

# Report on outcomes from discussions with children and young people in **Essex**

## The Essex Activity Workbook 2010

Informing the Essex Children and Young People's Plan 2009/11



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# Essex Activity Workbook 2010

The Essex Activity Workbook is a discussion toolkit developed in 2009 to enable children and young people to give their views on how to improve services in Essex.

The workbook is delivered in focus groups with children and/or young people facilitated by an adult.. Two versions of the workbook were published in February 2010:

- **Junior version** for children aged 5-11 years
- **Senior version** for young people aged 12-19 years, or up to the age of 25 years if leaving care, or if they have a learning difficulty or disability.

The workbook topics are aligned to the priorities in the Essex Children and Young People's Plan 2009/11 and the outcomes will be used to measure the progress in delivering the priorities in the Plan.

## Outcomes from discussions

The views in this report reflect those captured during discussions with children and young people during early January and February 2010. This report builds on the outcomes evidenced in the report on the Activity Workbook 2009, published in January 2010.

Further discussion groups will be delivered during the summer of 2010 and the outcomes reported in Autumn 2010.

## Further information

If you have any queries or would like further information, please telephone us on 01206 762923 or email us at [involvement@essex.gov.uk](mailto:involvement@essex.gov.uk).

# Executive Summary

## **Healthy lifestyles**

All of the groups thought that not having a good diet was the most likely reason for some children and young people being unhealthy, which was closely followed by children and young people not getting enough exercise. Several groups thought that children and young people might not know what is good to eat, and some raised the problem of healthy food being more expensive than non-healthy food.

## **Emotional health**

Most groups reported that if they were having a serious problem coping with issues they would talk to someone they know. Most would talk to their parents or friends as a first choice, followed by other family members. Many stressed the importance of confidentiality and trusting the person they talk to.

## **Smoking, alcohol and drug misuse**

The most common suggestions for reducing the number of young people who smoke or drink alcohol is to increase the cost, provide more education, and prevent underage sales by implementing harsher punishments for perpetrators. Providing more positive activities for young people is the most common suggestion for reducing the numbers of those that misuse alcohol and drugs. Young people feel most comfortable speaking to friends or older peers/siblings for advice and support.

## **Teenage pregnancy**

All of the groups agreed that sex and relationships education in school is not as good as it should be, that there are not enough places to go for advice and free contraception, and that young people do not understand the consequences of having unprotected sex. Other reasons for teenage pregnancies include young people feeling pressured into having sex, young people getting drunk, and young people thinking that having a baby is the best way to create a settled family life. All of the groups agreed that they would want to speak to their friends for advice about sex and relationships, however several noted that their friends may not know anymore than themselves.

## **Social care and social workers**

Being a good listener, being easy to talk to, and being able to explain things are seen as the most important skills for social workers to have. In terms of knowledge, all of the young people agreed that it is most important for social workers to understand the needs of the child or young person they are working with, their background, and their family situation. Just over half of the young people said that they would consider a career in social work, but only a third knew what qualifications are needed to practice social work. Of those that would not consider a career in social work, the most common reasons include having to make difficult decisions about people's lives, bad experiences of social workers, and being unable to detach from emotional situations.

## **Being in care and foster families**

All of the groups agreed that feeling safe and secure in your placement would be most important to children looked after. Being able to see family and friends, and getting help with education, were also seen as important for children looked after. Loving and caring carers were seen as most important to making a good foster family placement, and having your own personal space and privacy for making a good children's home placement.

### **Young carers**

The majority of participants did not know what a young carer is, with the exception of those from the young carers' group. Some groups thought that being supported to do well in school and having time for fun and playing or hanging out with friends would be most important for young carers. The young carers' group, however, agreed that making sure the 'person you look after is well cared for' would be most important. Opinions were mixed over who would be the best person for a young carer to talk to for advice and support, but both secondary age groups agreed that they would speak to other family members. The young carers' group said that they would want to talk to their parents, or not tell anyone at all.

### **Bullying**

The most common idea to reduce children and young people's fear of bullying is for schools to implement good peer support networks, closely followed by having approachable teaching or school staff that pupils can easily talk to.

Nearly all of the groups agreed that the reason children and young people do not report bullying to staff in schools is because they fear the situation will get worse. The most popular way of reporting bullying is face to face, although many groups stressed that this must be in confidence and with someone you know and trust. Bullying outside of school appears less prevalent than bullying in school, particularly for primary age pupils. Some suggestions for improving children and young people's safety outside of school include providing more positive activities for them to engage in and having more police and community support officer presence.

### **Road safety**

Discussions concluded that the most common causes of child and young person casualties are that both pedestrians and drivers do not pay enough attention, that cyclists do not wear helmets or safety clothing, and that drivers drink alcohol and drive.

### **Cyberspace safety**

The majority of groups thought that using filtering systems on computers is the best way to keep children and young people safe online, however secondary age pupils said that most young people know how to unlock these systems. Whilst primary age pupils thought it important for their parents and carers to prevent access to certain websites and not let their children use mobile phones, secondary age pupils thought it more important to educate children, young people and families about cyberspace safety.

### **Children missing education**

Reasons for children and young people truanting were wide and varied, with several groups suggesting that some pupils are just lazy and cannot be bothered, that their peers are influencing them, or that they are being bullied, or experiencing problems at home. The most common suggestions for encouraging children and young people to attend school are to make it more enjoyable, and to publicise the benefits of school and education, particularly making the link to young people's future outcomes.

### **Children with special educational needs**

The most popular actions for schools to take to improve children's potential include establishing a buddy system with other pupils, ensuring that buildings are accessible, and providing learning resources that meet the needs of pupils. The most popular suggestions for enabling children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to engage in out of school clubs and activities are to provide more clubs and activities that meet their needs, and develop and provide activities that families can do together at home.

## **Volunteering**

The most common view as to why children and young people are not getting involved in volunteering is that they are not aware of the opportunities available. Suggested ways of providing this information to children and young people include via schools or colleges, Connexions, or online. Other ways to encourage children and young people to volunteer include providing more rewards and accreditation/achievements for CVs, and providing opportunities to meet other young volunteers and share experiences.

## **London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games**

When asked for ideas on how children and young people can get interested or involved in the Games, the responses were quite varied, ranging from working at the Games or the opening ceremony, to schools hosting their own 'mini-games', and children and young people undertaking sports journalism activities. The most popular suggestions for when children and young people could take part in these activities were after school and at the weekend.

## **Getting involved and having a voice**

All of the groups concluded that children and young people can make a difference to services by being involved, however opinion was more divided as to whether children and young people complain about services when things go wrong, with the most common assumption being that nothing will change as a result of complaining.

The most popular ways for children and young people to give their views include filling in a questionnaire or survey or joining an online forum or group. The most common suggestions for improving parks and recreation grounds for children and young people include providing more or better CCTV and security, and providing more and/or better youth provision.

## **Young offenders and victims of crime**

The most popular way to prevent children and young people from getting into trouble is to introduce lessons in schools which explain the consequences of crime. Parents and carers were seen as the most likely to be able to help prevent children and young people from getting into trouble.

## **Higher education**

The most commonly agreed ideas for encouraging young people to stay on in education after the age of 16 years include providing courses that young people really want to do, better transport to local colleges and sixth forms, and better financial support. Other suggestions include having better employment opportunities and more support from family and friends.

## **Training and apprenticeships**

The best ways to give young people advice about training and apprenticeships are to get people to come into schools/colleges to talk about opportunities, get teachers or other school staff to share information, or to present it on a website.

## **Getting a job and employment**

The most popular suggestions for helping young people be successful in getting a job or employment include providing practical information on how to complete job applications and attend interviews, and providing advice on whether an opportunity is the right one for an individual. Other suggestions include information on how to research what jobs are available and advice on how to contact companies and employers.

**Leaving home**

The most commonly agreed person/s to speak to about leaving home and housing options are parents and carers, or Connexions workers. All of the groups agreed that 'life skills' should be taught in school or college. When discussing homelessness, the most popular way to get advice and support would be face to face with someone, most likely school or college staff, or friends.

**Our carbon footprint**

When asked for ways to encourage children and young people to use public transport, the most popular suggestion was to reduce the prices of public transport, particularly trains, "so that more people can use them". When asked for things that schools can do to reduce children and young people's carbon footprint, the most popular ideas include improving school bus services and improve recycling facilities in school.

**Transport**

The most popular ideas for encouraging more children and young people to use buses and trains include providing more frequent buses and trains, and extending bus routes.

# Being healthy

## Topic 1: Healthy lifestyles

Ten focus groups, comprising 96 children and young people, contributed to the discussion on healthy lifestyles. All of the groups thought that not having a good diet was the most likely reason for some children and young people being unhealthy, which was closely followed by children and young people not getting enough exercise. Several groups thought that children and young people might not know what is good to eat, and some raised the problem of healthy food being more expensive than non-healthy food.

