



# FUTURE READY:

## Warwickshire's Youth Conference

### Report

Thursday 21 April 2022

Woodland Grange, Old Milverton Lane,  
Leamington Spa, CV32 6RN



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# ABOUT FUTURE READY

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Hosted on Thursday 21 April 2022 and organised by young people, for young people, Future Ready: Warwickshire's Youth Conference, brought together local organisations with young people to create a safe space to talk about important issues facing young people today.

Part of Warwickshire County Council's priority programme, Child Friendly Warwickshire, the Future Ready conference aimed to give young people a voice. Young people chose the five topics for the day, which were:

- climate change
- mental health
- careers
- respectful relationships, and
- youth homelessness.

They spoke to each organisation delivering the five workshops to ensure they were the right fit for the conference and worked closely with the Participation Team, Targeted Youth Support Team and the Child Friendly Warwickshire Team to identify what they wanted to achieve on the day.

There were numerous activities available, including a digital graffiti wall, a caricature artist and a photo booth. A key part of the day was the quiet space, supported by the county council's Voice, Influence & Change team, for any person who needed time away from the activities and the crowds. This area proved to be very beneficial to many young people in attendance, particularly those with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and will be a priority for all future Child Friendly Warwickshire events. Lunch was provided for attendees. Young people had the chance to talk to over 25 local organisations who are helping to create a child friendly county.

This report breaks down some of the feedback received from young people, workshop leads and stall holders.

To watch highlights from the day, [click here](#) for the conference video on YouTube.

Child Friendly Warwickshire is an initiative that aims to provide young people with the opportunities to have their voices heard and learn new skills, as well as offering safe, happy and healthy experiences so they lead the best lives they can.



# INTRODUCTION

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Warwickshire's Youth Council, Children In Care Council and Care Leavers Forum helped to organise the event and delivered presentations on each of the five workshop areas.

Here, Zoe Stevens and Alice Battersby, co-chairs of Warwickshire's Youth Council, provide some words post-event:

Young people are the voice of the future: a future we should take every opportunity to influence. Future Ready, Warwickshire's Youth Conference gave us the space to talk with each other, and to local organisations, about our views on issues we care about and how we can shape and make a difference in our communities.

True to the Child Friendly Warwickshire ethos, the youth conference allowed our voices to be heard and we felt valued. Our five workshops - climate change, mental health, careers, youth homelessness and respectful relationships – were based on issues that young people want to learn more about and have an impact on, together.

We want to thank the Warwickshire councillors, Warwickshire County Council officers and, of course, all of the young people in attendance who made it a powerful and uplifting day.

**Now, on to the next one!**





## Warwickshire's Young Poet Laureate - Daniel Wale

The 2021/22 young poet laureate for Warwickshire, Daniel Wale, attended the conference and even wrote a poem about the power of young people, which can be read below.

Daniel said: "Since September, I have been Warwickshire's Young Poet Laureate, a position which allows me to write and perform poems for communities all around Warwickshire for a variety of purposes and events, as well as receive tuition from my mentor, Jasmine Gardosi. It has been an amazing experience so far and I really enjoyed my short talk at the youth conference. I look forward to what it has to offer in the coming months."

### Youth Voices

A knock at the door,  
A hand curled in a tight fist,  
That menacing sound.  
The future cannot wait long  
And the children must answer.

A march on the street,  
A hand curled in a tight fist,  
The voice of the young.  
The future cannot wait long  
And the adults will soon know.

