



Sandwell MBC

SHAPE

Survey Results 2022

Final Report

Neesha Patel
11-11-2022

Contents

1. Executive Summary.....	2
2. Objectives and purpose.....	3
3. Methodology.....	3
4. Results.....	4
4.1 Demographics & Limitations.....	4
5. Coronavirus.....	5
6. Mental Health & Wellbeing.....	6
7. Keeping Physically Fit & Mentally Healthy.....	11
8. Support Services.....	13
9. Substance Misuse.....	15
10. Social Media & Gaming.....	16
10.1. Internet.....	16
10.2. Social Media	17
10.3. Gaming.....	18
10.4. Communicating Information.....	19
11. Local Area.....	20
12. Education & Learning.....	21
13. Youth Activities.....	26
14. Child's Voice & Helping.....	27
15. Your Future.....	29
16. Being a Young Person in Sandwell.....	31
17. Conclusion.....	33

1. Executive Summary

The SHAPE Survey has been conducted since November 2014, when the SHAPE Programme was first introduced as a child's voice initiative. It is a means to consult with young people on the five SHAPE themes:

- Staying Safe
- Being Healthy
- Enjoying and Achieving
- Making a Positive Contribution
- Economic Wellbeing

In 2022, the online survey was developed for Primary School children from years 5 and 6 and Secondary School children from years 7 – 13. The link to the survey was distributed to all Primary, Secondary, Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) in Sandwell. The total number of survey participants was 795.

The questions were devised and developed by a number of stakeholders who deliver services to young people and broken down further into these specific areas: demographics, mental health and wellbeing, support services, social media, gaming and communications, local area, education and learning, youth activities, child's voice and future.

The main findings from the report portray that children and young people are finding life challenging with the pressures of school work and exams and fitting into society in an environment of increasing crime and bullying incidents.

Children and young people need to be listened to, so they can be supported adequately, and their needs can be met, particularly to improve their mental health and wellbeing. They need to gain trust in adults for them to share their concerns and they need to be aware of and gain confidence in services to support them.

Social media has become part of daily life for children and young people starting from primary school age and the influences of social media remain a concern.

The perception of Sandwell as a Borough remains negative, due to high levels of crime and deprivation. A greater emphasis needs to be made on the positives and ensuring regeneration and town plans are responsive to the needs of the future generation, making Sandwell a more attractive place to live for all.

Finally, further work needs to be done to improve communication for young people especially youth in secondary schools, so they have a wealth of information they need to support them and their families.

This report provides a detailed account of all the survey results along with a set of recommendations which internal and external stakeholders will adopt to address the needs and issues identified by children and young people.

2. Objectives and Purpose

The purpose of the SHAPE Survey is to consult with children and young people ranging from the age of 8 – 18 years. It allows council members, senior leaders, officers and partner agencies should be able to understand the experiences, needs, issues and views of young people in Sandwell.

The information from this study will enable stakeholders to reflect on the services they offer to young people and identify from the responses in the survey if any changes need to be made based on the consultation results.

National surveys such as Ditch the Label, Make Your Mark and the Ofcom Survey collect data from young people on specific issues like bullying, views on what national changes should be made by Government and media use and attitudes. However, on a local level, the SHAPE Survey offers a cross-section of consultation on a number of topics affecting the lives of young people and is the only consistent survey that is sent to every school in Sandwell on a regular basis.

3. Methodology

There were 2 participant groups for the survey, these included the following:

- Primary School Pupils from years 5 and 6
- Secondary School Pupils from years 7 to 13

An online survey was developed by the Public Health Intelligence Team with the questions formulated by the SHAPE Team and internal and external partners who had an interest in consulting with young people on their services. The following topics cover all the SHAPE themes of staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and economic wellbeing, and were used to devise the questions asked:

- General – demographic information e.g. age, school year, town
- Coronavirus
- Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Social media, gaming and communications
- Your local area
- Education & learning
- Youth Activities
- Child's Voice
- Your Future

The survey was developed with similar questions for the two groups. Many open-ended questions were included to ensure the children and young people were able to express their views and opinions freely. The survey questions can be found on Sandwell Trends.

Once the survey was developed and tested, the links were sent to all schools through the regular school's communication bulletin to Head Teachers. Head Teachers were asked to distribute the survey for pupils in their schools to complete, as well as staff.

There were no restrictions in the amount of young people from each school who could take part in the survey, however, schools were offered the incentive that if 25% of pupils on their school roll completed the survey, they would be provided with their school's individual results.

Each group was also offered the chance to enter into a prize draw to win vouchers, as an incentive for more participants to take part in the survey.

The survey was active from April 2022 to July 2022.

4. Results

The total number of participants that took part in the survey was 795, the total for each group were as follows:

- Primary school pupils –341 (3% of the borough population in years 5 and 6)
- Secondary school pupils – 454 (2% of the borough population in years 7 to 13)

The following pages provide a breakdown of the results of all the surveys based on the topic areas.

4.1 Demographics and Limitations

Of the 94 primary schools in Sandwell, 6% of schools were represented through participants. The number of participants from a single institution varied from 1 to 117.

Of the 20 secondary schools in Sandwell there was a representation of 30%. The number of participants from a single institution from this age range varied from 1 to 290.

The number of responses from both groups were considerably higher than 2020. This is likely to be as children and young people were back into school, enabling schools in the borough to ensure participation.

Figure 4.11 provides a breakdown of the age of the participants. For the primary age the largest category was age 11. For secondary, the largest category was 13. There was representation from all ages however the 16 to 18 age group responses were low and therefore it must be noted that it is difficult to offer definitive conclusions when analysing the results of the survey for this age group.

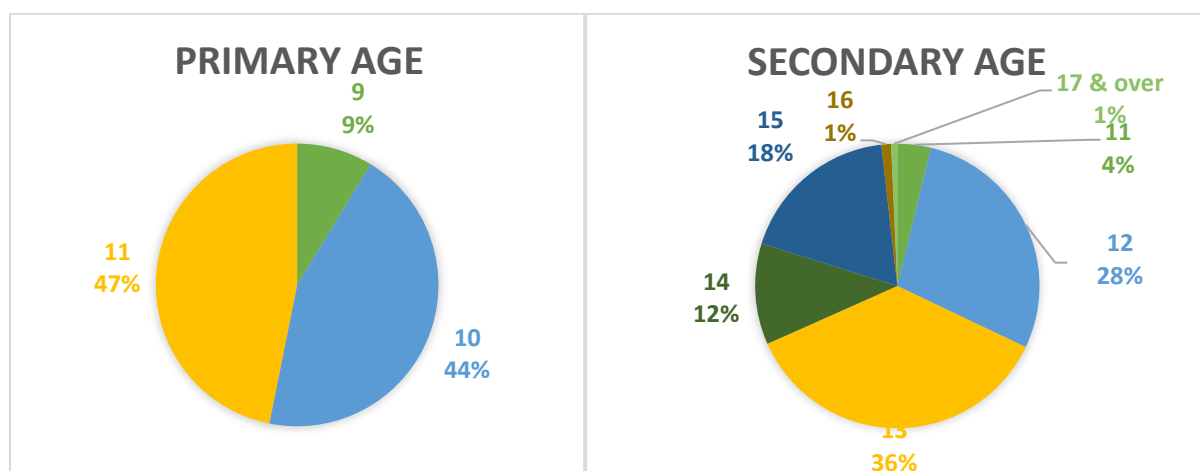


Figure 4.11 – Breakdown of the age respondents of survey respondents

The male/ female and ethnicity breakdown are shown in Figure 4.12. The proportion of female responses was slightly higher for both groups.

Please note primary pupils were not asked about their ethnicity but for secondary the majority were non-white respondents.

Participants	Male	Female	Other or prefer not to say
Primary	48.4%	51.3%	0.3%
Secondary	44.7%	51.5%	3.8%

Participants	White	Mixed, Asian or Black	Other
Secondary	38.3%	58.4%	3.3%

Figure 4.12 – Gender and ethnicity breakdown of survey respondents

The participant groups were asked which town they lived in. The breakdown is provided in Figure 4.13. In terms of primary, Wednesbury was the highest with 34% of respondents from the town. For secondary however Wednesbury was the one town not represented and Oldbury proved to be the highest with 58% of respondents.

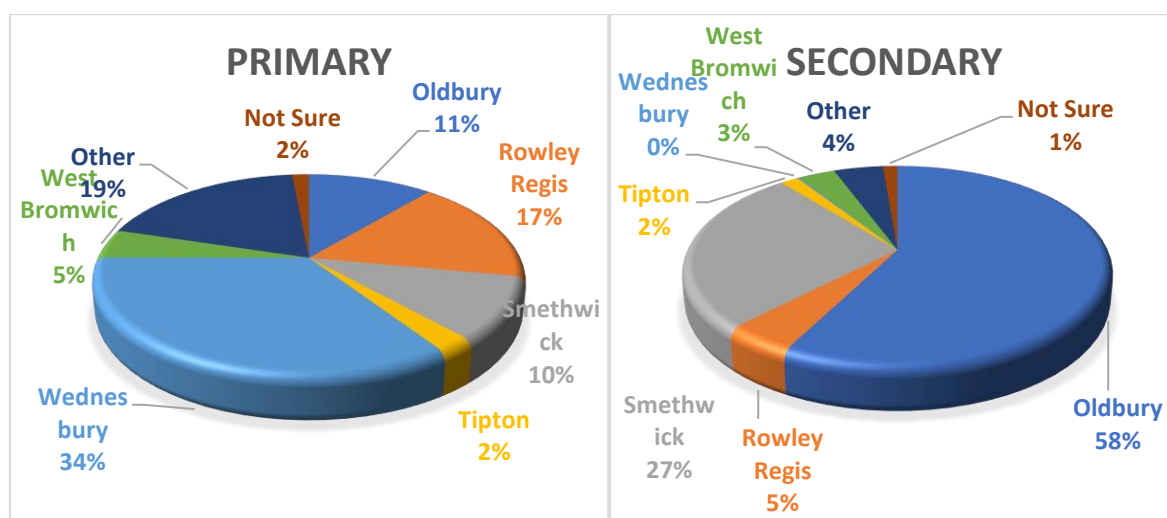


Figure 4.13 – Breakdown of where survey respondents live

5. Coronavirus

The questions within this section explored whether young people were still feeling the impact of the pandemic. 83.2% of the primary aged children felt happy that all the coronavirus restrictions had ended, compared to 72% of secondary age young people but over a third of secondary children felt that the effects of the pandemic were still having an impact on their education. The reasons they gave for this were due to the time not spent in school during the pandemic, a lot of problems were incurred during online learning as well as many teachers being unavailable due to Covid. Some young people made references to forgetting a lot or just becoming lazier whereas others felt missing out on education increased their stress levels. Comments from young people included:

- “I feel as though all content was either rushed, missed or simply interrupted”
- “Remote learning wasn't as effective as in person learning”
- “I lost the majority of my secondary school education and there's now gaps in my knowledge. With starting GCSEs next year adds to the stress”

Young people stated that not just their education, but social isolation has affected their mental health, and this ultimately also affects learning as well, “I have noticed that I have developed social anxiety and anxiety in general. I feel anxious when in class and it affects my learning”.