### What do you think are the most likely reasons that some children and young people are unhealthy?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Not having a good diet	8	2	10
Not getting enough exercise	7	1	8
Not knowing what is good to eat	4	0	4
Sport and exercise is too expensive	0	0	0
It is difficult to get to sport and exercise	0	0	0
Healthy food is too expensive	1	1	2
Adults in the home are unhealthy	0	1	1
Other	4	2	6

A number of groups thought there were other important contributing factors, including that some people cannot be bothered, or do not have time to cook or exercise, and that some do not know how to cook. Young people suggested that there are not enough sporting activities to do outside of school. Other reasons include parents giving into demands of their children, and there being too many fast food restaurants in the local area.

### Other reasons some children and young people are unhealthy

	Primary	Secondary	Total
People can't be bothered to cook or exercise	2	0	2
People don't have time to cook	0	1	1
People don't know how to cook	1	0	1
Parents give in to what children want	0	1	1
Not enough sport activities outside of school	0	2	2
Too many fast food restaurants	1	0	1

### Schools' contribution to healthy lifestyles

When asked what schools can do to improve children and young people's health, the most common suggestions concerned improving and providing more healthy meals, snacks and drinks. One secondary age group noted that most school menus include unhealthy options, and that some young people need more encouragement and support to choose healthy options.

*"Schools should have a full menu of healthy food on set days".*

Nearly all groups said that they would like more hours of PE and more play/exercise time each week. A number of groups thought that children and young people should be more involved in the activities on offer, and that they should be able to choose which activities they take part in. Some groups suggested there be more after school sports clubs.

Some children and young people commented on issues regarding ability and gender, with one group arguing that schools should focus on encouraging those that are not necessarily 'good at sport', and both primary and secondary age pupils raised concerns about gender-typical sports and the need to challenge these stereotypes.

*"We do PE and we love it – makes you sweaty".*

### **Family contribution to healthy lifestyles**

All groups thought that parents and families should take an active interest in their children's physical exercise, with many primary age children suggesting more family activities, such as bike rides and walks. Many young people identified that sedentary lifestyles can often run in the family.

*"Parents need to get fit so their children won't inherit their behaviour".*

Another popular suggestion was for parents and families to buy more fruit and vegetables, particularly fruit for snacking on, rather than other unhealthy foods. Both primary age and secondary age pupils noted that healthy foods can be expensive, as could out of school sporting activities.

*"Have more fruit and healthy things in the cupboard".*

Also important is the need to educate parents and carers, and children and young people on how to live healthier lifestyles, with one group asking to be taught to read and understand ingredients and nutritional information.

Some children and young people commented on different cultural influences, particularly the knowledge and skills of parents and grandparents being passed down through the generations, evident in Irish Traveller, and Nepalese family groups.

# Being healthy

## Topic 2: Emotional health

One group, comprising six children, contributed to the discussion on emotional health. Due to the low number of participants to the discussion, the following summarises outcomes from meetings with children and young people during 2009.

### **Who to talk to about problems**

Almost every group (of 25 groups) reported that if they were having a serious problem coping with issues they would talk to someone they know. Most would talk to their parents or friends as a first choice, followed by other family members. The telephone helpline was rated quite highly as an option, as were a range of professionals.

A number of groups felt that who they would talk to depends on the situation or problem, with one facilitator confirming that “young people were adamant that depending on what the issue is would influence who they would talk to”.

### **Type of support**

The type of support they wanted was (with equal ratings):

- Someone to listen to them.
- To talk to someone who had had a similar experience to them.
- Someone they could talk to in confidence.

Many groups stressed the importance of confidentiality and trusting the person they talk to:

*“It’s sometimes easier to talk to someone you don’t know - no judging”.*

*“Sometimes worry about confidentiality. Will talk to someone they know well enough to trust.”*

A number of groups said that they wanted the person to be non-judgemental and non-biased. Someone not directly involved in the situation would also be helpful for some.

# Being healthy

## Topic 3: Smoking, alcohol and drug misuse

Eight focus groups, comprising 68 young people, contributed to the discussion on smoking, alcohol and drug misuse. The most common suggestions for reducing the number of young people who smoke or drink alcohol is to increase the cost, provide more education, and prevent underage sales by implementing harsher punishments for perpetrators. Providing more positive activities for young people is the most common suggestion for reducing the numbers of those that misuse alcohol and drugs.

The groups thought that young people would feel most comfortable speaking to friends or older peers/siblings for advice and support. *Talk to Frank* was cited as informative and useful for young people in several discussions.

### Who do you think young people would feel most comfortable going to for advice about alcohol and drug misuse?

	Secondary	Total
Parents	1	1
Other family members	1	1
Friends	5	5
School or college staff	0	0
Connexions worker	0	0
Youth worker	0	0
Social worker	0	0
Doctor or nurse	2	2
Telephone helpline	2	2
Online or magazine	1	1
Other	6	6

### Other places young people would feel comfortable going to for advice about alcohol and drug misuse?

	Secondary	Total
Support groups/specialist workers	4	4
Older peers	2	2
Someone with experience of alcohol and drug misuse	1	1

### Reducing the number of young people who smoke

Most groups agreed that preventing underage sales is key to reducing the number of young people who smoke, in particular preventing older people from purchasing cigarettes for young people, and improving proof of age identification in shops. Some suggestions include educating the public on the consequences of buying for under age young people, having people outside shops to deter young people approaching older people, and ensuring vendors are stricter when identifying the age of young people.

*“Always ask for ID, even if they look like they’re in their 20s”.*

### **Reducing the number of young people who drink alcohol**

The most common suggestion for reducing the number of young people drinking alcohol is to provide more positive activities for young people to do with friends in their local area. Young people again acknowledged the need to reduce underage sales as above and suggested harsher punishments for those that participate in underage sales. One group suggested that there be a place for young people, and the public, to report suspected underage sales. Two groups suggested that making 'shocking' films might educate and deter young people.

*"Films are a good idea. Educate people about the effects, such as falling over or being sick".*

Several young people commented on the effects of alcohol on other aspects of their lives, particularly crime and anti-social behaviour, and teenage pregnancy.

### **Reducing the number of young people who drink take drugs**

The groups had a wide range of ideas for reducing the number of young people who take drugs, the most popular being to provide more positive activities for young people, and provide more and better education in school, in particular learning about what is in drugs and their effects, and inviting ex-users into schools to talk to pupils about their experiences.

*"Drugs and alcohol education should be compulsory in school".*

Other suggestions relate to provision in the local community, such as having more CCTV, and more police presence with increased 'stop and search' activity. One group of young people praised the 2 *Smart* roadshows and suggested that similar events be held for older young people. One young person stated that parents need to be more aware of how the money they give their children is being spent.

### **Reducing illegal underage sales**

In addition to the suggestions outlined above, some groups identified the need to prevent fake IDs as many knew where to obtain fake ID for as little as £5. Several young people suggested introducing technology that can determine whether proof of age cards are real or fake.

### **Other discussions and ideas**

Many young people agreed that drugs were easier to obtain than alcohol or cigarettes, and most knew where to go to get drugs. Some young people said that they would not go to the police for advice or information because they do not 'trust them'. Most young people agreed that it is difficult to talk to parents about these issues as they do not understand and worry too much.

*"You need to break down the 'cool' about alcohol and drugs".*

One group thought that young people use drugs and alcohol as a way of releasing stress and having fun with their friends, and argued that there needs to be provision for young people to have fun and release everyday stresses. One group said that you need to engage young people in positive activities at an earlier age. Several groups suggested that education needs to be more substantial and informative, with one group suggesting that young people often know more than adults about these issues and therefore should be involved in developing curriculum or learning resources.

# Being healthy

## Topic 4: Teenage pregnancy

Three focus groups, comprising 24 young people, contributed to the discussion about teenage pregnancy. All of the groups agreed that sex and relationships education in school is not as good as it should be, that there are not enough places to go for advice and free contraception, and that young people do not understand the consequences of having unprotected sex. Other reasons include young people feeling pressured into having sex, young people getting drunk, and young people thinking that having a baby is the best way to create a settled family life.

All of the groups agreed that they would want to speak to their friends for advice about sex and relationships, however several noted that their friends may not know anymore than themselves. Drop in clinics or centres is another commonly suggested place to get advice or information.

