



VOICES OF TOMORROW: WARWICKSHIRE YOUTH CONFERENCE 2023

Event Report
Friday 3 November 2023
The Slate Room, Warwick University



VOICES OF TOMORROW: Warwickshire's Youth Conference

FRIDAY 3RD NOVEMBER



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ABOUT VOICES OF TOMORROW

Over 100 Warwickshire young people took part in this year's Warwickshire Youth Conference: Voices of Tomorrow held at the Slate Conference Centre, University of Warwick.

The event on 3rd November, hosted by Child Friendly Warwickshire, Warwickshire County Council's Voice, Influence & Change team and in partnership with Warwick University, was organised and led by young people for young people to offer an opportunity for them to come together to discuss topics of importance to them.

A total of eight different workshops were thoughtfully planned for the day allowing participants to focus on issues that affect children and young people. The themes were broad including:

- Climate & sustainability
- Safety in Warwickshire
- Mental health & wellbeing
- Careers & opportunities
- Let's talk money!
- Activities & green spaces
- Space for girls
- Identity

These themes were based on issues raised by young people from Warwickshire in previous Child Friendly Warwickshire engagement. Warwickshire's Youth Council played a pivotal role in planning and organising the event, working alongside Child Friendly Warwickshire, Warwickshire County Council's Voice, Influence & Change team, youth workers, councillors, and businesses to create an impactful day.



There were numerous activities available, including a digital graffiti wall, a caricature artist, and a craft table. 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 20 local organisations who are helping to create a child friendly county. Please see our [conference pack](#) for more information.

The event was also supported by Warwick University Student Ambassadors, who played an essential role in ensuring the day's success. 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.



INTRODUCTION

YOUTH COUNCIL CO-CHAIRS: WREN AND ALICE

Youth Council Co-chairs Alice Battersby and Wren Morley-Brown are confident that events like this can make a big difference to helping the county be as child friendly as possible.

Alice said, “Young people are the voice of the future: a future we should take every opportunity to influence. This conference gave us that chance by creating a space to talk with each other and to local organisations about our views on issues we care about and how we can make a difference and shape our communities.”



WARWICKSHIRE'S YOUNG POET LAUREATE - EMILY HUNT

The 2022/23 young poet laureate for Warwickshire Emily Hunt, attended the conference and even wrote a poem about listening to the voices of young people, particularly her thoughts on the effects of Climate Change:

Warwickshire's Young Poet Laureate - Emily Hunt

When I was Afraid for the future, I made meadows

When I was Afraid for the future, I made meadows

Sowed barren ground with hope

swathes of colour, texture, scent -

it helped

there was lady's bedstraw and field scabious

birds-foot-trefoil, poppies, vetch.

I felt better and the butterflies came -


red admirals, tortoiseshells, skippers.

Nectaring, lifting me with their wings

then hoverflies and bees and things I didn't

even have names for.





Goldfinches clung to drying seedheads
just as I'd seen in books, and dusk
was peppered with moths
and under leaves hid pearly slug eggs
and snail shells tightly cemented shut
as pipistrelles cast shadows
in the street light -
it felt good.

Do you ever feel hopeless helpless, alone?

I did. I thought it was just me
and my meadows
just me and a handful of seed –
but it's not, you see
I found Em and Jose and Harry
with their nest boxes and birds and trees
and Benji and Beth
with their drawings and rewilding
and James who spends his days counting bees.

Everywhere
there are young people like us
our small acts adding up,
so don't feel alone -
in the face of adversity
be the hope.