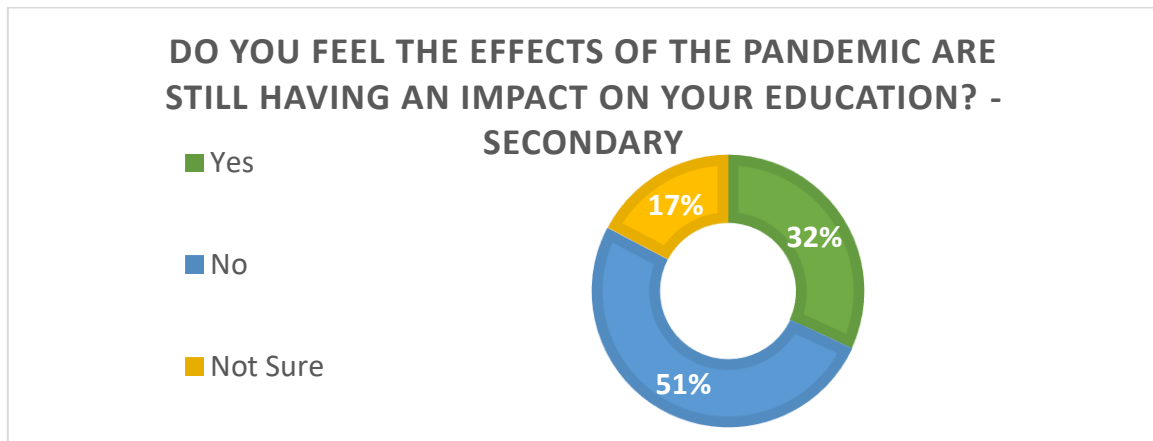


Figure 5.1

6. Mental Health & Wellbeing

Mental health and wellbeing questions covered many different aspects including issues affecting young people today and how the topic is dealt with in an educational setting.

One of the questions asked consistently in all SHAPE surveys to date is, what is the top issue affecting young people in today's society. Figure 6.1 shows the top 5 issues from 2015 to 2022.

From all the surveys conducted over the years, there are obvious reoccurring themes, such as school work and exams which you would expect to see for this age group. However, the more serious issues include gangs and youth violence, knife crime and getting bullied. Comments made from this year's survey by young people on why they chose these issues, include:

- “People consider being in a gang cool. Being accepted is hard as thing like being gay is seen as a joke”
- “I don't feel accepted because I don't feel good enough and I dislike the way I look”
- “Many teens worry about their future after school and end up getting into violence because of stress”

Highlighted in red is 2020, the year of the pandemic, which during lockdown saw less crime taking place in Sandwell therefore knife crime and gangs were not featured.

However, being bullied was ranked third with physical appearance second which young people tend to give as one of the reasons why they are bullied. The increased usage of social media during the pandemic increased cyberbullying incidents with young people.

	2022	2020	2019	2017	2015
1	Gangs & Youth Violence	School/College work & Exams	Knife Crime	What to do after year 11	School work and exams
2	Knife Crime	Physical Appearance	School/College work & Exams	School work and exams	Gangs & youth violence
3	School/College work and exams	Being Bullied	Gangs & Youth Violence	Getting college course/apprenticeship	What to do after year 11
4	Drugs and substance abuse	Impact of covid 19	Being Bullied	Gangs and youth violence	Being Bullied
5	What to do after GCSEs Being Bullied	What to do after GCSEs	What to do after GCSEs	Nothing worries me	Being Healthy

Figure 6.1 – Issues affecting young people from 2015 to 2022 SHAPE survey - Secondary

In figure 6.2, young people were asked to rate their happiness in different categories, for secondary aged children, they were most happy about their home, family and hobbies which was the same in the 2020 survey results. However, what they were least happy about, has changed with this year including their confidence, appearance, caring for the environment and how to communicate with people, compared to 2020 where they were least happy with their community, other relationships and local area.

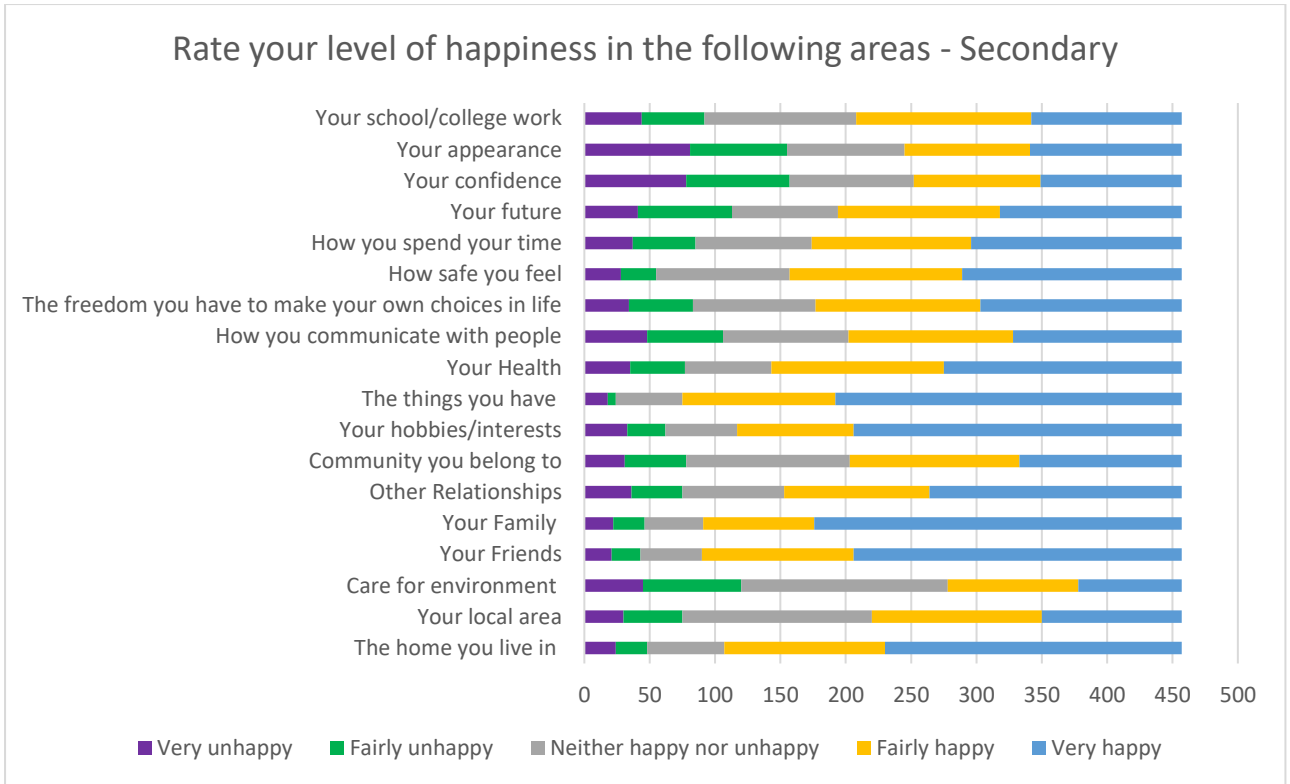


Figure 6.2

Primary aged children portrayed a similar picture in figure 6.3, however they were least happy with their school work.

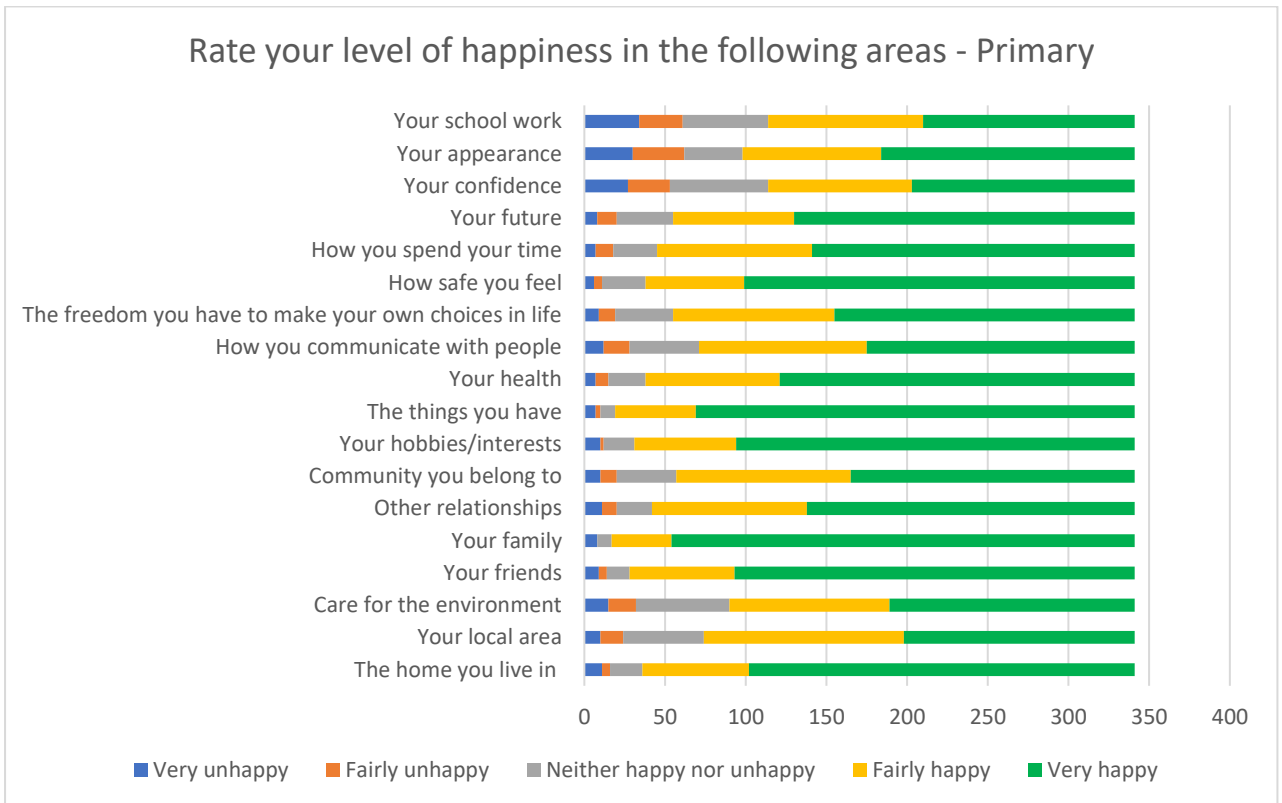


Figure 6.3

In figure 6.4, a large proportion of primary school children, 75%, did feel happy about their life at the moment which was positive. This is significantly higher than 2020 which provided a result of 40.2%, with many reasons being due to the pandemic. Therefore, coming out of the pandemic for this age group, proved to be beneficial for their mental health and wellbeing.