### Why do you think there is quite a high number of young people under the age of 18 getting pregnant in Essex?

	Secondary	Total
Sex and relationships education in school is not very good	3	3
Not enough places to go for advice or contraception, such as free condoms or the pill	3	3
Lack of information and advice about sexual relationships	0	0
Young people feel pressured into having sex	2	2
Young people feel that they are not able to talk about sex and relationships with their parents	1	1
Young people do not understand consequences of having unprotected sex	3	3
Young people see having baby as the best way of creating a settled family life of their own	2	2
Other	2	2

### Other reasons for young people getting pregnant

	Secondary	Total
Alcohol	3	3
Girls think boys will 'dump' them	1	1

All of the groups agreed that sex and relationships education in school needs to be improved. One group identified that there are lots of myths about having sex and that young people do not know what is true. The same group said that “sometimes you get told off by teachers for asking silly questions”. Another group identified that sex and relationships education often focuses on changes in puberty and the biology of conception, and not on sexual relationships.

*“Young people think that the first time you have sex you can’t get pregnant”.*

A number of groups made links with other issues, such as cyber safety, with many young people accessing pornography on the internet to learn about sex, and bullying, with many young people feeling pressured by their peers and boyfriends/girlfriends to have sex too early.

**If you were thinking about, or had started to have sex, who would you want to talk to for advice?**

	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Total</b>
Parents or carers	1	1
Other family members	0	0
Friends	3	3
School or college staff	0	0
Connexions worker	0	0
Youth worker	0	0
Social worker	0	0
Doctor or nurse	1	1
Telephone helpline	1	1
Online or magazine advice	1	1
No one	1	1
Other	2	2

All of the groups said that they would want to speak to friends for advice on sexual relationships, although some were concerned that their friends would not be anymore knowledgeable than themselves. Young people also suggested that drop in clinics or centres are a good place to go for advice. All of the groups agreed that it would be important to speak to someone in confidence and than any online advice would have to be anonymous and confidential, and telephone helplines should not show up on a phone bill.

**Other places to go for advice**

	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Total</b>
Drop in clinics or centres	2	2

All of the groups agreed that the best way to give young people information and advice about sex and relationships is through schools. One group suggested that an information pack be sent to all parents of children of a certain age in order to reduce parental concerns about sex education being taught at too early an age.

*“The younger you learn about sex, the less awkward it will be to talk about it”.*

# Staying safe

## Topic 5: Social care and social workers

Three groups, comprising 16 young people, contributed to the discussions on social care and social workers. Some of the group members had been in care, several had experience of working with social workers, and some referred to friends and family members who had been in care.

Being a good listener, being easy to talk to, and being able to explain things were seen as the most important skills for social workers to have. In terms of knowledge, all of the young people agreed that it is most important for social workers to understand the needs of the child or young person they are working with, their background, and their family situation.

Just over half of the young people said that they would consider a career in social work, but only a third knew what qualifications are needed to practice social work. Of those that would not consider a career in social work, the most common reasons include having to make difficult decisions about people's lives, bad experiences of social workers, and being unable to detach from emotional situations.

### What skills do you think social workers need to have?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Be a good listener	0	2	2
Be easy to talk to	0	2	2
Be able to explain things	0	2	2
Have lots of patience	0	0	0
Be calm in a crisis	0	0	0
Make difficult decisions	0	0	0
Respond quickly when you need them	0	1	1
Be organised (gets things done)	0	0	0
Use a computer	0	1	1
Other	0	3	3

Good communication skills appear to be the most important requirement for social workers, including being a good listener, being easy to talk to, and being able to explain complex information in a way that children and young people can understand.

*“Social workers need to talk to children in a way they understand without frightening them”.*

### Other skills social workers should have

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Good communicator with children	0	2	2
Enthusiastic	0	1	1
Be confident	0	1	1
Be trustworthy	0	1	1
Adaptable to who they are working with	0	1	1

*“Social workers should have enthusiasm for what they do”.*

When asked what knowledge social workers should have to help children and families, two of the groups agreed that they should have a thorough knowledge about the child and their family and a good understanding of their background and needs. Another group said that they need to know how to help a child or young person in a wide range of situations and suggested a 'resource bank' or social worker information database.

### What do you think social workers need to know to help children and families?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
How to keep children safe from harm	0	0	0
Child development	0	0	0
The law	0	0	0
Children's rights	0	0	0
Other services that can help children (such as schools, or the police)	0	1	1
Other cultures, faiths and languages	0	0	0
Other	0	2	2

### Other things social workers need to know

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Knowing and understanding the child or young person and their family	0	2	2

46% of young people said that they would consider a career in social work, however only 29% knew what qualifications were needed to become a social worker. One group suggested that there be more local apprenticeship schemes for young people to get into social work.

Due to the low number of participants contributing to the discussion about experiences of social workers, the following information is taken from discussions with children and young people during 2009.

When asked how they feel when they talk to their social worker, more young people made negative comments than positive.

*"5 social workers in 2 years "WOW!!" Is it me???"*

*"Not a good relationship with her - putting pressure on you to talk. Didn't like her."*

*"Do not really talk to them."*

*"Fine, I feel that I can talk to her in confidence and know she will only tell people that need to know."*

*"I feel better when I talk to her."*

A number of single criticisms of social work practice were made, which are repeated verbatim below:

*"Need to be able to contact/call whenever you need support"*

*"Social care should have a menu of options - so it's tailored to the individual."*

*"Social worker was easy to talk to but took no action. I was told there was nothing they could do because of my age (I was 5 months away from 16 so they put my case to the side)."*

*"Social workers don't listen. Social workers don't find things out for you when they should. Social workers don't organise things when they should."*

# Staying safe

## Topic 6: Being in care and foster families

Three focus groups, comprising 25 children and young people, contributed to the discussion about being in care and foster families. All of the groups agreed that feeling safe and secure in your placement would be most important to children looked after. Being able to see family and friends, and getting help with education, were also seen as important for children looked after.

Loving and caring carers were seen as most important to making a good foster family placement, and having your own personal space and privacy for making a good children's home placement.

### What do you think would be most important to children and young people when they are looked after?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Seeing their family and friends	1	1	2
Being able to go to the same school	0	1	1
Getting help with their education	1	1	2
Having a choice about their placement	0	1	1
Feeling safe and secure	2	1	3
Being able to continue their interests and hobbies	0	0	0
Being kept informed about what is happening	0	0	0
Having someone to talk to in confidence	0	1	1
Not having to move too many times	0	0	0
Being included in decisions about plans for their care and future	0	1	1
Other	1	1	2

*“Seeing your mum or dad once a week would be important”.*

### Other things that would be important

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Being able to get to places and activities	0	1	1
Material things such as computers and gaming	0	1	1
Choosing their own room and having their own things	1	0	1
Retaining memories of their own family	1	0	1
Being played with	1	0	1

### Making a good foster family placement

The most commonly agreed function for making a good foster family placement is for carers to be loving and caring. Other suggestions include having your own room and space, having carers that are interested in your life, having carers that keep you safe, and spending time together to get to know one another.

### Making a good children's home placement

The most commonly agreed function for making a good children's home placement is having your own personal space and privacy, with the second most popular being that staff should support children and young people in getting along with each other. Other ideas include having adults that protect you and make you feel safe, and ensuring that everyone is treated the same.

*“Staff need to know what children want and need”.*

# Staying safe

## Topic 7: Young carers

Three focus groups (including one from a young carers' group), comprising 23 children and young people, contributed to the discussion about young carers. The majority of participants did not know what a young carer is, with the exception of those from the young carers' group.

Two of the groups thought that being supported to do well in school and having time for fun and playing or hanging out with friends would be most important for young carers. The young carers' group, however, agreed that making sure the 'person you look after is well cared for' would be most important.

Opinions were mixed over who would be the best person for a young carer to talk to for advice and support, but both secondary age groups agreed that they would speak to other family members. The young carers' group said that they would want to talk to their parents, or not tell anyone at all.

### What support do you think would be most important to a young carer?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Being supported to do well in school	0	2	2
Having time for fun and playing/hanging out with friends	0	2	2
Getting support from an adult who understands their needs	0	1	1
Talking to other young carers who have similar experiences	0	1	1
Getting an adult carer who can help care for their relative	0	1	1
Having someone to talk to in confidence	0	0	0
Having a choice about what care they provide and when	0	0	0
Other	1	1	1

### Other things that would be important

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Going to school all the time	0	1	1
Making sure the person looked after is well cared for	1	0	1

### If you or a friend wanted to get support from a young carers' group, who would you want to speak to for information?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Parents or carers	1	0	1
Other family members	0	2	2
Friends	0	1	1
School or college staff	0	1	1
Connexions worker	0	0	0
Youth worker	0	1	1
Social worker	0	0	0
Doctor or nurse	0	0	0
Telephone helpline, such as Childline	0	1	1
Online or magazine advice	0	1	1
Other	1	0	1

Most groups agreed that they would go to parents or other family members to get advice and support. Other suggestions include friends, school or college staff, youth workers, and telephone or magazine support groups. One young carer said that they would not want to speak to anyone for advice or support.