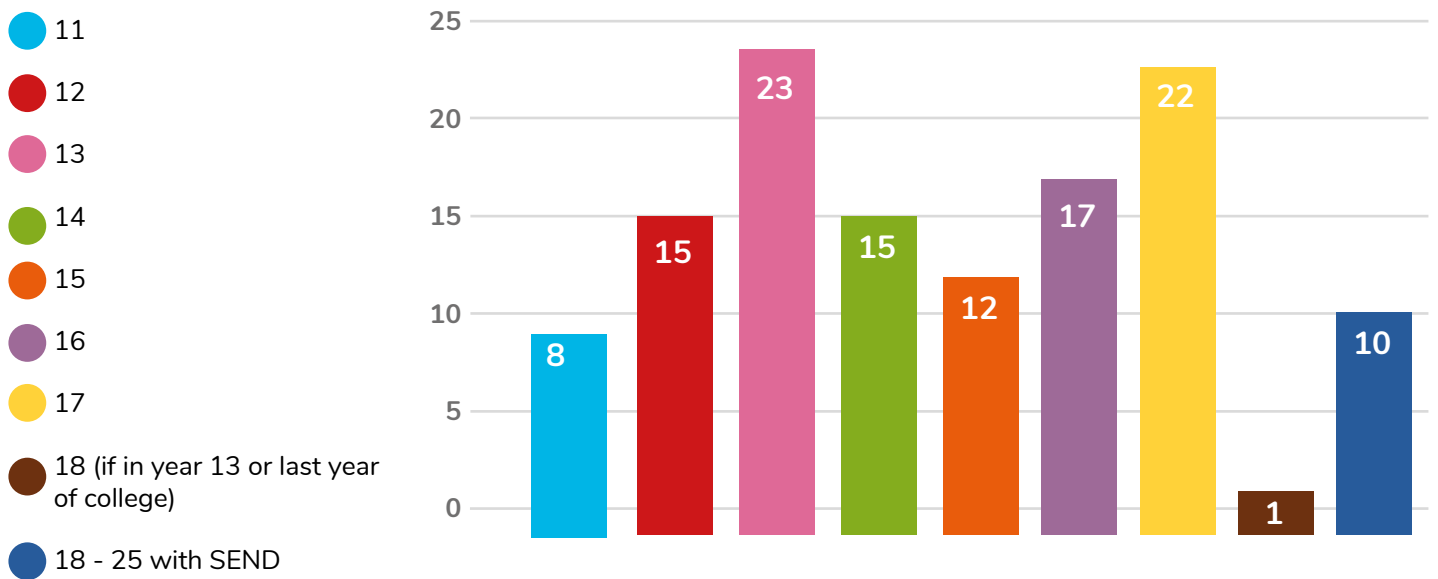


**"THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR INVITING ME TO READ AT THE CONFERENCE, IT WAS BRILLIANT
TO SEE SO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE ATTENDING! WHAT A FANTASTIC EVENT!"**