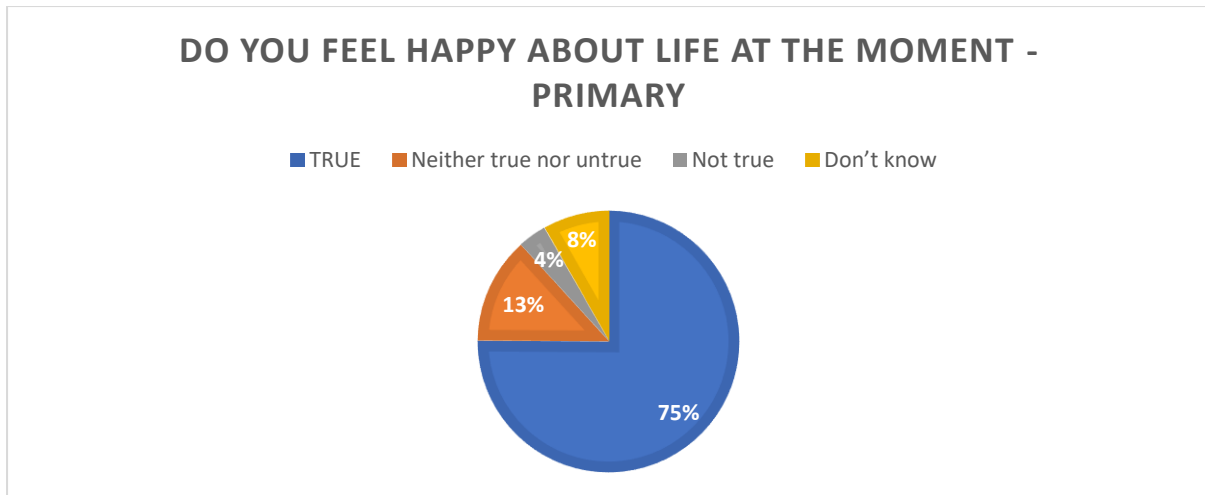


Figure 6.4

Secondary pupils were asked further about mental health and education in school. 57% of students did not know if they had a mental health ambassador or champion in school. However, when asked if they would approach a young person in this role if they had issues, over 50% said no. Professionals often talk about peer to peer support or mentoring, however in terms of mental health, this is clearly not welcomed by young people and often when it comes to mental health, a lot of young people want to talk to a professional to get advice. The young people highlighted reasons in the survey for why they would not discuss these issues with a young person from their school and trust was a big contributor, they fear their peers may tell others or teachers who they don't trust, and young people feel it's their personal business and like to deal with it themselves. They want to choose to talk to who they feel comfortable with.

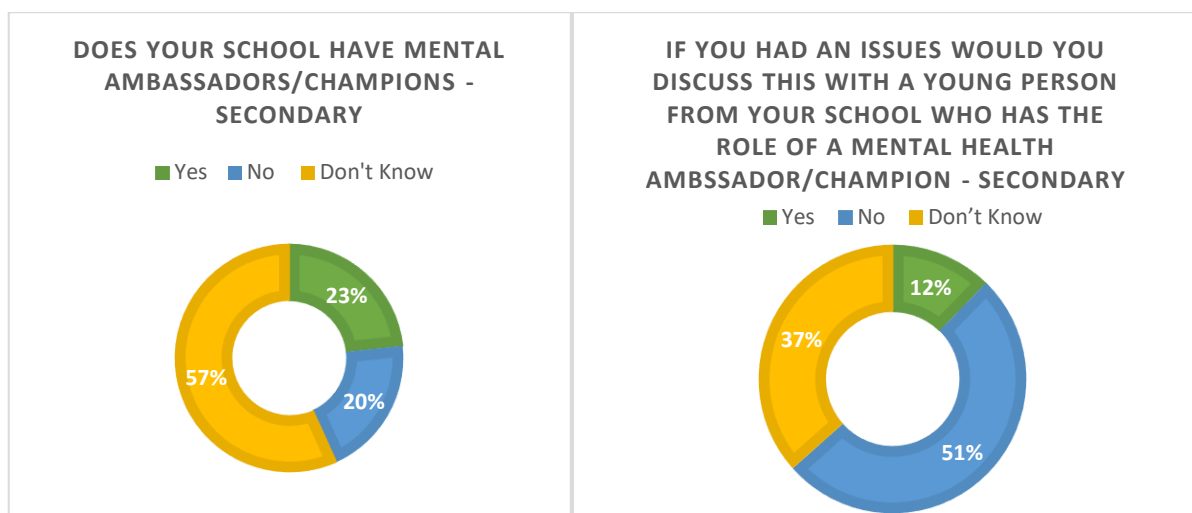


Figure 6.5

Both groups were asked what would improve their mental health and wellbeing. There were many different answers provided by each age group, but the most popular ones are listed here. Some are common between both age groups, such as having someone to talk to when you have a problem and being able to voice views and opinions freely

For primary, they highlighted that helping with the transition to secondary school, which 25% of the children surveyed were not looking forward to, is important, as is tackling bullying issues. They also recognised supporting families who may have financial difficulties was important too.

For secondary, there was a focus on their future, and exams and school work often came up as an issue. They felt that extra support during exam season would help them as would planning for their future. In order to relax and spend time with their friends, they have also identified that they need more places to hang out.

	Primary	Secondary
1	Having someone to talk to when you have a problem	More support to plan for my future
2	Making my move to secondary school easier	Extra support during exam season
3	Being able to voice your views and opinions freely	More places where I can hang out with my friends
4	Family support for families who have issues with money	Having someone to talk to (e.g. mentor)
5	Tackling bullying issues	Being able to voice your views and opinions freely

Figure 6.6 –Top 5 responses to “What would improve your mental health and wellbeing”

The secondary aged young people were asked what services could do specifically to support young people’s mental health and wellbeing and as this was a free text box. There was a large number of answers referring to some of the improvements raised in figure 6.6 such as providing them with someone to talk to, listening to young people and helping them by giving them better advice. Providing them with more things to do also was mentioned, such as more sporting activities and facilities to do them in.

However, they also raised that they wanted services to make them feel safe and build their confidence and self-esteem. They stated they felt services should provide more health and wellbeing education in schools, examples given were that there should be dedicated assemblies, wellbeing lessons and just simply regular check ins with young people to see if they are ok. Figure 6.7 below shows that only 44% of young people

stated that they have lessons promoting emotional health and wellbeing, with 27% stating they didn't know if they had any, demonstrating there may be a lack of understanding of what emotional health and wellbeing is. 29% stated they didn't have any lessons.

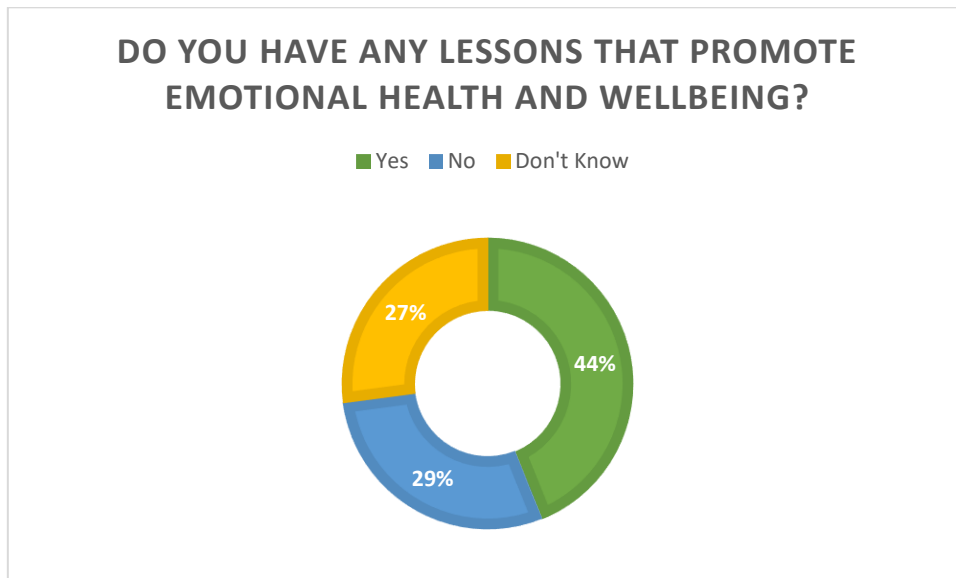


Figure 6.7

7. Keeping Physically Fit & Mentally Fit

When asking young people how they keep themselves physically fit and healthy, for both age groups, exercising and eating healthy food were the most popular ways in keeping physically and mentally fit.

However, the vast array of answers in figure 7.1 shows how many different things young people like to do and what they associate with keeping physically and mentally fit, including keeping a positive mindset, reflecting and focusing on themselves which enhances their wellbeing.

