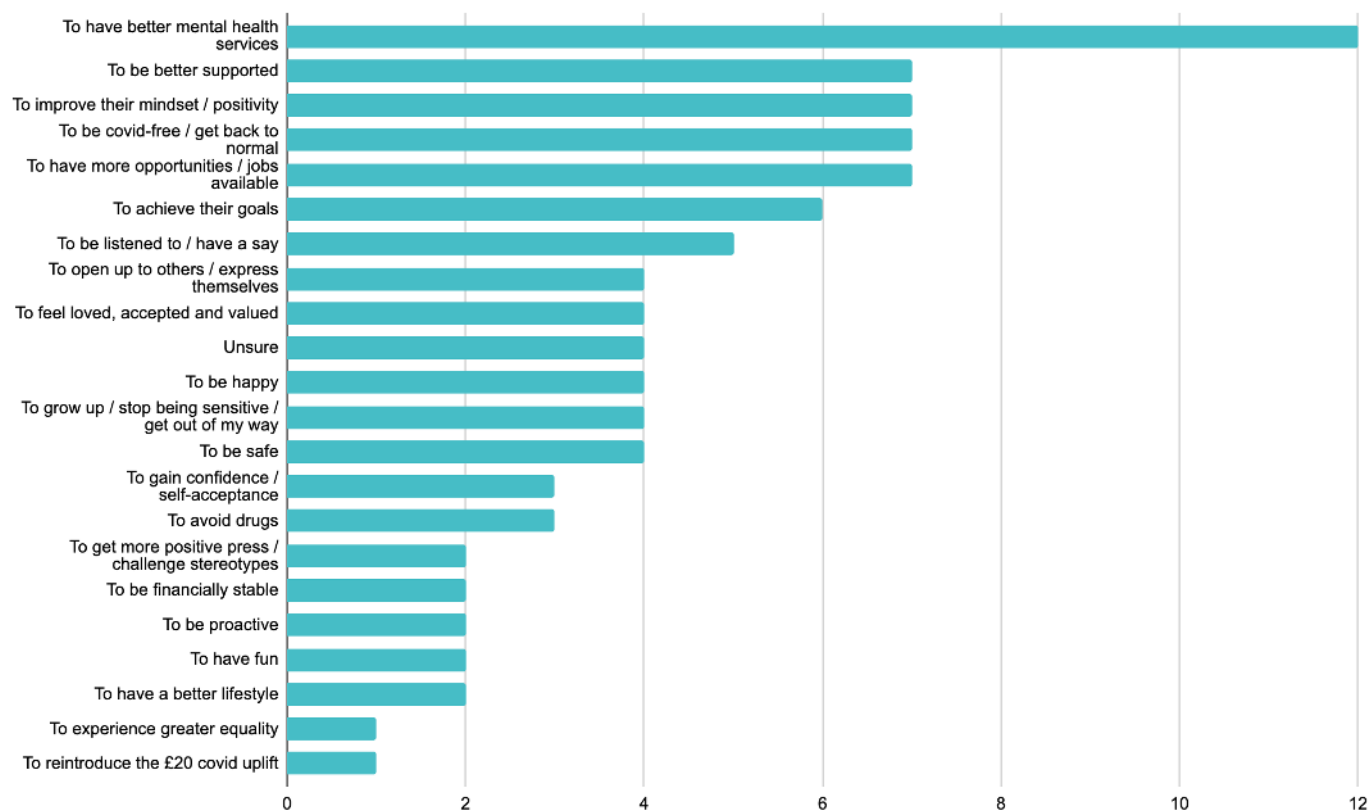
11. What three words would you say describe your feelings about the future?



12. How likely do you think it is that you will achieve your ambitions in life?

On average, young people rated this likelihood as 6.9/10. This is the lowest we've seen on these surveys so far – down from 7.6 in February. This highlights the importance of building confidence with young people, coaching them to set personalised, realistic goals, and acknowledging and celebrating the small successes along the way.

13. What is your wish for young people in the next year?



The most common wish young people had for one another for the coming year is to have better provision of mental health services (12.9%), followed by the related wishes of receiving better support in general and improving their mindsets (7.5% each). This is consistent with the responses from February 2021.