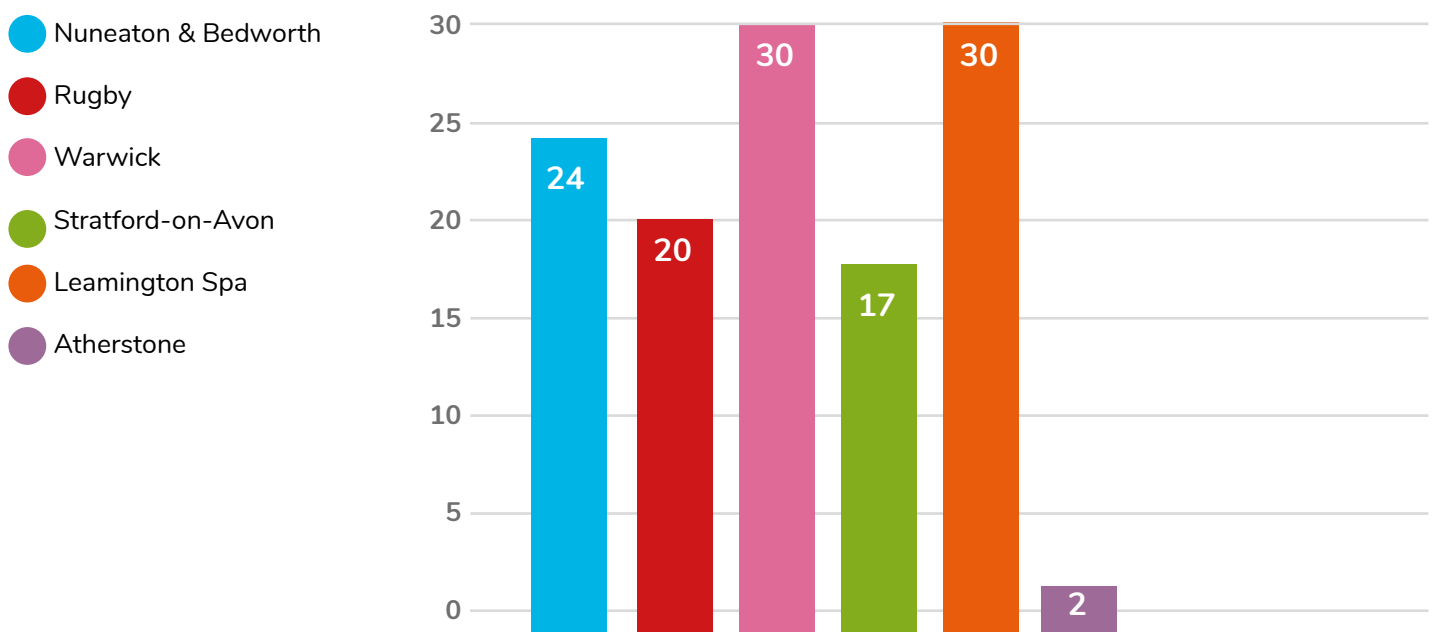
ATTENDANCE

Essential to Voices of Tomorrow were the young people attending. The aim was to have 100 young people aged between 11 and 17 (up to 25 for our SEND young people) attend, from all across the county. We had over 125 registrations! In total, there were 102 young people in attendance, ranging from ages 11 to 17

What is your age?



Which of these is the nearest town to where you live?



FEEDBACK

YOUNG PEOPLE

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

“When I started coming to the youth club I never noticed how important connections are, Wow, just wow”

“We had a great day at the #voicesoftomorrow youth conference with @childfriendlywarks we had such brilliant feedback from the young people we took along”