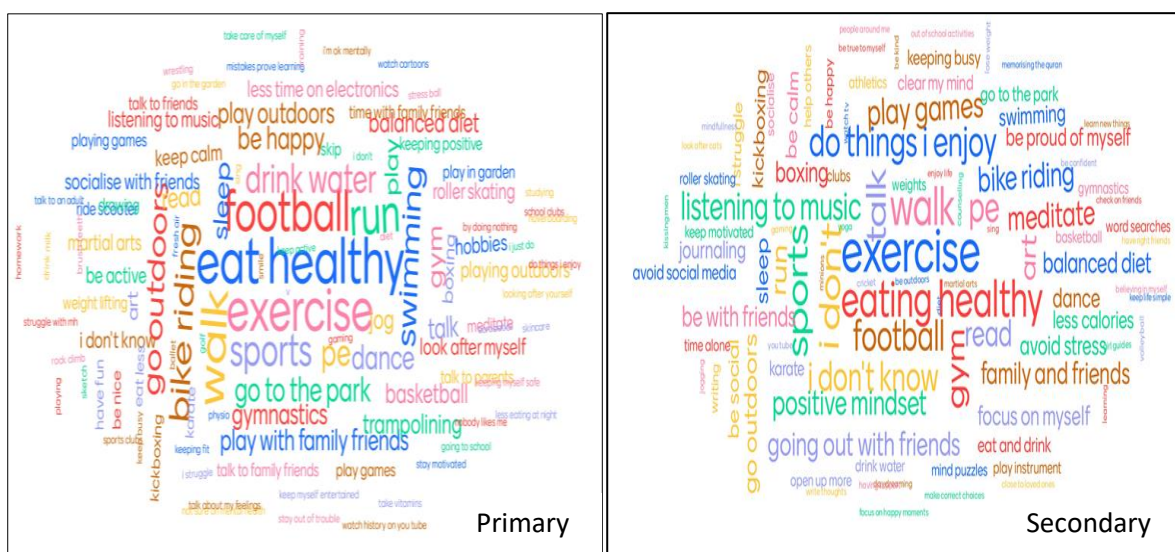


Figure 7.1 – Responses to “How do you keep yourselves physically and mentally fit?”

The young people were asked if they like to take part in PE/sporting/physical activities in and/or out of school, and although the results were positive, the primary age group enjoyed sporting activities more than the secondary age group as figure 7.2 shows.

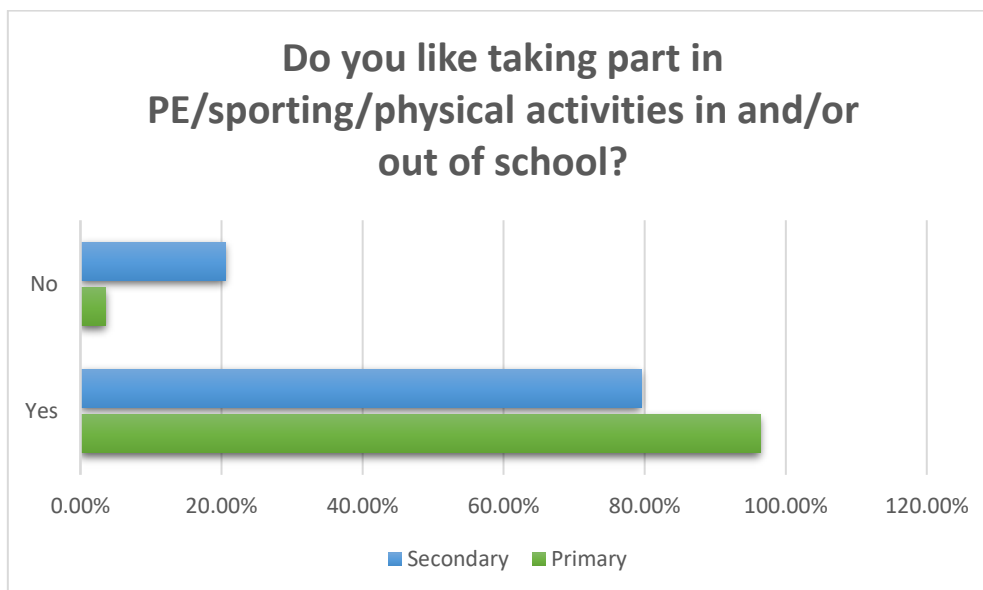


Figure 7.2

Figure 7.3 shows that when asking why they exercise; the top reasons were to get stronger and to help with long term health conditions such as diabetes. The 'other' category that primary children chose included reasons such as to help them mentally, to lose weight, to generally be healthy and to have fun.

Primary	Secondary
To get stronger	To help with long term health conditions eg diabetes
To help with long term health conditions eg diabetes	To get stronger
Other	To lose weight
To lose weight	To improve my mood
To improve my mood	To have better stamina
To have better stamina	To look good
To get more energy	To make more friends when you take part
To make more friends when you take part	To get more energy

Figure 7.3 – Responses to “Why do you Exercise?”

Young people at secondary age were asked if the council could do more to help direct them to available sporting/physical activity facilities, with 33.1% agreeing that the council could do more.

8. Support Services

A range of support services exist in Sandwell and this section of questions aimed to find out whether young people were aware of these services.

Two questions were asked about policing, these were whether the pupils knew who their local/link police officer was, and secondly would they know how to report something. The results are shown below and are significantly lower than last year's survey.

	Do you know who your local/link Police Officer is?		Would you know how to report something to the Police?	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
Yes	5.4%	8.4%	60.5%	59.9%
No	94.6%	91.6%	15.7%	21.2%
Not Sure	N/A	N/A	23.7%	18.9%

Figure 8.1

The results show that although many pupils are unaware of their local police officer, positively, around 60% are aware of reporting something to the Police.

Both age groups were asked questions on the school nursing service. In terms of awareness as shown below, over 50% of both groups are aware of the school nurse service which is a higher percentage than 2020.

	Primary	Secondary
Yes	55%	58%
No	45%	42%

Figure 8.2 – Results to “Are you aware that your school has a school nurse?”

68.2% of secondary age young people knew how to contact the school nurse, but only 45.3% of primary age group knew who their school nurse was.

For the secondary students' further questions were asked. Even though over half the students were aware of the school nurse only 37.3% of these knew what services the school nurse offers. 45.2% of the students who were aware had visited the school nurse for a number of reasons in figure 8.3, but the main ones being injury and accidents and illnesses. As NHS School nurses do not provide first aid, this suggests that students are confusing their role with the role of the school first aider/pastoral support. Over 82.9% accessed school nurses through a drop-in session at school.

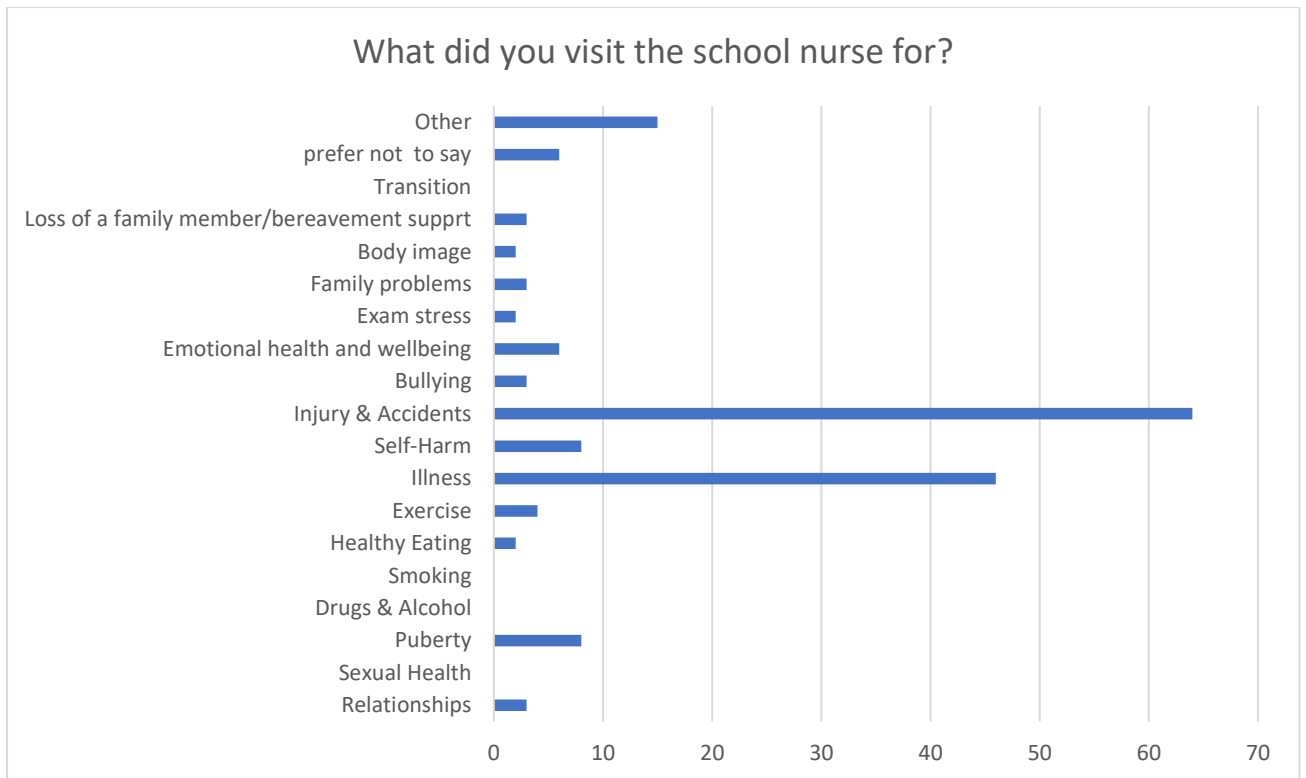


Figure 8.3

Young people were asked if they had a problem at home that they couldn't talk to their parents or carer about, who if anyone would they talk to about it or ask for help from. Figure 8.4 shows they would choose their friends (particularly secondary age students), teacher or an adult at school.