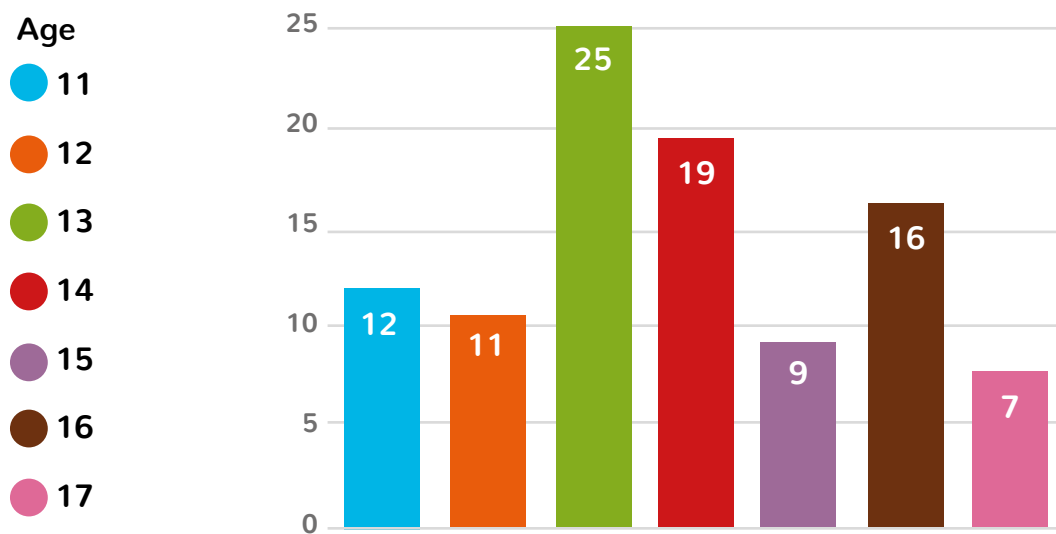


# ATTENDANCE

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Essential to Future Ready were the young people attending. The aim was to have 75 young people aged between 11 and 17 attend, from all across the county. We had over 100 registrations!

In total, there were 76 young people in attendance, ranging from ages 11 to 17.



Note: attendance figures may not 100% accurate.

Attendance was high from Leamington Spa, Rugby and Warwick. The location of the next youth conference will ensure that it is more accessible for the north of the county.



Note: attendance figures may not 100% accurate.

# FEEDBACK

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## What young people said

Opportunities were created for young people to give their feedback, including via Mentimeter. Below are a sample of quotes from young people:

“ I got back earlier from the conference and just wanted to thank all involved. I had a brilliant day! Please pass my best wishes to everyone involved (can't wait for the next one!) ”

“ This has been very educational fun and inspirational. Thank you for the great opportunity to let our voices be heard! ”

“ I have had a great experience and I would like to come again. ”

“ Excited to make a difference. ”

“ I feel like I have a wider knowledge of the subjects I participated in. ”

“ Literally amazing. ”

A few were nervous with the amount of people attending as they came alone.

## Workshop feedback

The themes for the workshops were chosen by young people, they were: climate change, mental health, careers, respectful relationships and youth homelessness.

Each of the organisations leading the sessions were chosen by young people, too. Here is what they said about the event:

“ It was a striking and impressive event, and I can see a lot of future in it. Well done! ”  
David Mond, Warwickshire Climate Alliance

“ It was a lovely event yesterday and great to be a part of it! ”  
Jennifer Shergill, Kooth

“ It was great to be part of it and to see so many young people there. I hope this can be a yearly event. ”  
Chris Stephens, Prospects

“ It was great to see so many young people there, well organised and run. ”  
Kerry Hansard, St Basils

“ Young people engaged really well and seemed to enjoy the day. ”  
Loz Grinnell, Targeted Youth Support





## Stall holder feedback

Alongside the workshop sessions, 25 organisations from across the county attended as stall holders. Young people were encouraged to go to each stall and talk about the issues they care about and find out more about each organisation.

A survey was given to stall holders in which nearly every stall said they would be interested in future events/conferences, with just one saying 'maybe'. All stall holders found that the youth conference provided them with some opportunity to talk to young people, but noted that they would want more space and a longer period of time to talk to them at future conferences.

Below are a sample of quotes from stall holders:

“ It was a great opportunity to meet with young people and other organisations and talk to them about our service and how we can meet the needs of young people. ”

“ Giving young people a voice. ”

“ It was great to see so many young people and agencies raising awareness about important issues and services available. ”

“ Everyone seemed really friendly, all of the young people there were really interested and engaging and forthcoming in making conversation and asking questions, it was a great vibe with lots of positivity! ”



# WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

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## Climate Change & Environment Recommendations

Young people felt frustrated and worried about the future. They feel time is running out and there is not enough urgency to get things done. Our recommendation is that Warwickshire County Council, as a large organisation, become a role model to other large organisations on how to deliver sustainable services by switching to renewable energy, and introducing sustainable planning, design and delivery of services that do not harm the environment.

Young people commented that climate change is always seen as someone else's problem. But supporting everyone to make small changes can lead to bigger benefits. Creative and imaginative campaigns about small changes residents of Warwickshire can do to help the climate emergency were encouraged by young people.