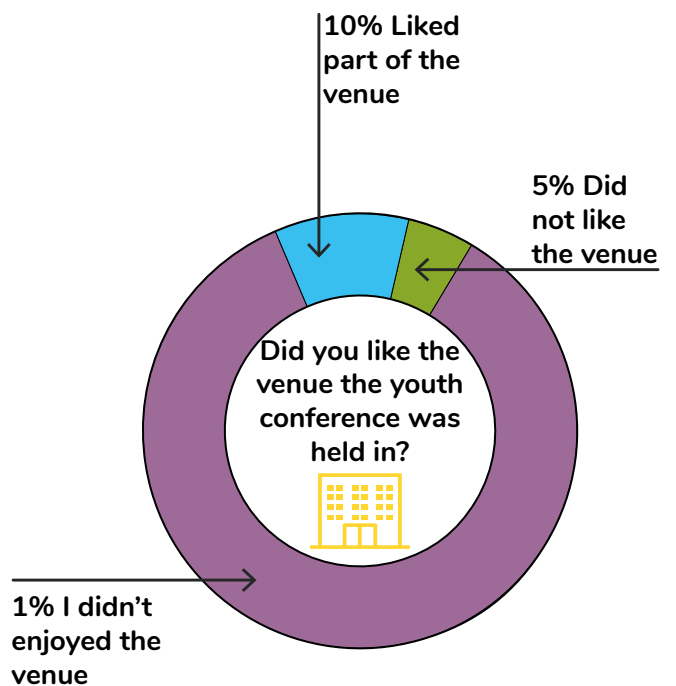
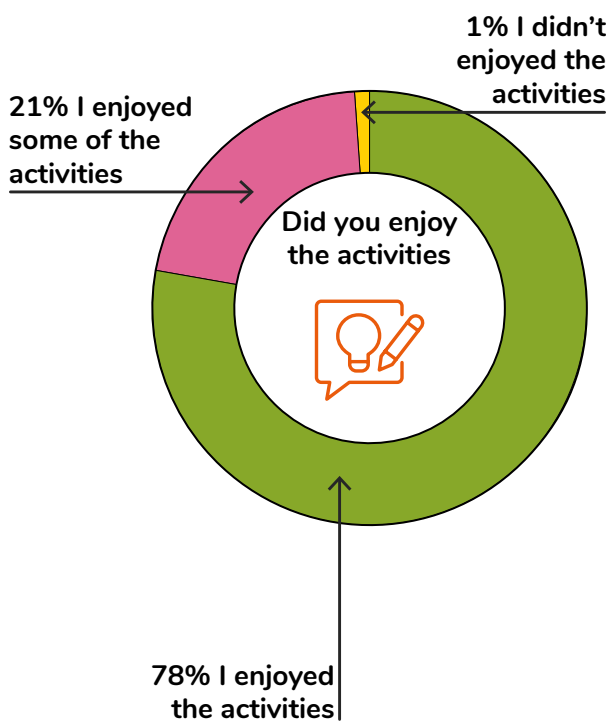
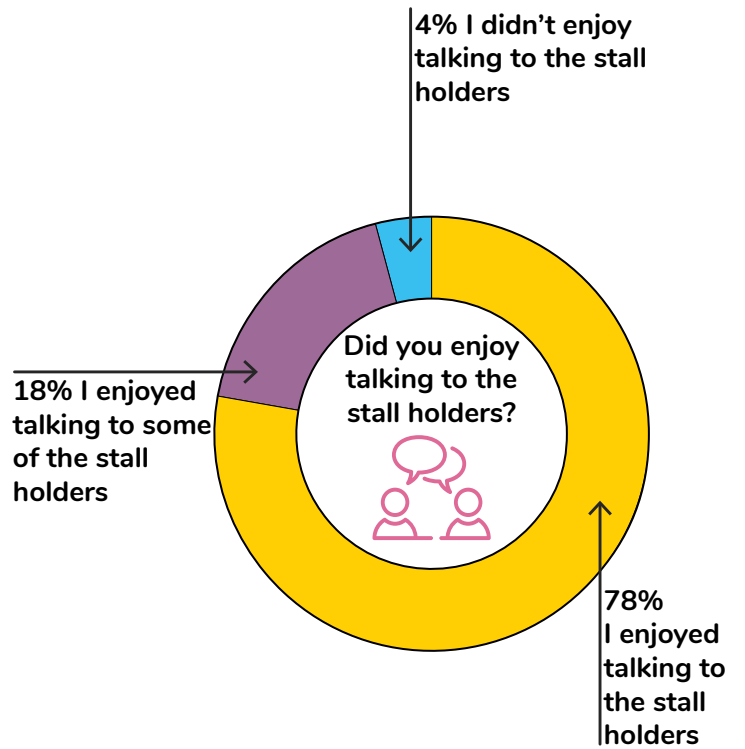
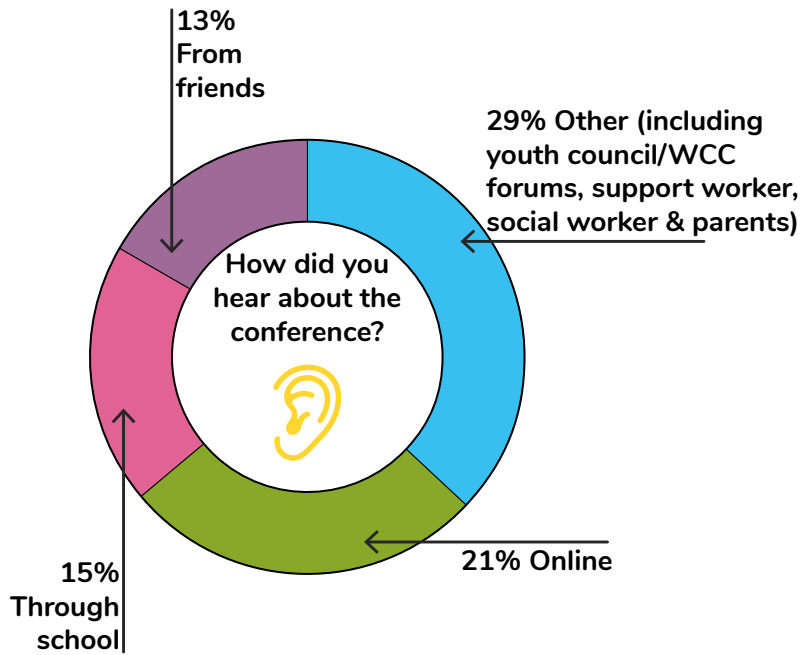
“I enjoyed the trip so much I would definitely tag along again”

“ Was a good day lots of freebies! ”

“I really enjoyed the this trip with a lot of opportunities to try a wide selection of activities”

“Stratford youth collective - Young people made new friends, met up with old friends but more importantly were front and centre of a youth conference about them and what is important to them”

“AMAZING!”



Is there anything you would like to tell us about the venue?

1. Comments on venue size and space

"It was very spacious, which is good for accommodating large groups of people"

"Very welcoming and clean"

"The venue was beautiful!"

2. Comments on venue accessibility, style, and cosiness

"The venue was easy to navigate and a really nice setting"

"The venue is relaxing and enabled young people to interact and their voices to be heard."