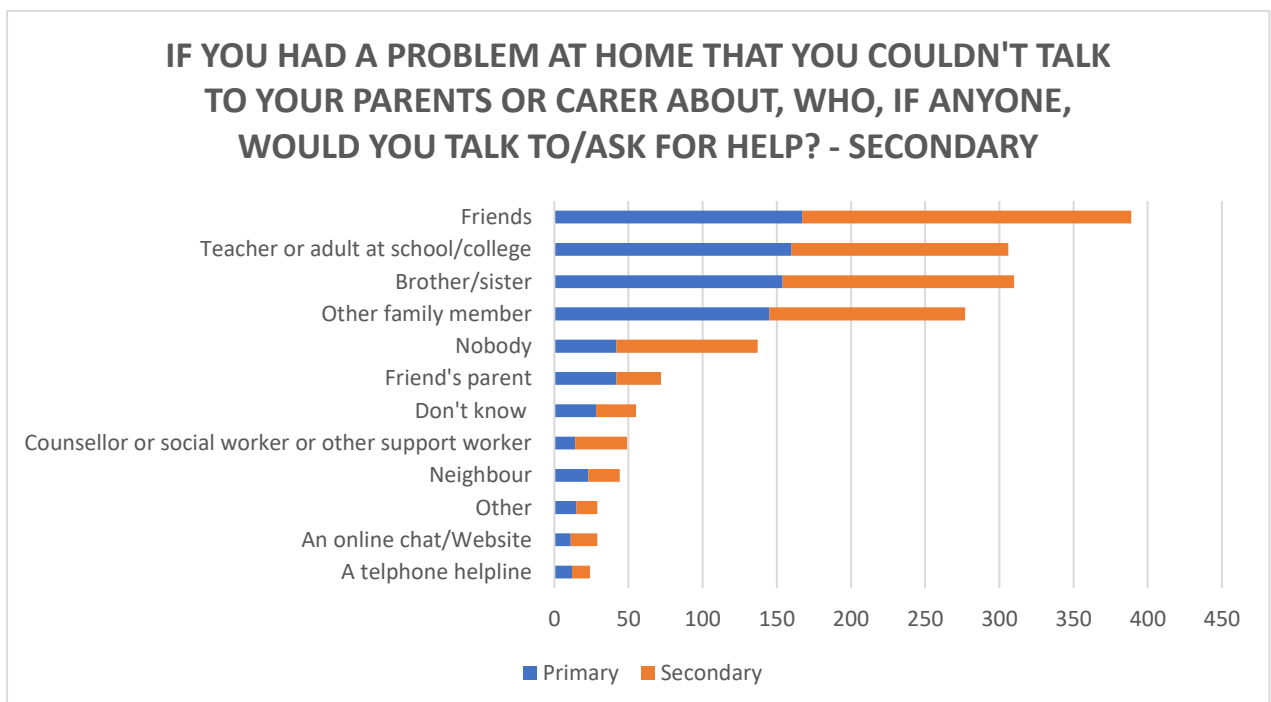


Figure 8.4

In Sandwell there are a range of services available to support your emotional health and well-being. The secondary pupils were asked which services they were aware of. Sandwell Council's Youth Service and pastoral support were the services that they were most aware of. In terms of partner and external services, Kooth and School Health Nursing along with DECCA were most known.

The Just Youth website has recently been relaunched and as shown by the figure 8.5 is now also becoming more known to young people.

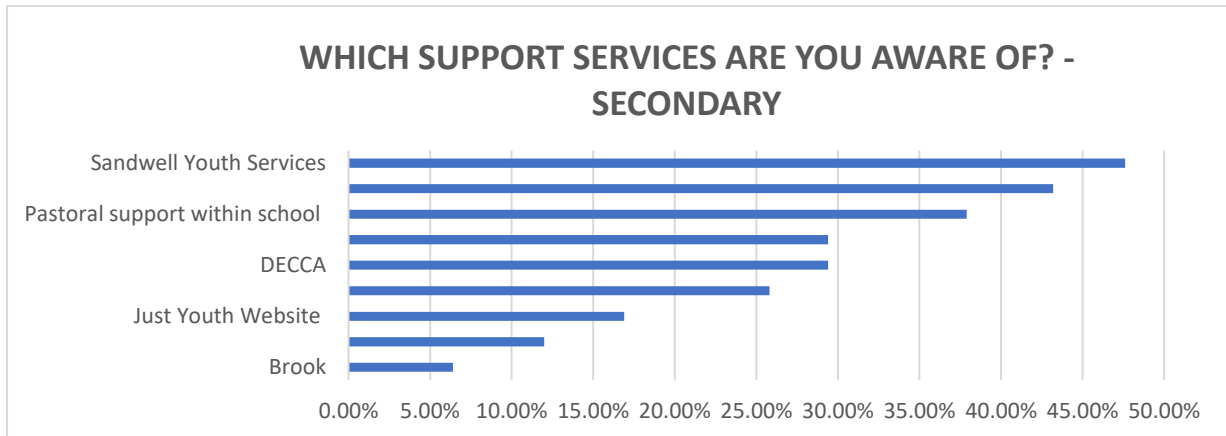


Figure 8.5

9. Substance Usage

Questions about substance use were asked to those young people who were in year 9 or above in secondary schools. Of the 156 young people surveyed 20% had consumed an alcoholic drink.

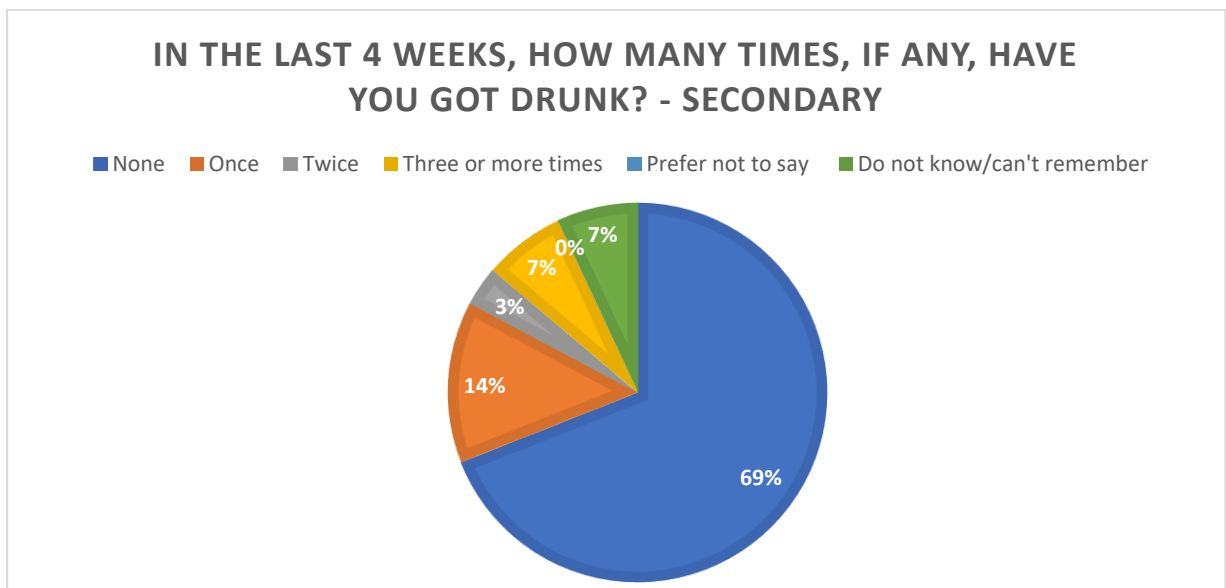


Figure 9.1

11.5% have used an e-cigarette/vape of which the usage can be seen below in figure 9.2.

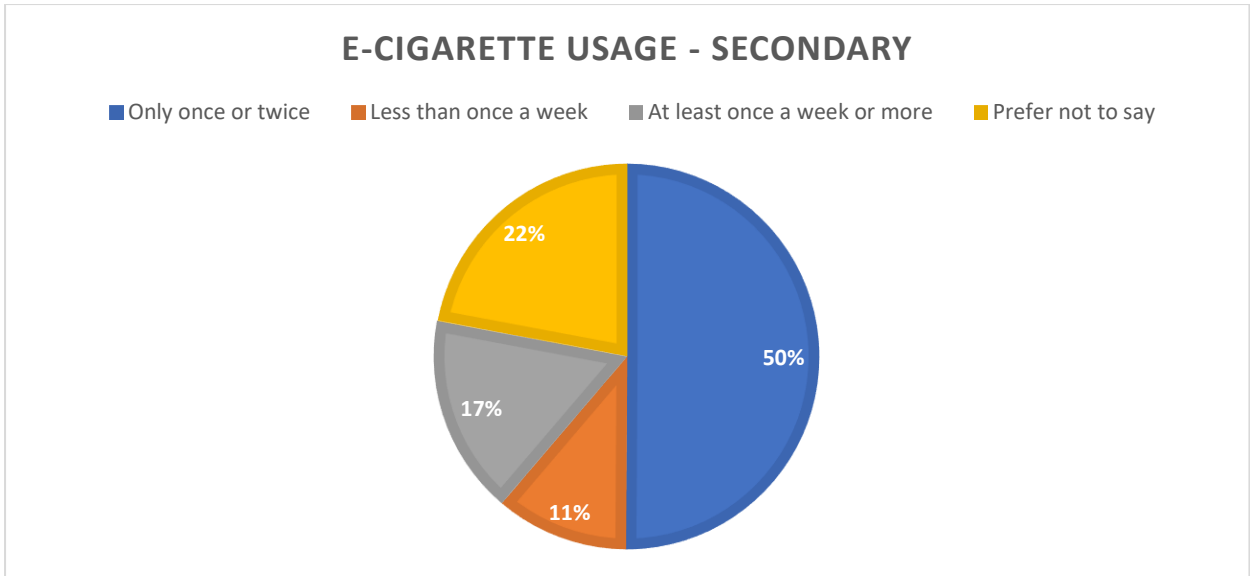


Figure 9.2

5.1% have taken drugs (illegal substances) for recreational use, of which in the last 4 weeks, 3 people had taken cannabis (weed, grass, dope, pot, marijuana) and 3 preferred not to say. 14.3% of those who had taken drugs before had not done so in the last 4 weeks.

10. Social Media and Gaming

The following series of questions focuses on internet, social media channels, usage and gaming.