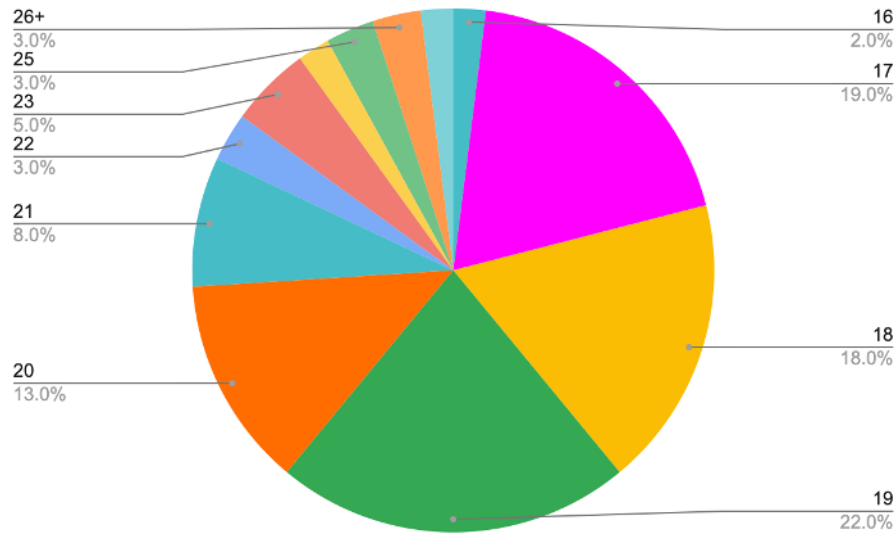
Having better opportunities and achieving goals were also high up on the list, as was the ongoing desire to get back to normality after covid – though this dropped a great deal from February, when everyone was in lockdown.

The wish that young people would be listened to appeared for the first time, which likely shows that this is being talked about and explored more in Foyers and is therefore on young people's minds. This is a positive result!

“To be able to cope with bullying and mental health” “To get more freedom and for them to get off their phones and socialise the right way” “To have more. Not too easily influenced” “Grow tf up” “Mental health gets better” “Better mental health services” “That it's easier to deal with mental health” “Make life better for people who suffer with mental health and disabilities” “That people listen to them and help with mental health” “That they feel supported and valued” “To have more job opportunities” “That they get the covid uplift again” “To accept themselves and not let others bring them down” “To be happy” “Feel able to open up about LGBTQ+ mental health abuse and the struggle with abuse in general” “That we live in a safe environment” “Don't do drugs” “To be happy and not care about other people's opinions” “improve mental health” “be confident” “stay in education because with an education you can go further in life” “to show we are more mature than they think” “Don't get in violence” “to stop letting yourself get dragged into negative stuff and focus on the good things in life not the bad. (there's always a light at the end of the tunnel)” “to have succeeded in life ambitions and to be where the best place is for them” “for them to feel supported that someone cares” “To reduce drug abuse” “To have more of a say” “Stay positive” “To always believe that anything positive is possible” “to have more fun, as last year many weren't able to do that” “No covid 19” “That they stop being so sensitive” “that COVID doesn't affect the young minds as it has done” “More support for young people” “No covid” “Clean your rooms and don't leave rubbish in the hall” “Don't Be Scared To Ask For Moral Support When You Need It!” “To try and get a job and live on their own” “That they get the help I got” “Keep safe” “For a better world with more opportunities” “To have more opportunities to make decisions about their lives and what is going on. Also to have the confidence to speak out, make those decisions and be happy with their choices” “That they feel loved and accepted for who they are” “To be happy” “To be happy” “Achieve their ambitions” “To be more positive about negative situations” “Hope all succeed in their chosen careers” “Some normality” “Not sure” “Covid free” “To achieve their goals” “To do something proactive” “Not sure” “Stay safe” “Better lifestyle” “Better mental health support” “To not feel alone” “I wish young people had better access to support; for employment, mental health and general living. there should be options for young people to learn about things they will need to do in the future: tax, housing, money management etc to allow them to settle into adulthood easier” “I wish them luck” “To be more open and forgiving” “For us to be able to get back to sort of normal and for our views and mental health to be recognised” “be able to have a healthier balance of social equality in schools and colleges (covid)” “Mental health support improves” “More jobs” “To have better mental health services” “Be listened to more” “To be financially settled” “More support with mental health” “Provide more community groups and support” “To be able to express themselves without negativity” “More money” “Mental health services to be better” “To get out of my way” “To get more help than I did” “Better mindset” “More positive press” “Feel better” “Better mental health services” “For young people to be respected” “To keep going and don't let the past beat you down” “More opportunities” “Less drug use” “To be able to speak up if they are feeling down or cornered by anything or anyone” “To be successful in the new year”