"It was very modern and cosy"

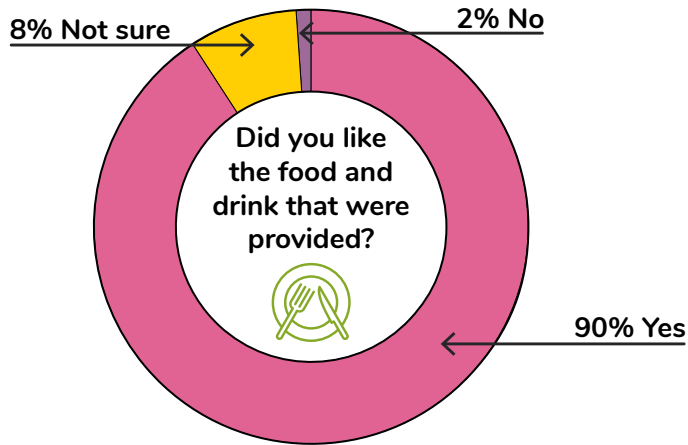
3. Recommendations

"It's a bit too dark."

"it was to spread out, and I liked the venue last year as it was a bit smaller and more compact and easier to get anywhere or get any drinks and snacks."

"Nice spaces but sometimes the smaller rooms felt a bit cramped."

"It didn't have the surf simulator like last year."



Is there anything you would like to tell us about the food and drink that was provided?

Positive feedback:

“Better than last year, very nice.”

“Smashing.”

“Good range of drinks.”

“Staff were really nice.”

Suggestions for improvement:

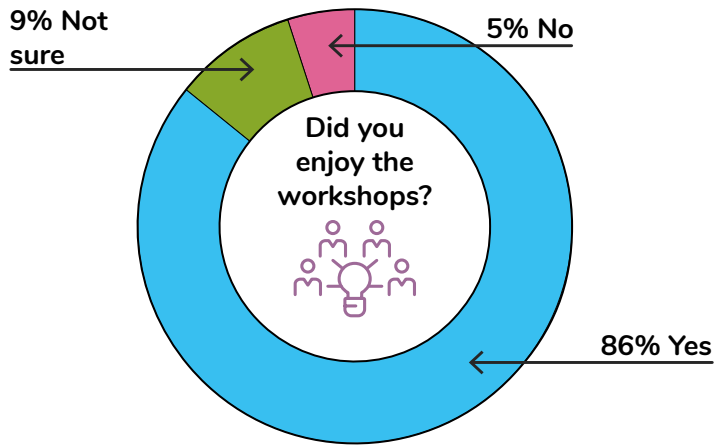
“It was nice but could we maybe have squash or juice on the table rather than still and sparkling water.”

“More food options would have been better.”

“Would have been good to have more vegetarian.”

“It would be great to have a dessert but I really enjoyed the food.”





What did you enjoy about the workshops?

General workshop experience:

“They were fantastic! I really had the chance to talk about the themes of the day.”

“I thought one of mine was really fun, the game in the climate workshop was great. I also learned a lot in the Money workshop.”

“I’m glad I came here during half term”

“Loved them! Really fun and interesting, the identity workshop was great.”

“Really interesting and Interactive”

Specific workshop content:

“The space for girls was my favourite!!”

“The climate workshop was so fun and engaging.”

“The virtual reality was amazing with the police.”

“Identity was brilliant.”

Is there anything you would change about your workshops?

General:

“No, they were both relevant and interactive”

About duration and structure:

“Make them a little bit longer.”

“Maybe next year have 3 workshops in the day and a bit shorter for each to fit it in.”

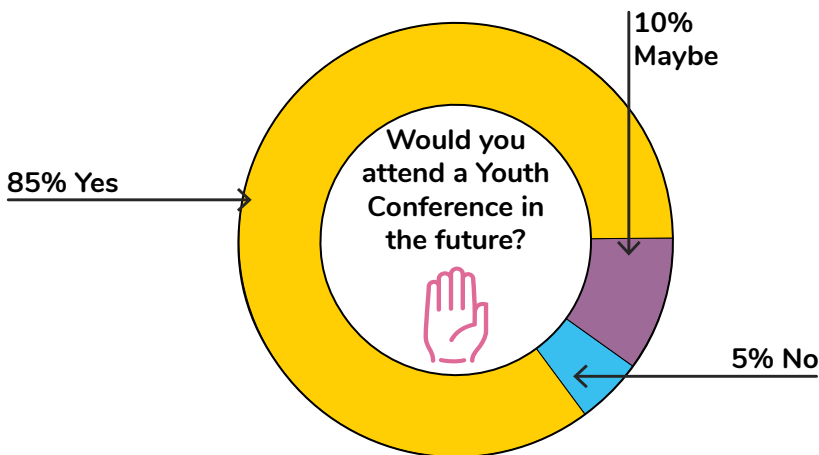
“Make them a bit more fun”