### **Other discussions and ideas**

Some groups identified that teaching staff in schools can be unapproachable. The young carers group were particularly concerned about teachers not understanding or being supportive of their commitments at home.

*“Teachers don’t understand why young carers might be late and then you have to explain in front of the class”.*

Fifteen focus groups, comprising 121 children and young people, contributed to the discussion about bullying. The most common idea to reduce children and young people's fear of bullying is for schools to implement good peer support networks, closely followed by having approachable teaching or school staff that pupils can easily talk to. The groups thought the best way for the Essex Anti-Bullying Coordinator to have an impact is to visit schools and talk to pupils.

Nearly all of the groups agreed that the reason children and young people do not report bullying to staff in schools is because they fear the situation will get worse. Most children and young people agreed that teachers should regularly ask pupils about how safe they feel in school, but some identified that pupils who are being bullied may not be honest in any event. The most popular way of reporting bullying is face to face, although many groups stressed that this must be in confidence and with someone you know and trust.

Bullying outside of school appears less prevalent than bullying in school, particularly for primary age pupils. Some suggestions for improving children and young people's safety outside of school include providing more positive activities for them to engage in and having more police and community support officer presence.

### **Reducing children and young people's fear of bullying in school**

The most common idea for reducing pupils' fear of bullying in school is to develop good peer support networks. Only one group out of the 15 said that bullying is not a problem in their school and this was due to an excellent peer support network, with peers trained in particular subjects to support younger pupils. The second most popular suggestion is to have more teachers or school staff that pupils can approach with concerns. During a number of discussions, participants identified the need to build better relationships between teaching staff and pupils, and to challenge teachers' perceptions of pupils. Any conversations about bullying with teaching staff would need to be in confidence and subtle in approach, so that bullies do not know that it is being reported.

*"Teachers don't listen to you and they are always right".*

Other suggestions include punishing bullies, educating pupils, particularly on the effects of bullying, encouraging teachers to be more vigilant, and inviting professionals, such as the police, in to talk to pupils.

### **Do you think it would help if teachers regularly asked pupils how safe they felt in school, using a scale of 1 to 10?**

	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Total</b>
Yes	5	5	10
No	1	2	3
Don't know	0	1	1

The majority of groups thought that a safety scale would be a good idea, however some groups raised concerns that it would not have an impact on reducing bullying, that it might be annoying after a while, and that individuals still might not be confident to give their true opinions on how they feel. It would be important for the views to be collated in a private and confidential way.

## Role of the anti-bullying coordinator for Essex

None of the groups were aware that there is an anti-bullying coordinator for Essex, and few were aware of an anti-bullying agenda or strategy for Essex.

*“Our school has an anti-bullying policy, but we don’t know what’s in it”.*

The majority of groups thought it would be important for the coordinator to visit schools and raise awareness of their role and the strategy, either by talking in assemblies, or talking to pupils in smaller groups. Other suggestions include developing workshops to be delivered in schools, developing an anti-bullying DVD, and sharing good practice between schools.

*“The anti-bullying coordinator should do research into what is working well in schools and what isn’t”.*

## Reporting bullying

12 out of 15 groups agreed that the most likely reason that children and young people do not report bullying to school staff is because they expect the situation will get worse as a result. The second most commonly held view is that children and young people do not think anything will change as a result of reporting. Other reasons include teachers not believing pupils and not keeping the information in confidence.

*“Sometimes they won’t know they are being bullied until the situation gets really bad”.*

The most popular way to report bullying is in a face to face setting, in confidence and to someone you know and trust. The second most popular way is through friends or peer support groups, although one group noted that those that are bullied often do not have any friends they can talk to.

## If you or a friend were being bullied, how would you rather tell someone?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Face to face	5	4	9
Text	2	1	3
Email	0	0	0
Through a friend	4	2	6
Through a peer support group	1	2	3
Through a trusted adult in school	3	1	4
Through a trusted adult outside of school	4	0	4
Other	4	4	8

## Other ways to report bullying

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Must be in confidence	0	5	5
Must be to someone you know and trust	0	3	3
Through parents and carers	1	0	1
Online	2	0	2
In a private room or space in school	1	0	1
Through a worry or feedback box	1	2	3
There should be a 'menu' of different ways	0	3	3

### **Bullying outside of school**

Many of the groups thought the reason children and young people bully outside of school is because of boredom and lack of things to do. The most popular suggestion for helping children and young people feel safe in their local area is to provide more positive activities for them get involved in. The second most popular idea was to have more police and community support officer presence, and more and better CCTV coverage. Another issue for safety outside of school for secondary age pupils is rivalry between local schools and some suggested that more partnership work could be done to reduce this.

*“There are lots of rumours about fights between rival schools, but nothing ever happens”.*

One group suggested that cyber bullying is the most common type of bullying outside of school, and this discussion is covered in Topic 10: Cyber Safety.

### **Other discussions and ideas**

Some discussions identified how bullying can affect other outcomes, such as increasing truancy, and lowering attainment and aspiration, and how a lack of service provision can cause bullying, such as not having enough positive activities to engage in.

*“Doing well in school can make you a target for bullying and you get called a geek”.*

# Staying safe

## Topic 9: Road safety

Four focus groups, comprising 37 children and young people, contributed to the discussion about road safety. The discussions concluded that the most common causes of child and young person casualties are that both pedestrians and drivers do not pay enough attention, that cyclists do not wear helmets or safety clothing, and that drivers drink alcohol and drive.

### What do you think are the biggest causes of child and young person casualties in Essex?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
<b>Roads...</b>			
Are too busy	0	1	1
Don't have enough speed restrictions	0	0	0
<b>Drivers...</b>			
Are not paying enough attention	1	1	2
Are going faster than they should	0	1	1
Are drinking alcohol and then driving	1	1	2
Are not making sure passengers wear seatbelts	0	0	0
<b>Pedestrians...</b>			
Are not paying enough attention	1	2	3
Are not wearing visible clothing	0	1	1
Do not have enough pedestrian crossings	0	1	1
<b>Cyclists...</b>			
Are not paying enough attention	0	0	0
Are not wearing helmets or safe clothing	1	1	2
Do not have enough cycle lanes	0	1	1
<b>Motor-cyclists or moped drivers...</b>			
Are not paying enough attention	0	0	0
Are not wearing helmets or safe clothing	0	0	0
<b>Something else</b>	0	2	2

Road safety around schools is of particular concern to pupils of secondary school age, with issues being raised regarding congestion of cars dropping off and picking up causing difficulties for pedestrians.

*“Schools should have a way in and a way out to reduce congestion”.*

## Other causes of child and young person casualties

	Primary	Secondary	Total
School drop off/pick up congestion	0	2	2
Broken traffic lights	0	1	1
Roadworks not accommodating pedestrians	0	1	1
Parking on pavements	0	1	1
Big vehicles parked on busy roads	0	1	1
Pavements not being gritted	0	1	1
Young people showing off	0	1	1
Slow drivers	0	1	1

## Improving children and young people's safety on the roads

The groups came up with a wide range of suggestions for improving children and young people's safety on the roads, with the most popular being to improve traffic congestion near schools by developing one way systems, and providing more parking spaces and school buses. Also important, is improving road safety education in school, including the importance of wearing safety helmets and clothing.

*“Wearing helmets is embarrassing. If everyone was wearing them, you wouldn't feel so different”.*

Other suggestions for improving safety on the roads include providing more cycle lanes, more zebra crossings, more and better signs around schools, and having more speed cameras. One group noted that speed counters should also have cameras as people use the counter to see how fast they can go.

## Other discussions and ideas

One group discussed how buses are often late in their local area which can make pupils late for school and result in detentions.

# Staying safe

## Topic 10: Cyberspace safety

Four focus groups, comprising 32 children and young people, contributed to the discussions about cyberspace safety. The majority of groups thought that using filtering systems on computers is the best way to keep children and young people safe online, however secondary age pupils said that most young people know how to unlock these systems. Whilst primary age pupils thought it important for their parents and carers to prevent access to certain websites and not let their children use mobile phones, secondary age pupils thought it more important to educate children, young people and families about cyberspace safety.