Demographic information

Almost all of the responses to these questions were free text boxes, allowing people to self-describe their identities. Everyone also had the option not to share this information with us. We use this information to assess whether we're reaching a diverse group of young people and discover any gaps.



Age

80% of the respondents are between 17-21 (up from 66.4% in February), but we have a good range of ages from 16 to 26+.

Ethnicity

8% of the respondents to this survey described themselves as white, and the next largest groups described themselves as Black (4%) or mixed race (4%). We do not believe that this fully represents the racial demographic of young people within the Foyer network, and we welcome feedback on how we can reach a wider audience with this survey to ensure all views are heard.

Nationality

88% of respondents are from the United Kingdom. We also had two young people from Iran, and one from each of Bahrain, Jamaica, Poland, Somalia, Vietnam and Zimbabwe.

Sexual orientation

61% of young people responding to the survey described themselves as 'heterosexual' or 'straight', with approximately 24% being on the LGBTQ+ spectrum including bisexual, pansexual, heterosexual and lesbian. 13% chose not to respond.

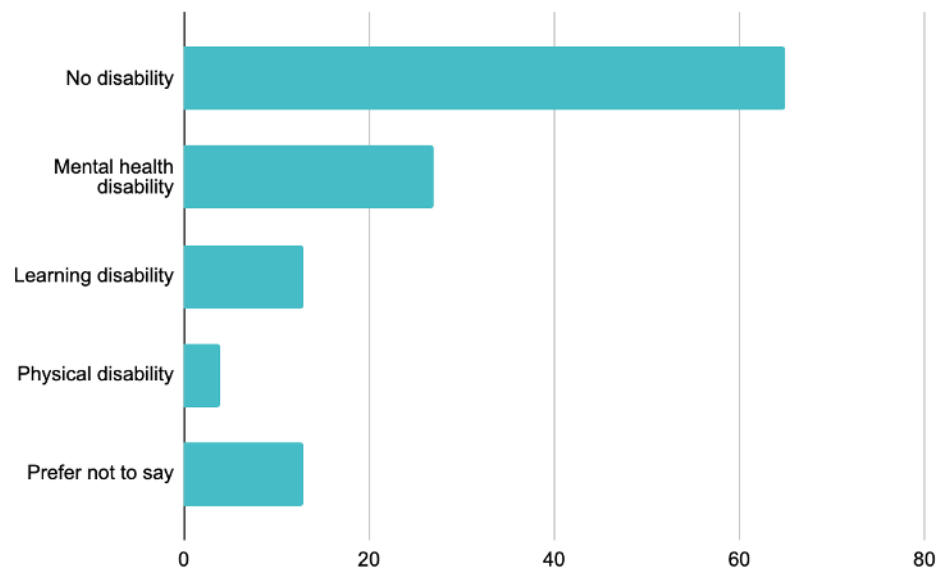
Gender

50% of respondents are male, 46% are female, 2% are non-binary, 1% are "confused", and 1% declined to respond. 4% disclosed that they are transgender – half of whom are non-binary.

Religion or belief

28% of respondents follow a religion or belief, with the largest group (18%) describing themselves as Christian. The other faiths mentioned are Islam, Catholicism, Satanism, Buddhism and Paganism. 69% do not follow a belief system, and 3% are unsure.

Disability



27% of respondents consider themselves to have a mental health disability, 13% to have a learning disability and 4% to have a physical disability.

9% of respondents report having multiple disabilities.

The UK averages are:

- [17% of adults in the UK have a common mental health problem](#)
- [2.16% of adults in the UK have a learning disability](#)
- [16% of adults in the UK have a physical disability](#)