10.1 Internet

When primary school children were asked what they used the internet for, figure 10.1 shows that it is widely used for a number of reasons beyond school work, including over a third stating they use it for gaming, 21% for chatting and 17% for social media (bearing in mind they should not legally even have social media profiles or be using the channels at this age)

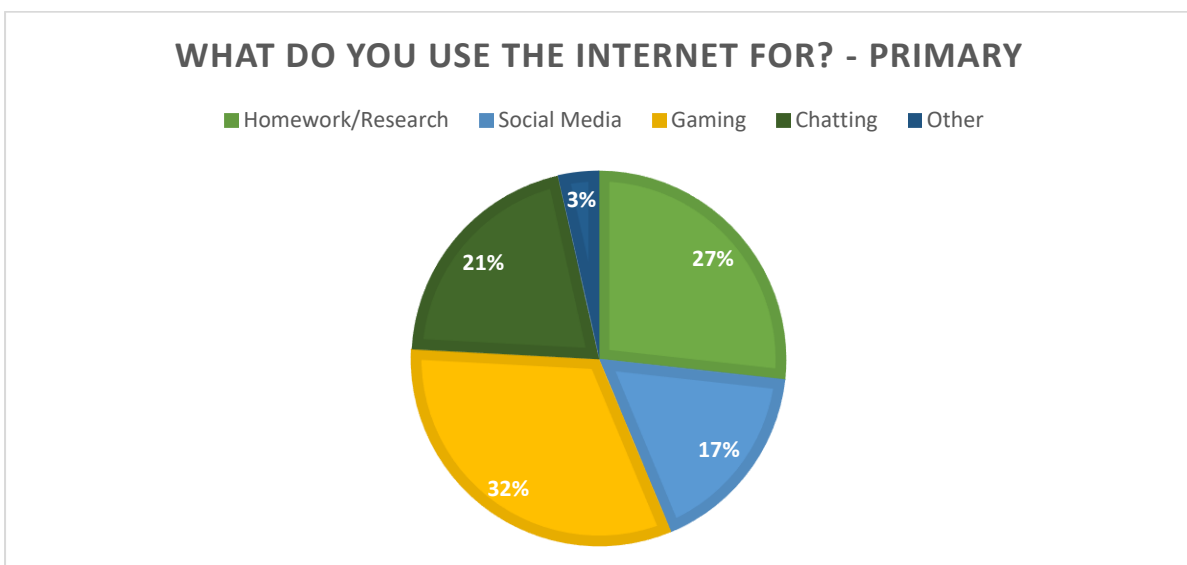


Figure 10.11

10.2 Social Media

When asked about social media platforms and applications, figure 10.21 shows primary age children stated the most popular channels were You Tube, Whats app, Tik Tok and Snapchat, with the most popular reason for using them being chatting, watching videos and messaging. Tik Tok is also used for making videos. It is good however to see that there are some channels this age group are not using.

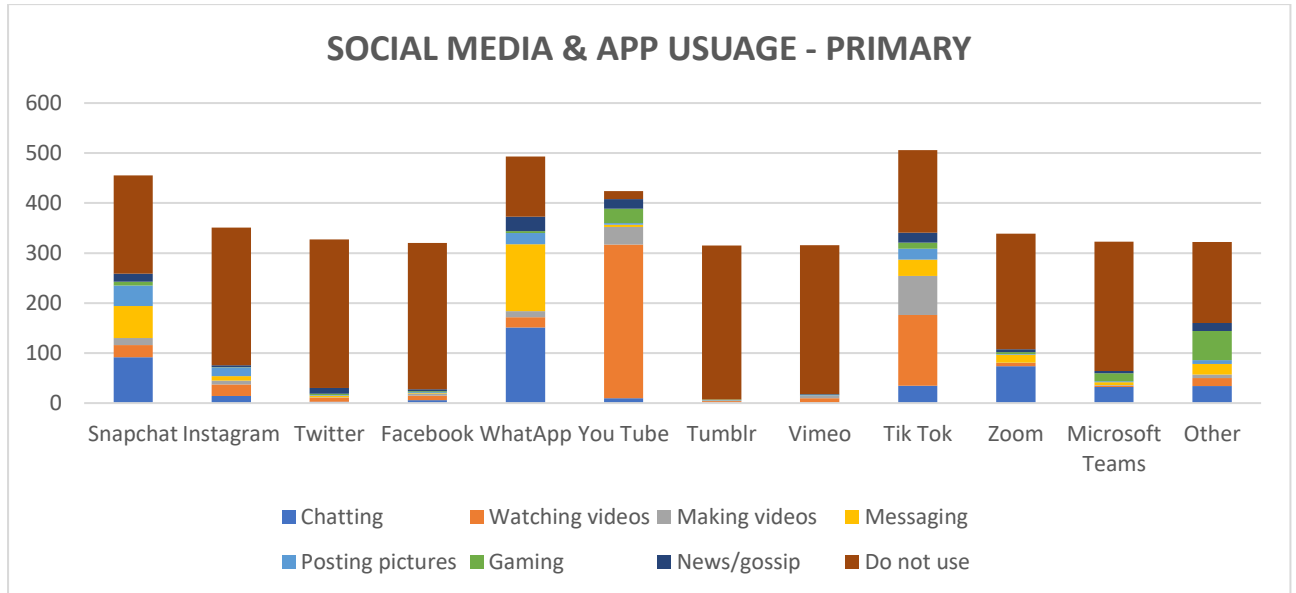


Figure 10.21

For secondary young people, figure 10.22 shows the most popular channels are Tik Tok, Whats app, Snapchat, Instagram and You Tube, for chatting, watching videos and messaging. This has changed from 2020 when Tik Tok was just emerging in the top 5 but now it is the top channel for the secondary age group.

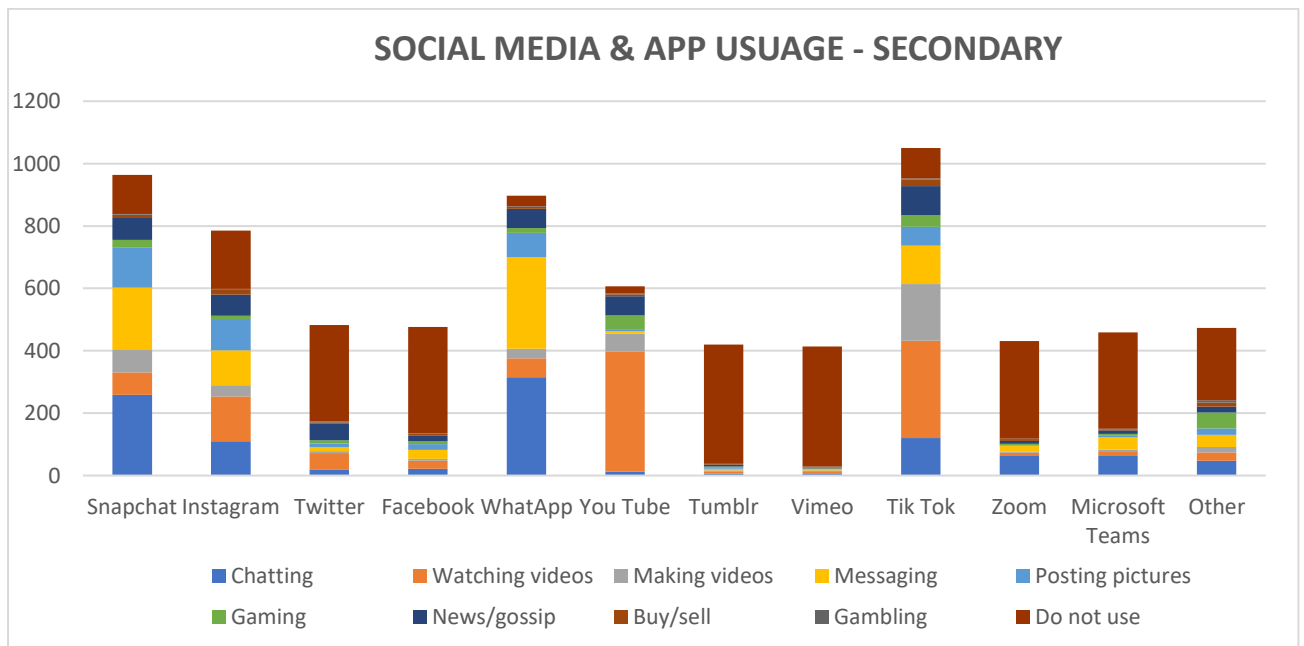


Figure 10.22

Young people were asked what issues they experienced online from various options. In figure 10.23, for the primary age group, issues are encountered and range from some name calling and cyberbullying with some elements of racist and sexist comments. It is important to note cyberbullying issues accounted for over a third of the responses and is significantly higher than 2020.

At a secondary age, more issues are encountered, and all with a similar number of responses. However, racist, sexist and homophobic comments online can also be viewed as being a form of cyberbullying too.

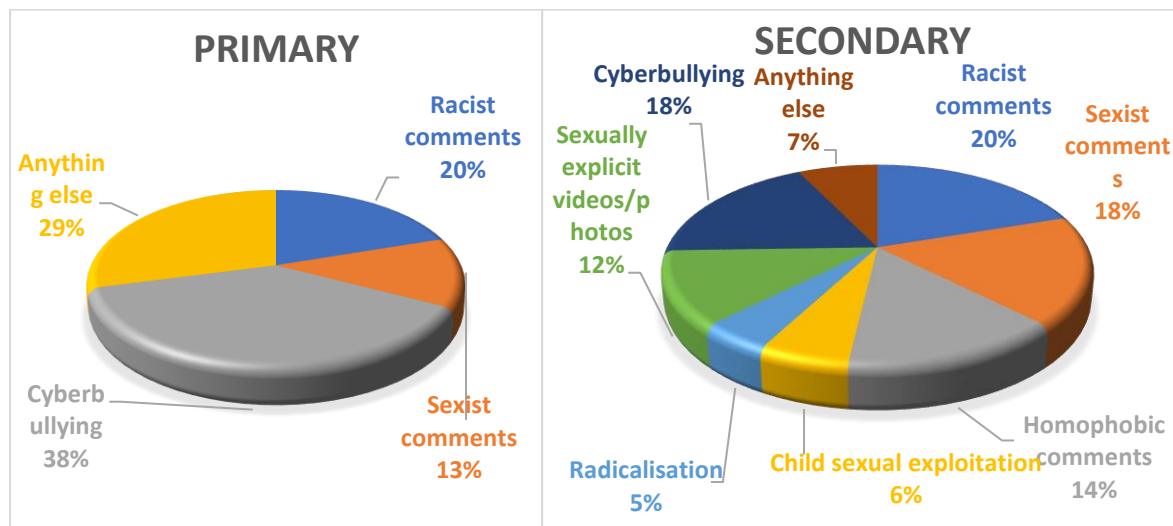


Figure 10.23 – Issues experienced online

10.3 Gaming

Gaming for primary age children is hugely popular and emerged as a popular activity for children at this age to do since the surge of activity online during the pandemic.