Content and engagement

“I loved mine but it would have been good to have games in all of them.”

“Boring”

“Careers: more engagement in the careers.”



WORKSHOPS

The themes for the workshops were chosen by young people, they were:

- Climate & sustainability
- Safety in Warwickshire
- Mental health & wellbeing
- Careers & opportunities
- Let's talk money!
- Activities & green spaces
- Space for girls
- Identity

Each of the organisations leading the sessions were chosen by young people, too.

Here is what the workshop leaders said about the event:

Space for Girls – Flourish

We really enjoyed hosting our 'Space for Girls' workshop and had great engagement and feedback.

A little summary and feedback from our sessions-

Our aim was to help young people understand their unique strengths and qualities, find their voice and encourage them as changemakers to shape the space around them.

Each participant was able to pick out their own strengths and qualities and start to think about how these can influence and be influenced by our environments. Our collage making activity was popular with the young people as we started to think how we use these qualities and what in our physical environments can bring these out. Everyone created a unique collage to take away with them as a reminder.

We finished off with making a collective piece (patchwork banner) that showcases all the incredible strengths that girls across Warwickshire have which shows them as influential changemakers! We would love to be able to display this somewhere (a youth centre?) to demonstrate the power of the young people's voices (pic attached).

It was great to hear so many young people's thoughts and opinions.



Let's talk Money. Citizens Advice Bureau

It was good to be involved in the second Warwickshire youth conference.

Both workshops were well attended and hopefully the young people got some helpful information out of them. They did however seem to be unclear about what format the session would take and the initial questions from the young people didn't really happen! Perhaps due to reluctance to speak in front of their peers, however we were prepared with lots of info to give them about banking and saving etc so managed to fill the time.

Without having asked their ages there did seem to be a mixed age group attending the workshops and discussions ranged from basic savings accounts to student finance.

Hope all the other workshops went well and the young people had a positive experience of the day.

Activities and Green Spaces – Think Active

We provided an interactive workshop where we openly discussed the barriers facing young people getting active and engaging with green spaces for physical activity. The groups were really engaging and gave us some great insights and ideas. We were particularly impressed with the diversity and representation of young people from all different backgrounds, facing different challenges in life, from different localities etc.

We enjoyed the day so much and hope the young people did too. Such an impressive group of young people.



PARENTS

“I think it was a well organised and safe environment for a lovely day out!”

“She said it was great! I loved it! I would really like to go again. I had a wonderful time”

STALL HOLDERS

Jessica Dunnicliff – Warwickshire Libraries

A huge thank you for letting Warwickshire Library and Information Service participate in the Voices of Tomorrow conference at Warwick Uni.

It was fantastic to meet so many young people and get to hear about their experience of libraries and get the opportunity to hear what they wanted from libraries.

Michelle Wykes – WCC Public Health

Just wanted to say a massive thank you for Friday. It was a great venue and was really well organised. The young people were insightful as ever and their thoughts and feelings on what healthy looks like was really insightful! It was great to be a part of this event.

Regeneration and place team Aoife O’Gorman

Thanks for having us, and to all the fantastic young people who engaged with us on the day



Safeline

Safeline was honoured to participate in the Warwickshire Youth Conference - Voices of Tomorrow. This remarkable event provided a platform for 11-17-year-olds (and up to 25 for SEND young people) to discuss pressing topics that impact their lives.

We felt privileged to be part of this event, engaging with enthusiastic young minds and collaborating with other agencies. Our presence at events like this allows us to raise awareness about Safeline and the vital support we provide to individuals.”

At Safeline, we are deeply committed to sexual violence awareness and prevention. Let’s join hands to create a safer and more informed world for all.