### What do you think children and young people can do to keep themselves and their friends safe in cyberspace?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Have a parent with you when you are online	0	0	0
Filtering systems on computers	2	1	3
Lessons and advice about online safety in school	0	1	1
Have a website where you can report or get advice about bullying/safety	0	0	0
Have a text service where you can forward offensive text messages	0	0	0
Other	0	1	1

### Other things that can be done

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Educate children, young people and their families about keeping safe	0	1	1
Educate children and young people about consequences of cyber-bullying	0	1	1

### Role of parents and carers in keeping children and young people safe in cyberspace

Primary age pupils said that their parents keep them safe by preventing access to certain websites using filtering systems. Their suggestions for other ways for parents to keep them safe include having passwords for particular websites, and not allowing their children to use mobile phones.

Most secondary age pupils agreed that their parents and carers are not able to keep them safe in cyberspace, mainly because young people know more than their parents about the internet and how to use it. They suggested that parents and carers be educated about computers and the internet, perhaps through free local courses, and that children and young people be educated about cyber-bullying and internet crime through IT lessons in schools.

*“All young people know how to break blocks and delete history and that sort of thing”.*

### Other discussions and ideas

One group discussed how easy it is to access pornography online and suggested that pupils are taught about pornography in school, particularly in relation to sex and relationships education.

*“All the boys look at pornography and talk about it. Can be intimidating for girls”.*

Other issues include cyber bullying, particularly within social networking websites, and the need to educate pupils about the effects of cyber-bullying.

*“Young people that bully online don’t see the effect on the person”.*

# Enjoying and achieving

## Topic 11: Children missing education

Three groups, comprising 25 children and young people contributed to the discussion on children missing education. Reasons for children and young people truanting were wide and varied, with several groups suggesting that some pupils are just lazy and cannot be bothered, that their peers are influencing them, or that they are being bullied, or experiencing problems at home.

The most common suggestions for encouraging children and young people to attend school are to make it more enjoyable, and to publicise the benefits of school and education, particularly making the link to young people's future outcomes.

### Legitimate absences

The most popular suggestions for children with legitimate reasons for missing education to continue to learn was to send work home and to engage parents in their learning. Other ideas include families using private tuition, although it was noted that this may be expensive, and for peers and friends to help out.

### Why do you think some children and young people do not go to school when they should?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
They don't enjoy school	0	1	1
They don't value school	0	0	0
They don't see the point of school	0	1	1
Their family does not see the point of school	0	0	0
They think lessons are not relevant to their life	0	0	0
They are not doing very well at school	0	0	0
They don't get on with other pupils	0	0	0
They don't get on with teachers	0	0	0
They are just naughty	0	0	0
There is something else they like doing better	0	0	0
Other	1	2	3

The most likely reasons that children and young people do not go to school when they should are that they can't be bothered, or they are lazy, or that they are being bullied. Secondary age pupils also think that problems at home could be a likely cause, as with peer influences.

### Other reasons children and young people do not go to school when they should

	Primary	Secondary	Total
They can't be bothered / lazy	1	1	2
They're being bullied	1	1	2
Peer influences	0	2	2
Having problems at home	0	2	2
They think it's cool	0	1	1

*"All the links are there... between smoking, drinking, skiving and bad behaviour".*

### **Encouraging children and young people to attend school**

The most common idea for encouraging children and young people to attend schools is to publicise the benefits of education, and particularly for secondary age pupils, to make the links between education and an individual's future, such as jobs and careers. One group suggested that schools invite successful people to come into schools to talk to pupils about the importance of education. Another popular suggestion is to make lessons and activities more fun and enjoyable. Other ideas include developing good peer support networks, and providing more support for pupils who need it.

One primary age group suggested that parents and carers can get more involved in their children's education by helping them with their homework, and a secondary age group identified that some parents need more support.

*"Parents need more support to help them parent".*

### **Other discussions and ideas**

A group of young carers said that teachers need to be more supportive of their commitments and understanding of why they may not be in school. Young people suggested that there should be workers that visit the homes of pupils that are not in school to ensure that everything is okay at home, and others suggested that more responsibility should be placed on parents to ensure their children go to school.

# Enjoying and achieving

## Topic 12: Children with special educational needs

Two groups, comprising ten children and young people contributed to the discussion on children with special educational needs. Two participants described themselves as having learning difficulties or disabilities, and two were young carers who helped look after siblings with disabilities. The low sample size is acknowledged and targeted work will be undertaken during 2010 to increase the number of participants contributing to this discussion.

### Schools' contribution

The most popular actions for schools to take to improve children's potential include establishing a buddy system with other pupils, ensuring that buildings are accessible, and providing learning resources that meet the needs of pupils.

### What do you think schools can do to make sure children with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve their full potential?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Give them a mentor	0	0	0
Have a buddy system with other pupils	1	1	2
Make sure that school buildings are accessible	0	1	1
Provide 1:1 support in class	0	0	0
Provide additional lessons or classes outside of school	0	0	0
Have learning resources that meet their needs	0	1	1
Other	1	1	2

### Other things that schools can do

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Support their everyday needs	1	0	1
Teachers to explain to other pupils about the needs of individual	1	0	1
Raise awareness of and practice inclusion	0	1	1
Develop peer support networks	0	1	1

### Out of school clubs and activities

The most popular suggestions for enabling children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to engage in out of school clubs and activities are to provide more clubs and activities that meet their needs, and develop and provide activities that families can do together at home.

*"Most children have lots of things to do at home, like computer games. We need more games for children with disabilities to do".*

### Other discussions and ideas

Both of the groups contributing to this discussion thought it important to educate children and young people about disability and inclusion. They also identified that children with learning difficulties or disabilities can sometimes be bullied and that this can be because *"people don't understand their needs"*.

# Making a positive contribution

## Topic 13: Volunteering

Five groups, comprising 41 young people, contributed to the discussion about volunteering. All of the groups knew what volunteering is, and most provided their own definition of volunteering.

*“Doing something in your own time and not getting paid for it”.*

*“Contributing to your community”.*

*“Giving up your time to help other people or helping someone who is not as well off as you”.*

The most common view as to why children and young people are not getting involved in volunteering is that they are not aware of the opportunities available. Suggested ways of providing this information to children and young people include via schools or colleges, Connexions, or online. Other ways to encourage children and young people to volunteer include providing more rewards and accreditation/achievements for CVs, and providing opportunities to meet other young volunteers and share experiences.

### Getting involved

The most popular suggestion as to why children and young people might not volunteer is that they do not know what opportunities are available. This is closely followed by the suggestion that they do not think it is rewarding, and that there is no financial reward for their time. Two out of the five groups said that it is because some young people are lazy and cannot be bothered.

*“You don’t get paid. Would prefer to hang out with my mates”.*

### What do you think are the main reasons that children and young people may not get involved in volunteering?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
They don't know what opportunities are available	0	5	5
They don't have enough time	0	1	1
They don't think its rewarding	0	4	4
They don't feel confident trying new things	0	1	1
Other	0	4	4

### Other reasons why children and young people may not volunteer?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
No financial reward	0	4	4
Other things to do	0	1	1
Can't be bothered / lazy	0	2	2
Think its boring	0	1	1
Peer pressure	0	1	1

### Ways to encourage children and young people to volunteer

The most popular suggestion for engaging more children and young people in volunteering is to provide more rewards and incentives, such as accreditation and achievements for a CV. The second most popular suggestion is to provide more opportunities for young people to meet other young volunteers and to share experiences. Other ideas include providing more fun activities which are suitable for children and young people, developing more and better advertising, and holding 'taster' days.

*"You should get young volunteers to go into youth clubs to talk about what they do".*

When asked where or how is the best way to provide information on volunteering to children and young people, the most popular suggestions include in schools or colleges, through Connexions and online.

### Where or how would be the best way to find out information on volunteering?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
In school or college	0	4	4
Connexions office	0	4	4
Youth centre or club	0	1	1
Online	0	4	4
Leaflets or posters	0	0	0
Other	0	4	4

### Other ways

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Social networking sites	0	2	2
School newsletters	0	1	1
Local newspapers	0	1	1
Shop windows	0	1	1
Peers	0	2	2
Voluntary organisations	0	1	1

*"You can get experiences with volunteering that you can't get with paid work".*

# Making a positive contribution

## Topic 14: London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games

Four groups, comprising 37 young people, contributed to the discussion about the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. When asked for ideas on how children and young people can get interested or involved in the Games, the responses were quite varied, ranging from working at the Games or the opening ceremony, to schools hosting their own ‘mini-games’, and children and young people undertaking sports journalism activities.

The most popular suggestions for when children and young people could take part in these activities were after school and at the weekend.

### Ways children and young people can get interested or involved in the Games

Ideas from the groups were quite varied with the most popular suggestions including helping to raise awareness of the Games, supporting and/or working at the Games, and taking part in the opening ceremony.

*“Give priority to young people for 2012 volunteering”.*

Other ideas include getting Essex schools to host their own ‘mini games’, organising trips or residentials, undertake sports journalism, help with marketing and advertising (such as posters), and researching the impact of the Games.