This year we asked all children surveyed if they were purchasing through gaming, including the purchase of coins, skins and loot boxes. 44% of primary and 43% of secondary stated that they were making in-app purchases with over 85% of these stating they purchased on a monthly basis with 43% of both age categories spending £5-£9.99.

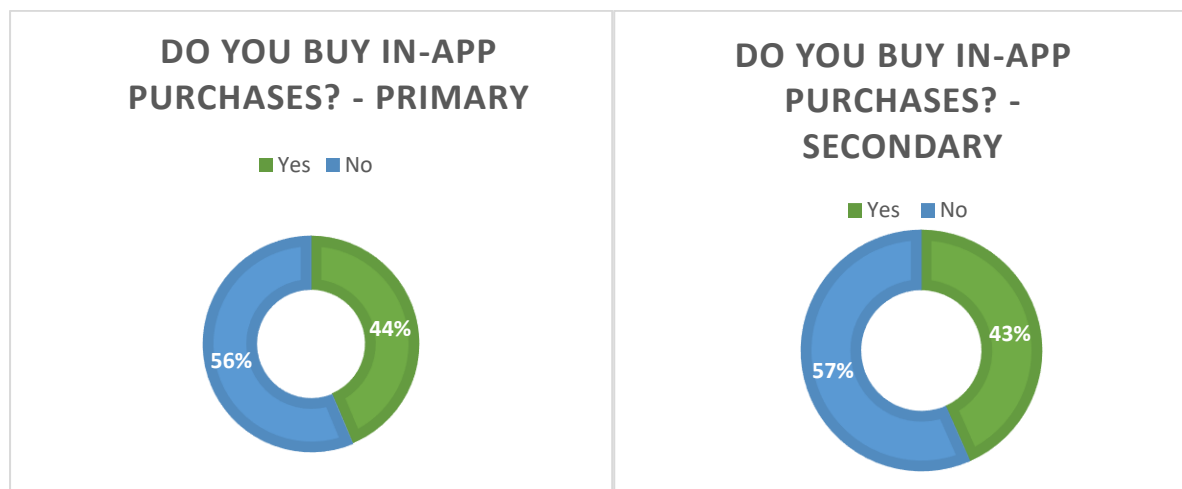


Figure 10.31

The young people were asked what games they play. There were vast number of games mentioned but the most popular ones were Minecraft, Fortnite, Roblox, Fifa, Call of Duty and Subway Surfers. There was not much difference in the games played between different age groups despite some games such as Call of Duty having an age restriction of 18 and above.

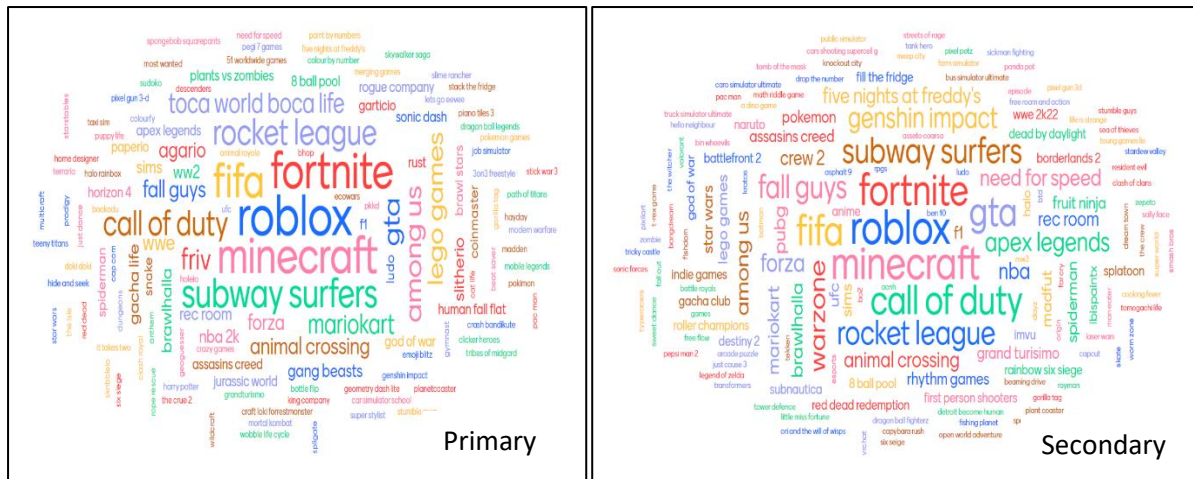


Figure 10.32 – Responses to “What games do you play?”

10.4 Communicating Information

The internet is the most popular mode of finding information particularly finding information on jobs and employment, health services, drugs and alcohol and physical health. Young people will also approach parents/carers particularly for managing and understanding money, jobs and employment and education choices.

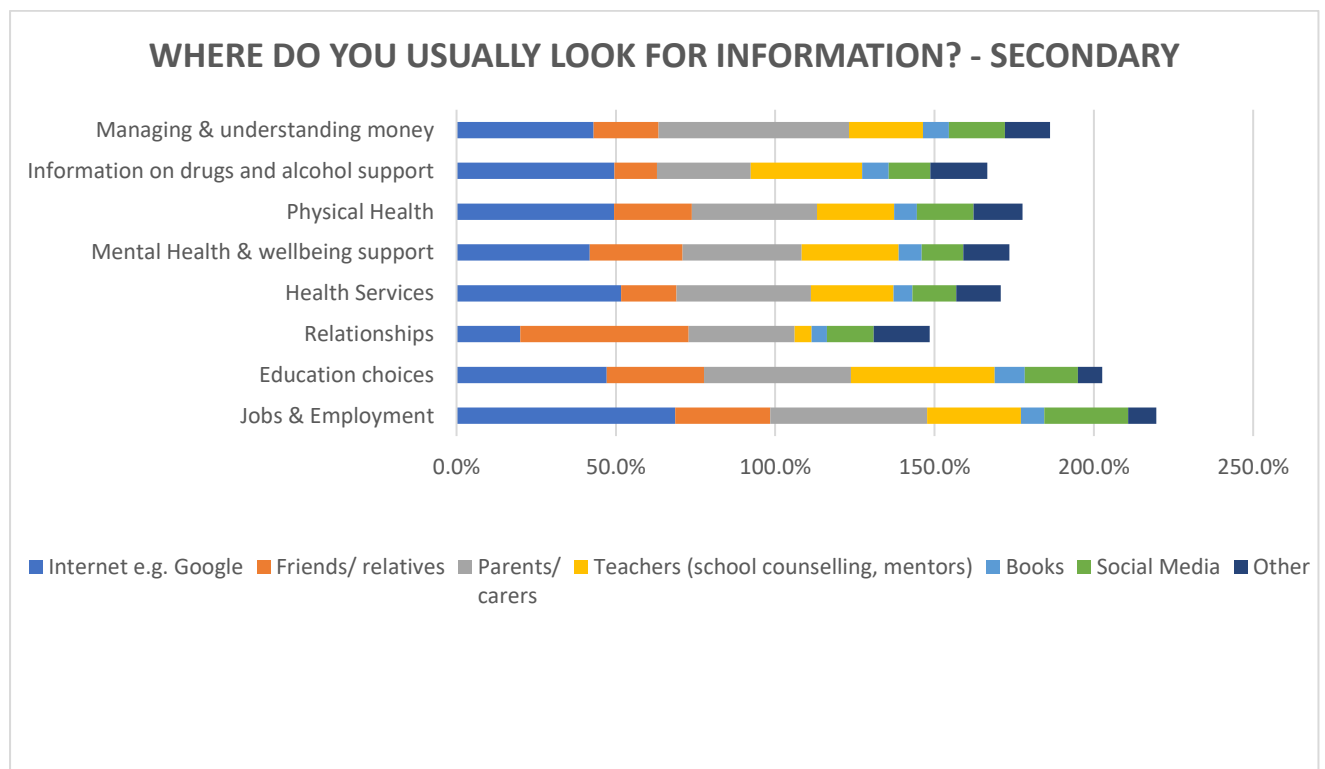


Figure 10.41

11. Local Area

Generally young people think their local area is either very good or fairly good. Opinions shift slightly at secondary age to be less favourable.

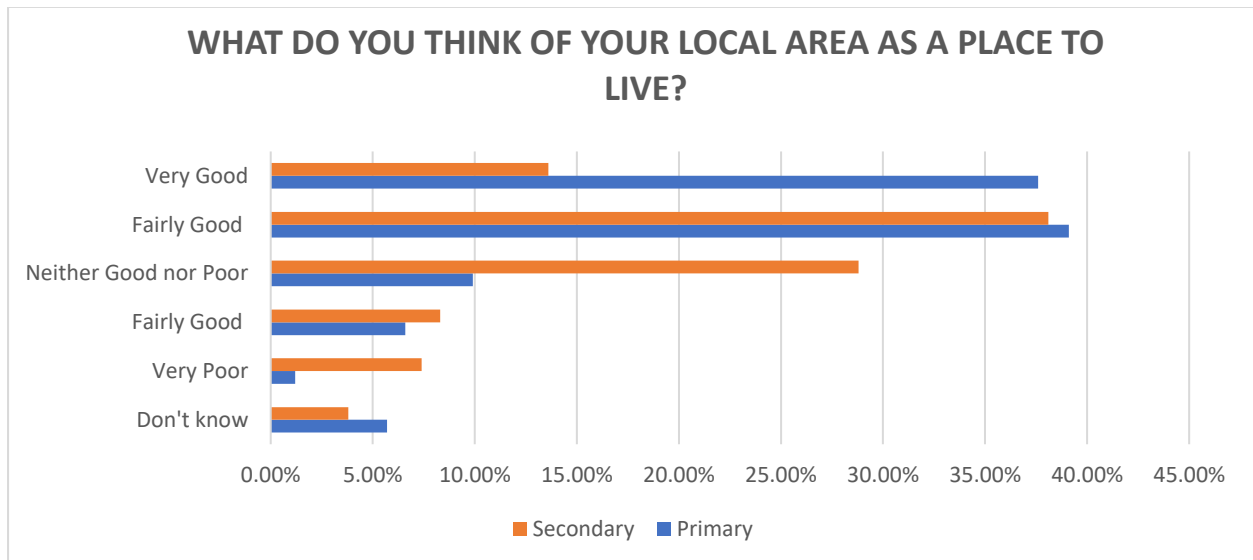


Figure 11.1

For the primary age group, the 3 things they felt would do the most to make their area better are: clean and less litter, safer roads and safer area or less crime. For the secondary age they agreed with the area being cleaner and less litter and safer roads, but their third choice for their area was more or better shops.