Lifespace Trust

We had a great day at @childfriendlywarks

#Warwickshireyouthconference and enjoyed talking to so many young people from across Warwickshire. Ellie from our Youth Advisory Panel helped to run the Lifespace Stall, telling others about her experience of being involved with Lifespace.

We encouraged young people to read positive messages from others and then leave their own positive messages for other participants.



WORKSHOP

RECOMMENDATIONS

Careers

“Explanations about applying for degrees and apprenticeships and the process etc. Have subject specific career information - medicine/healthcare/finance etc.”

“Learn more from GCSE age what subjects are best for what careers to get into certain areas/fields/sectors.”

“More support for students who failed GCSEs, e.g. allowing them to do other GCSE equivalents to provide more opportunities for young people e.g biology, RE and History as an option thing - jobs sometimes require 5 GCSEs and not everyone as the easiest primary/secondary life - allow us more opportunities to thrive.”

“Providing a streamlined place where young people can find out information around apprenticeships, jobs straight out of education, and job prospects from specific uni courses”

“School trips to businesses in Warwickshire that would likely employ.”



CAREERS

Climate Change & Sustainability

“Incentives aren’t always the way forward for net zero, there has to be some balance and we understand that senior leaders have tough decisions to reducing carbon emissions and that things take time and are expensive. It would be good for young people to have an easier understanding within the decision making processes and how this is publicised. Don’t people please. Do what people need not what people want. Your decisions will make an impact. Make key decisions government directives, not just guidelines.”

“It would be good to create an easy pack for individuals by offering simple and easy guidance of reducing our carbon emissions and then showcasing the wins.”



Outdoor spaces and activities

Young people spoke about the difficulties in accessing sport and leisure activities within the community.

The increase in mental health issues because of a lack of access to sport

We completed an activity where we played a game of cornhole, young people then gave ideas, solutions, and barriers.



Some of the main solutions suggested were:

“Promoting green spaces and free sports sessions in Warwickshire”

“Joining up different projects within the community to promote collaboration.”

“Subsidised memberships for young people”

“Promoting the use of public footpaths and making these more accessible e.g. lighting, cycling lanes, footpaths”

Space for Girls

What young girls want to see happen in Warwickshire:

“Youth services, free public spaces to go to”

“More lighting in public spaces to make it feel safer”

“Space for both genders”

“Have the choice of sports at school”

We discussed what girls in particular would like to see changed in Warwickshire and what were some of the current barriers, three common thoughts were

“Safer places for girls- not feeling safe at night, need better lighting, more people on the streets to help them feel safe, feel threatened particularly by other gangs of youth males.”

“Better free public places- with people to talk to, more activities for young people to do, things that are free, female only sports and gym clubs”

“Someone to talk to - places to go that are outside of school and home to hang out with people but also to have safe and trusted people to talk to, mental health provisions, girls only spaces, non-judgmental people/ services that you can access when needed.”

Safety in Warwickshire

“Better Lighting in parks so that young people can feel safer”

“Concerns of people drinking alcohol around their schools – in public in day time”

“CCTV cameras to reduce stress and anxiety of young people”

“Making sure women and girls are safe within school and when working”

“Having support points around town centres for young people who feel unsafe at any time”

Identity

“More Education and awareness on LGBT+ - people are still people - and More input on relationships”

“Address hate crime in the community and understand where there are particular locations of concern.”

“More sessions like the workshop - discussed expanding our Trans Focus Group to be a wider LGBT+ collaborative group with organisations bringing yp together from across the county to focus on LGBT+ experience and areas for change. We have the links already with Cath for the development of RSE education and I am in conversation with the chair of the LGBT+ network within Warwickshire Police”

Mental Health and wellbeing

“A mentor who you can call/text.”

“A pass at school to allow you some time out if you are struggling.”

“keep wellbeing as part of the school timetable and teach young people to manage their anxiety.”

Let's Talk Money

“When teaching teens about uni & opportunities, also teach them about student debt and loans”

“Make it easier for children and teens to learn about bank accounts and savings”

“Give student aged 13-18 £10,000 to save and invest”

CLOSING REMARKS

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
Direct of Children & Families Service

“This event was a chance for young people to come together and 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 into 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.

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.

If you are 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** and we'll be in touch.

To find out more about Child friendly Warwickshire, visit our website: **childfriendlywarwickshire.com** or search for us on Facebook and X.