*“The Essex Schools Olympiad – get schools to create their own mini games”.*

### Which of the following would children and young people most like to be involved in the Games?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Compete at the Games	0	5	5
Volunteer at the Games	0	5	5
Watch the Games	0	4	4
Promote the Games	0	2	2
Report on the Games	0	2	2
Create art, dance or music about the Games	0	3	3
Other	0	0	0

### When would be the best time for children and young people to take part in these activities?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Before school	0	0	0
During school	0	3	3
After school	0	5	5
At the weekend	0	5	5
Other	0	0	0

*“Exams and parents – could be better after school and during weekends”.*

# Making a positive contribution

## Topic 15: Getting involved and having a voice

Nine groups, comprising 71 children and young people, contributed to the discussion about getting involved and having a voice. All of the groups concluded that children and young people can make a difference to services by being involved, however opinion was more divided as to whether children and young people complain about services when things go wrong, with the most common assumption being that nothing will change as a result of complaining.

The most popular ways for children and young people to give their views include filling in a questionnaire or survey or joining an online forum or group. The most common suggestions for improving parks and recreation grounds for children and young people include providing more or better CCTV and security, and providing more and/or better youth provision.

### What is the best way for children and young people to give their views on their local area?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Talk to their school council	0	3	3
Contact a youth council or the Young Essex Assembly	0	1	1
Fill in a questionnaire or survey	1	4	5
Have discussions with workers (a bit like this activity)	1	2	3
Online forum or group	0	5	5
Text messaging service	0	3	3
Email service	0	2	2
Other	2	5	7

Other popular ways for children and young people to give their views include talking directly to Councillors or senior managers and using social networking sites.

### Other ways to give views

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Social networking sites	0	2	2
Talking directly to Councillors or senior managers	1	2	3
Talking to professionals, such as social workers	1	0	1
Taking direct action	0	1	1

### Making a difference

All of the eight groups concluded that children and young people can make a difference to services by being involved, however concerns were raised about adults views being more important and children and young people not having much influence. One group said that the difference would depend on the number of children and young people involved. Another group described school councils as ineffective.

*“Adults don’t listen to you because you are only children”.*

Five out of the nine groups thought that children and young people do make complaints about services when things go wrong, but all of the groups had views on why some children and young people do not complain. The most common suggestions include that nothing will change as a result of complaining, that children and young people do not know how to complain, and that adults don't respect young people. Other reasons include that children and young people may be frightened or not have the confidence, or that they cannot be bothered.

*“People make complaints, but 9 times out of 10 they don't get noticed and they don't get feedback!”*

### **Improving parks, playgrounds and recreation areas in Essex**

All of the groups contributed lots of ideas to improving parks and recreation areas in Essex. The most common suggestions include providing more and improved security or CCTV, and providing more or better activities and spaces for young people.

*“There's nowhere to go and adults assume you are up to no good”.*

Other ideas include having different activities for different age groups, more or better lighting at parks and recreation areas, more sports and leisure provision, and more police presence. One group commented on the need to better inform children and young people about what is available.

*“There should be more advertising about places to go”.*

### **Other discussions and ideas**

A number of groups did not know how to get involved and several young people had not heard of youth councils. Two groups concluded that there needs to be better advertising about how children and young people can get involved in service provision.

# Making a positive contribution

## Topic 16: Young offenders

Two groups, comprising ten children and young people, contributed to the discussion about young offenders. Targeted work will be undertaken during 2010 to increase the number of participants contributing to this discussion, however further information can be obtained from the report on the 2009 Activity Workbook discussions.

The most popular way to prevent children and young people from getting into trouble is to introduce lessons in schools which explain the consequences of crime. Parents and carers were seen as the most likely to be able to help prevent children and young people from getting into trouble.

### What would work best in helping to stop children and young people from getting into trouble?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Find out why they are getting into trouble by talking to them when problems start	0	0	0
Make punishments more severe for first and second offences	0	0	0
Make punishments less severe for first offences	0	0	0
Introduce lessons in school explaining the consequences of crime	1	1	2
Provide training sessions outside of school explaining the consequences of crime	0	1	1
Introduce visits to prisons and youth offending institutions at an early age	0	1	1
Other	1	1	2

Other suggestions to prevent children and young people from getting into trouble include providing them with more or better positive activities in which to engage in, more police or community support presence, providing specific programmes such as *Prison! No way!*, and enabling young people to hear and learn from the experiences of young offenders.

### Other things that would help prevent children and young people from getting into trouble

	Primary	Secondary	Total
More positive activities to get involved in	1	0	1
More police or CSO presence	1	0	1
Specific programmes	0	1	1
Offenders to speak to children and young people	0	1	1

*“Prison no way’ is really good. Two offenders came in and spoke about their experiences – really made you think”.*

The most commonly agreed person/s to help prevent children and young people getting into trouble are parents and carers. Other suggestions include family, school staff, youth workers, police officers, and older young offenders.

**Who do you think can best help prevent children and young people getting into trouble?**

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Parents	1	1	2
Other family members	0	1	1
Friends	0	0	0
School or college staff	1	0	1
Connexions workers	0	0	0
Youth workers	0	1	1
Social workers	0	0	0
Police officers	1	0	1
Telephone helpline, such as childline	0	0	0
Online or magazine advice	0	0	0
Other	0	1	1

The groups thought that family, school staff, youth workers and police officers could all help by explaining the consequences of crime. Older young offenders can help by revealing “their own life experience and knowledge”.

**Reporting a crime**

Views were mixed on how children and young people would want to report a crime. The primary aged group agreed that they would want to report a crime through their parents or carers, however the secondary age group were undecided about how best to report a crime, although agreed that it should be in confidence.

*“Children and young people often worry about the consequences of reporting a crime!.*

**Victims of crime**

When asked who they would want to speak to if they were a victim of crime, the groups cited close family and friends, but noted that it would largely depend on the situation.

*“Some young people aren’t able to talk to people about their feelings. They keep it bottle up until it gets really out of hand”.*

# Achieving economic well-being

## Topic 17: Higher and further education

Four groups, comprising 22 young people contributed to the discussion on higher and further education.

The most commonly agreed ideas for encouraging young people to stay on in education after the age of 16 years include providing courses that young people really want to do, better transport to local colleges and sixth forms, and better financial support. Other suggestions include having better employment opportunities and more support from family and friends.

### What do you think would encourage young people to stay on in education after the age of 16?

	Secondary	Total
Enjoyment of school or college	1	1
Doing well in school or college	0	0
Believing that you can succeed	1	1
Better employment opportunities	2	2
Courses that you really want to do	3	3
Better transport to colleges	3	3
Better financial support	3	3
Being able to train whilst working	0	0
Better support from family and friends	2	2
Better information about what type of jobs there are	0	0
Other	2	2

Two groups discussed the importance of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and how it should be higher and more widely available, whilst another group mentioned parents should be better financially supported. Transport to colleges and sixth forms is an issue with many young people citing worries about the cost of transport, or the need to rely on parents driving them. Two groups suggested having more choice in the courses that are available locally.

Other ideas include inviting young people to taster days at colleges, sixth forms and universities, and inviting undergraduates into schools to talk to young people about their experiences.

### Other suggestions to encourage young people to stay on in education

	Secondary	Total
Higher EMA and widely available	2	2
Financial support for parents	1	1
More choice of courses locally	2	2
More vocational courses	1	1
Taster days	1	1
Talking to undergraduates	1	1

*“Aim higher course is really good – don’t mind giving up our time for it”.*

# Achieving economic well-being

## Topic 18: Training and apprenticeships

Four groups comprising 22 young people contributed to the discussions on training and apprenticeships.

The best ways to give young people advice about training and apprenticeships are to get people to come into schools/colleges to talk about opportunities, get teachers or other school staff to share information, or to present it on a website.

### What would be the best way to give young people advice on training and apprenticeships?

	Secondary	Total
One to one contact with a Connexions Personal Adviser	0	0
People coming into schools and colleges to talk about opportunities	2	2
Through teachers or other school staff	2	2
Through parents or carers	0	0
Using leaflets or posters	1	1
On a website	2	2
Other	1	1

Other suggestions include using leaflets or posters, inviting young people to 'taster days', and sharing information through youth workers.

### Other ways to give young people advice

	Secondary	Total
Taster days	1	1
Youth workers	2	2

*"Didn't know that the One Stop Shop did careers advice".*

### Other discussions and ideas

Two of the groups were aged 14 to 15 years and had not yet heard of Connexions. When they were advised about the service they suggested that they should be made aware of services, such as Connexions, that will be made available to them when they are older.