Young people felt that business and retail have a part to play in creating new technologies and ideas to combat climate change. Business and retail should also be encouraged to work more sustainably. Our recommendation is that councils within Warwickshire work closely with the private sector to promote sustainable growth.

## Youth Homelessness Recommendations

Young people told us that homelessness is not a topic that is talked about enough. Talking about homelessness may prevent it from happening for some young people. Our recommendation is that there is more information on homelessness to promote awareness in schools and colleges.

Young people said that they did not feel that services listen to young people carefully enough. Services need to understand how to support young people better. Our recommendation is that there is a more child friendly approach used with young people who are homeless.

Many young people commented that they would not know what to do or where to go if they were at risk of becoming homeless. Our recommendation is that more targeted information is created and made available on what homelessness is and where to go to for help and support.

## Jobs & Careers Recommendations

Young people told us that these are the things that worried them most about jobs and careers:

- Powerful technology making it more difficult to get a job
- Employers taking away privacy at work
- Getting the right qualifications
- Workers' rights as the world changes
- Getting experience to get a job, but you can't get experience without a job.

Our recommendation is that more up to date and relevant information is made available to young people in a simple way, to help them explore and understand the variety of opportunities, and offer skills and support to plan and prepare for a rapidly changing future job market.

## Mental Health & Wellbeing Recommendations

Many young people commented that there are long waiting times, problems with being discharged from services when they felt they still required support, and generally the support being offered not matching their mental health needs. Our recommendation is that there is better information, with better publicity and promotion, in one place that young people can visit to understand what support is available to them and how to access it.

Young people also raised that they felt their schools were not helpful in supporting them with their mental health issues. Young people mentioned that they felt schools could be dismissive and tried to minimise mental health issues as 'exam stress' or 'low-level anxiety', but young people felt that that was not what they were experiencing. As a result, many did not view school staff/teachers as a safe place to talk through worries or concerns. Others who did use school support staff felt that teachers were stretched and not adequately trained in managing mental health issues, or even understanding them. Our recommendation is for better training to be provided to those in positions of responsibility to take young people seriously and signpost to appropriate quality support.

Young people felt that if they raised concerns with school, that information would always be passed on, even though teachers had previously advised that information wouldn't be shared. Many young people did not want parents/carers to know about their issues and accessing support from community services meant an even longer waiting list if parents/carers were unaware of issues. Our recommendation is that confidentiality be always respected (unless there is a risk of harm to the young person), and serious consideration be given to how services could be more responsive to meet young people's needs.

## Respectful Relationships Recommendations

Young people feel that the information that they receive from school around sex is based around the biology of reproduction or the practical condom demonstration. Our recommendation would be that young people want more information on healthy relationships and spotting the signs of unhealthy relationships.

Young women said that they can feel judged by young men, and also feel judged by other young women. They put this down to both insecurity and jealousy. Our recommendation is that young people should be given access to more information and workshops on body image and confidence.

Young people commented that they feel they must change their behaviour in school to fit in with peer groups. Young people said that they feel the pressure of not being seen as boring or sensible in school. They gave examples of behaving worse or swearing more than they would at home. Our recommendation would be to offer more information on how young people can better manage peer pressure.



# IN CLOSING

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We want to say a big thank you to our organising group, including the young people we worked with, for making this event happen.

**“** Thanks to all the young people whose contributions made this such a successful event. **”**

John Coleman  
Assistant Director - Children & Families

**“** This event was a chance for young people to come together to talk about issues that matter to them and to amplify their voices across the county. It was a joy to attend the youth conference, and to hear inspirational ideas from young people from all over the county. I look forward to attending future conferences with young people, and to including their ideas and thoughts in future policies from the county council. **”**

Councillor Izzi Seccombe  
Leader of the Council

The recommendations from the young people who attended the conference have been shared with colleagues and the team involved in organising the event. We're working on implementing and taking forward these recommendations and will be discussing them further with young people via the Youth Council and other young-person-led forums. We are keen for young people to continue to share their ideas with us, as listening to their voices will help us move forward.

If you're interested in future events, the next Youth Conference, or getting involved with Child Friendly Warwickshire in any way, please email us at [childfriendly@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:childfriendly@warwickshire.gov.uk) and we'll be in touch!

To find out more about Child Friendly Warwickshire, visit our website: [childfriendlywarwickshire.co.uk](http://childfriendlywarwickshire.co.uk) or search for us on Facebook and Twitter.