*"Don't know what Connexions is".*

# Achieving economic well-being

## Topic 19: Jobs and employment

Three groups comprising 17 young people contributed to the discussions about jobs and employment.

The most popular suggestions for helping young people be successful in getting a job or employment include providing practical information on how to complete job applications and attend interviews, and providing advice on whether an opportunity is the right one for an individual. Other suggestions include information on how to research what jobs are available and advice on how to contact companies and employers.

### What do you think would help young people become successful in getting a job or employment?

	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Total</b>
Information on how to research what jobs are available	1	1
Information on how to complete job applications and attend interviews	2	2
Information on how to contact companies and employers	1	1
Advice on whether an opportunity is the right one for you	2	2
Advice on the pros and cons of different opportunities	0	0
Advice on how to progress and future careers	0	0
Other	1	1

One group suggested that information be made available earlier in a young person's life. The same group suggested that information about what qualifications is needed for particular careers would be useful.

### Other things that might help

	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Total</b>
Earlier advice	1	1
Advice on what qualifications you need for careers	1	1

*"You only get advice at the end of Year 10".*

### Where and how to provide advice

When asked where and how would be the best place to get this information or advice, the ideas were varied and include job centres, the internet, schools, and face to face contact.

### Other discussions and ideas

Other discussions arose around the need to improve the information available and the skills taught in schools, particularly around preparing CVs and covering letters. More needs to be done to raise awareness of the information and advice that is currently available, and employers need to be challenged on prejudices about young people, such as their age and lack of experience.

*"Experience and age is a barrier".*

# Achieving economic well-being

## Topic 20: Leaving home

Four groups comprising 22 young people contributed to the discussions about leaving home. The most commonly agreed person/s to speak to about leaving home and housing options are parents and carers, or Connexions workers. All of the groups agreed that 'life skills' should be taught in school or college. When discussing homelessness, the most popular way to get advice and support would be face to face with someone, most likely school or college staff, or friends.

When asked who is the best person to speak to about leaving home and housing options, the most popular suggestions were parents or carers and Connexions workers. Other suggestions were varied and include One Stop Shops, other family members, friends, youth workers, voluntary organisations, counsellors and housing authorities.

### Who is the best person to speak to about leaving home and housing options?

	Secondary	Total
Parents	2	2
Other family members	1	1
Friends	1	1
School or college staff	0	0
Connexions worker	2	2
Youth worker	1	1
Social worker	0	0
Telephone helpline, such as Childline	0	0
Online or magazine advice	0	0
Other	4	4

All of the groups agreed that life skills should be taught in school or college, with two groups suggesting that it be compulsory education in schools. The second most commonly agreed way is through parents and family. Other suggestions include through voluntary organisations, or through their peers.

### What is the best way for young people to learn 'life skills' such as paying bills and managing money?

	Secondary	Total
Through their parents and family	2	2
At school or college	4	4
At a Connexions office	0	0
At a youth centre	0	0
Getting information online	0	0
Reading information in leaflets or books	0	0
Other	1	1

*"Life schools should be taught in schools and should be compulsory".*

## Homelessness

When asked who they would want to speak to if they had to leave home suddenly and in an emergency, the most popular persons to get help from are school or college staff, and friends. However, a couple of groups commented that it would largely depend on the individual's situation. Other suggestions were quite varied and include housing authorities, voluntary organisations, job centres, foyers, parents/carers, other family members, Connexions workers and youth workers.

### If you or a friend had to leave home in an emergency who would be the first person you would go to for help?

	Secondary	Total
Parents	1	1
Other family members	1	1
Friends	2	2
School or college staff	2	2
Connexions worker	1	1
Youth worker	1	1
Social worker	0	0
Telephone helpline, such as Childline	0	0
Online or magazine advice	0	0
Other	2	2

*“You’d stay with family or friends if it was an emergency over the weekend”.*

When asked what would be the best way for young people to get advice on homelessness, the most commonly agreed idea was face to face. It was very important to one group that the person they would seek help from is someone they can trust. One group suggested that there should be a “wide range of ways” to get help in this situation.

### What do you think would be the best way for young people to get advice on homelessness?

	Secondary	Total
Face to face	2	2
By telephone	0	0
Online	0	0
Other	1	1

*“You’d want to speak to a friendly face”.*

# Achieving economic well-being

## Topic 21: Our carbon footprint

Three groups comprising 17 young people contributed to the discussions about our carbon footprint.

### **Public transport**

When asked for ways to encourage children and young people to use public transport, the most popular suggestion was to reduce the prices of public transport, particularly trains, “so that more people can use them”. Other suggestions include educating the public on how they can reduce their carbon footprint by not using cars, and advertising the adverse affects of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions on the environment. One group suggested there be free or cheaper travel for under 18s, and another said that public transport providers need to improve safety on buses and trains at night, so that young people feel more comfortable using them.

*“More adverts about the impact of everyone driving”.*

### **Schools**

When asked for things that schools can do to reduce children and young people’s carbon footprint, the most popular ideas include improving school bus services and improve recycling facilities in school. Other suggestions include encouraging more cycling to school, turning off lights and computers when not in use, reducing the amount of meat on school menus, and providing more education about what a makes a difference to the environment.

*“Lots of recycling bins would encourage people to use them more”.*

# Achieving economic well-being

## Topic 22: Transport

Two groups comprising 11 young people contributed to the discussions about our carbon footprint. Targeted work will be undertaken during 2010 to increase the number of participants contributing to this discussion.

The most popular ideas for encouraging more children and young people to use buses and trains include providing more frequent buses and trains, and extending bus routes.

### Which of the following might encourage children and young people to use more buses and trains?

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Free or cheaper transport to school or colleges	0	0	0
Free or cheaper transport to everyone under the age of 18	0	1	1
More frequent buses and trains	0	2	2
More bus routes	0	2	2
Cleaner buses and trains	0	0	0
Safer buses and trains (such as CCTV)	0	0	0
Other	0	2	2

Other ideas include providing more or cheaper transport to under 18s, making young person railcards cheaper and increasing Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) to cover transport costs.

### Other ways to encourage children and young people

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Cheaper young person railcards	0	1	1
Increase EMA to help with travel costs	0	1	1

*"It should be 12 and up for discounts – anyone younger relies on their parents, not public transport".*

### Information on buses and trains in Essex

All participants said that they knew where to go to find information on buses and trains in Essex. All of the groups described the information as very or quite good. When asked what is the best way to give children and young people this information, one group commented on the 'information port in town' being good.

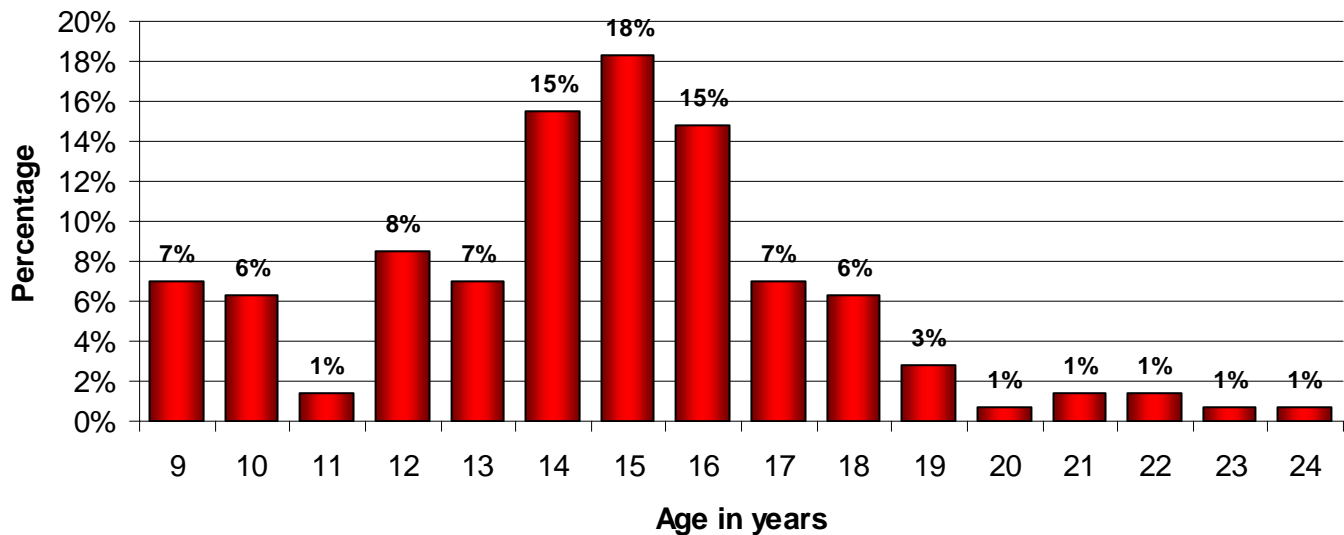
*"Don't have to pay for trains – you just jump them".*

# Participants

259 children and young people contributed to over 30 discussion workshops across the county during January and February 2010. The majority of the workshops were held in Basildon (12), Chelmsford (9) and Colchester (4), with other discussions being held in Epping Forest (2), Harlow (2), Tendring (2), and Braintree (1). 52% of participants described themselves as female and 48% described themselves as male.

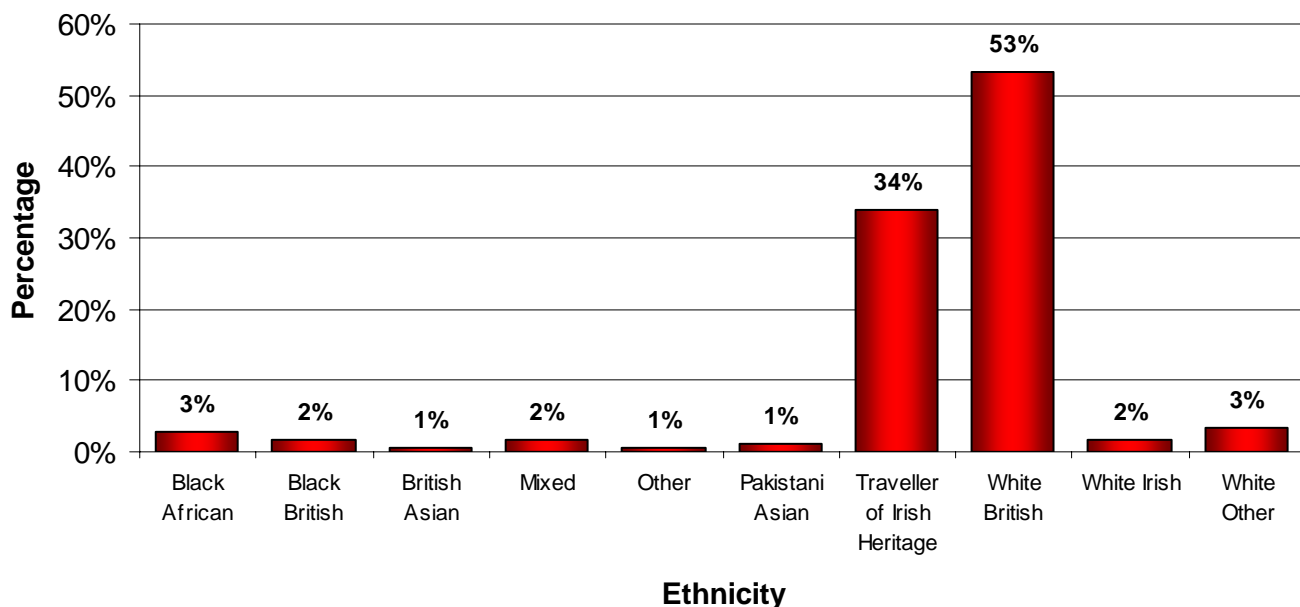
## Age

Participants were aged between 9 and 24 years.



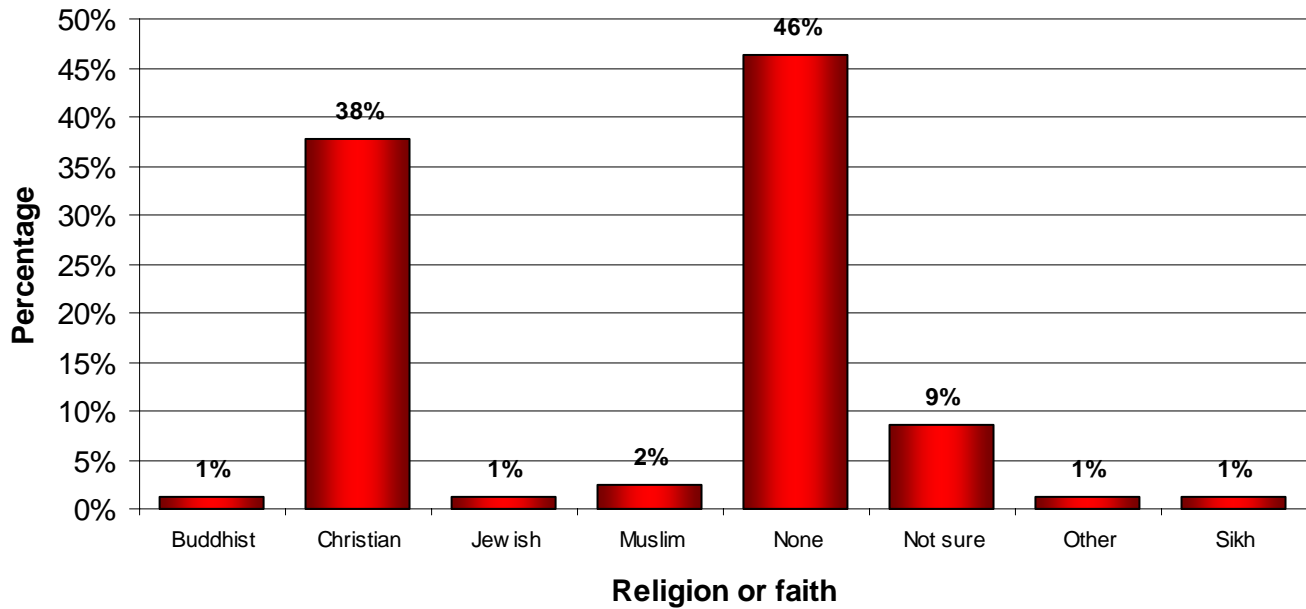
## Ethnicity

Participants were in the majority White British, Irish or other (58%). A large percentage of participants described themselves as Travellers of Irish Heritage (34%).



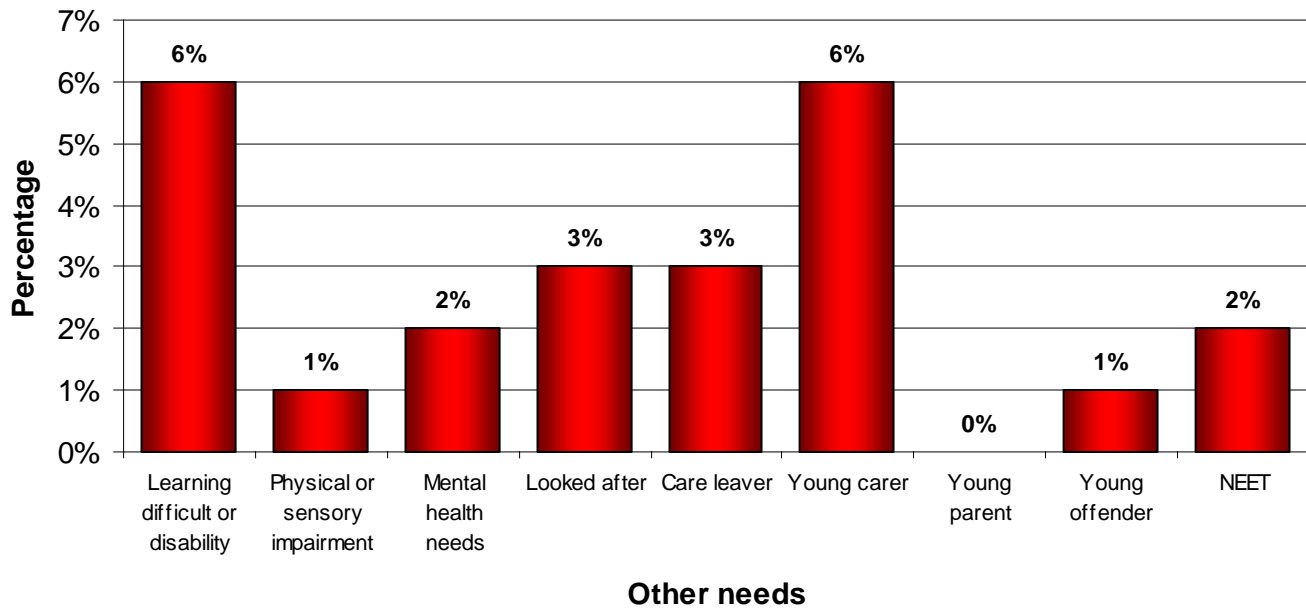
## Religion or faith

The majority of participants described themselves as not having any religious or faith beliefs.



## Other needs

Participants described themselves as below.



## **This booklet is issued by**

Essex County Council on behalf of the Essex Children's Trust

You can contact us in the following ways:

### **By post**

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Schools, Children and Families  
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