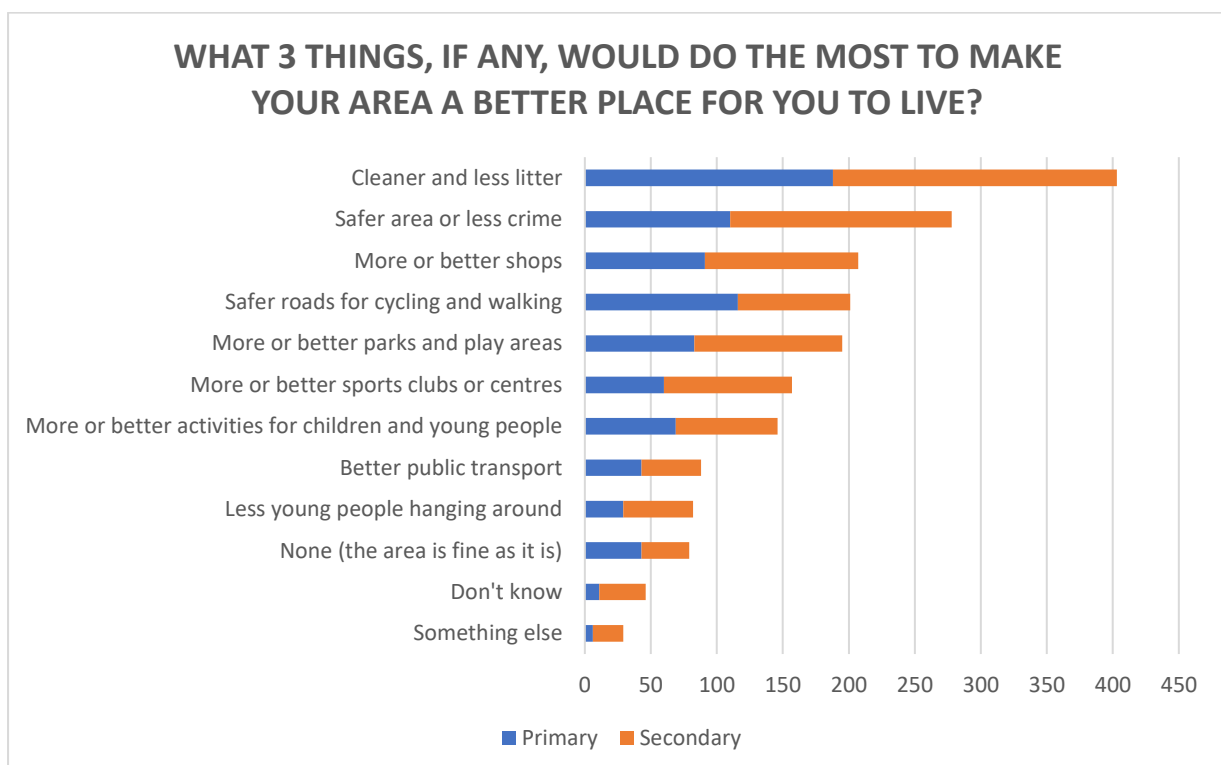


Figure 11.2

In terms of safety, both primary and secondary age felt very safe or fairly safe at home and in their school environment however only 59% of primary age felt very safe or fairly safe on public transport and even less at secondary age at 51.1%.

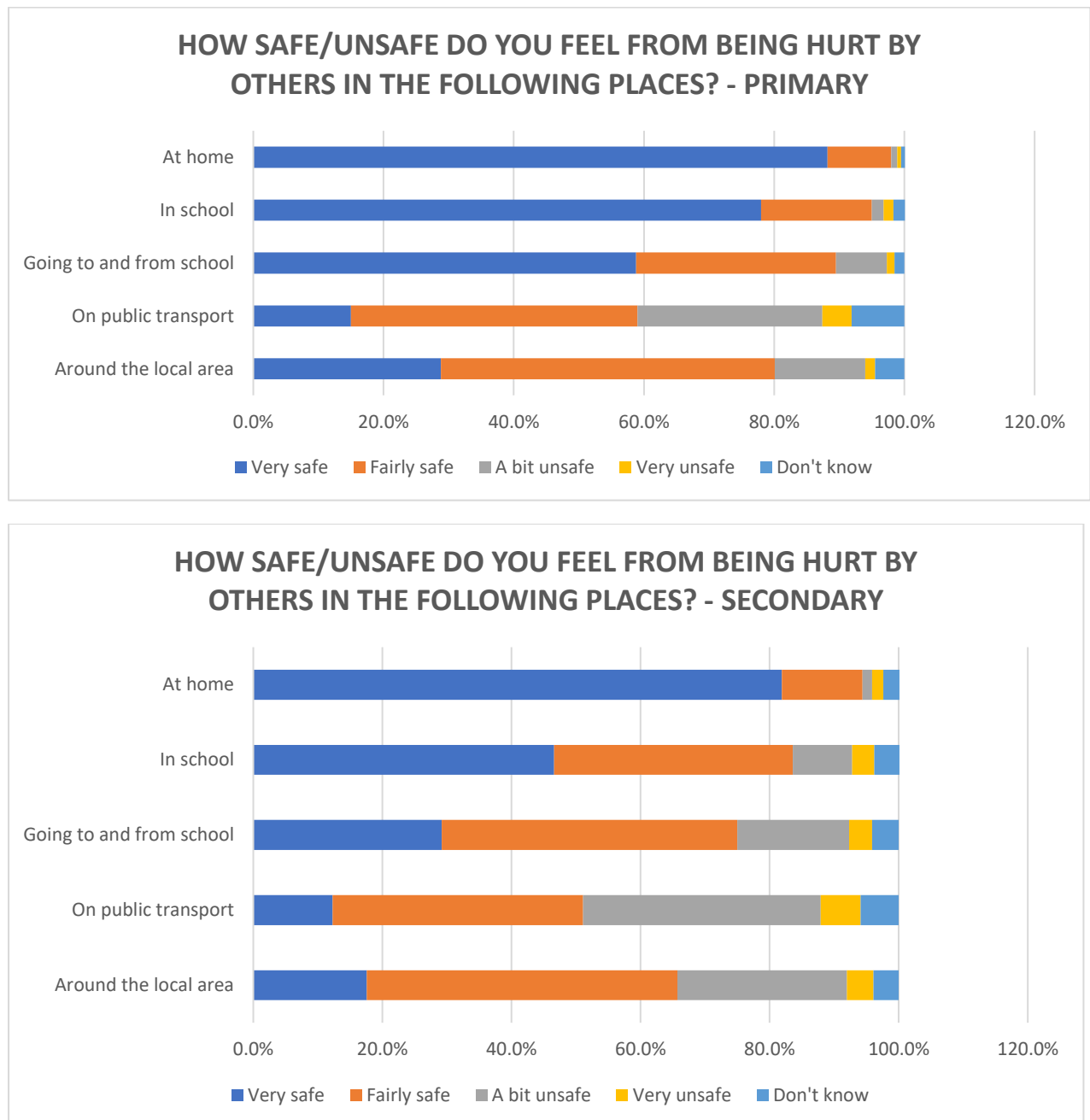


Figure 11.3

12. Education & Learning

In addition, to the education questions explored in the mental health and wellbeing section, this section included questions about children's likes and dislikes at school, bullying, coping with school work, transition to secondary school and topics they would like to learn about in school.

Friends, relationships, learning and education and the feeling of being safe are the positives felt about being in school. Physical activities such as PE are popular too.

Another one of the popular answers for the secondary age group was “nothing” which is not a positive answer.

Primary	Secondary
Friends	Friends & Relationships
Teachers	Nothing
Learning/Education	Learning/Education
Physical activities	Physical activities
Safe environment	Safe environment

Figure 12.1 – Top responses for positives about school

Although there were many things highlighted which children didn’t like about school, bullying has appeared again for both age groups. The secondary age young people also raised some of the other issues they had stated in the mental health and wellbeing section, such as gangs and knife crime. Mental health aspects also were stated such as stress, being bored and feeling unmotivated.

Primary	Secondary
Bullying	Stress
Arguments with friends	Unmotivated
Homework	Rules
School work is hard	Getting bored easily
Getting in trouble	Bullying
Nothing	Young people carrying knives
	Overcrowded
	Moody teenagers
	Bad behaved young people
	Gangs
	Mental Health
	Everything

Figure 12.2 – Top responses for negatives about school

Research conducted in the UK by Ditch the Label has shown a 25% increase in bullying year-on-year. Locally, figure 12.3 shows that 18.4% (62) of primary age children and 25.8% (101) of secondary age children who responded to the survey had been bullied in the last four weeks.

Those who had experienced bullying had the choice to explain their experience. For primary children, these involved nasty comments or being called names about their appearance. For young people at a secondary age, less were willing to share their stories and those that did stated issues between friends, name calling over appearance (in particular ‘fat-shaming’), group/ social bullying, homophobic, racist and transphobic comments. A few young people claimed they hid their experiences and did not trust anyone enough to tell them. Comments were made such as “Feel like killing myself”, “Devastating heartbroken”, “It’s very sad”, showing the hurt and sadness young people are facing through bullying.

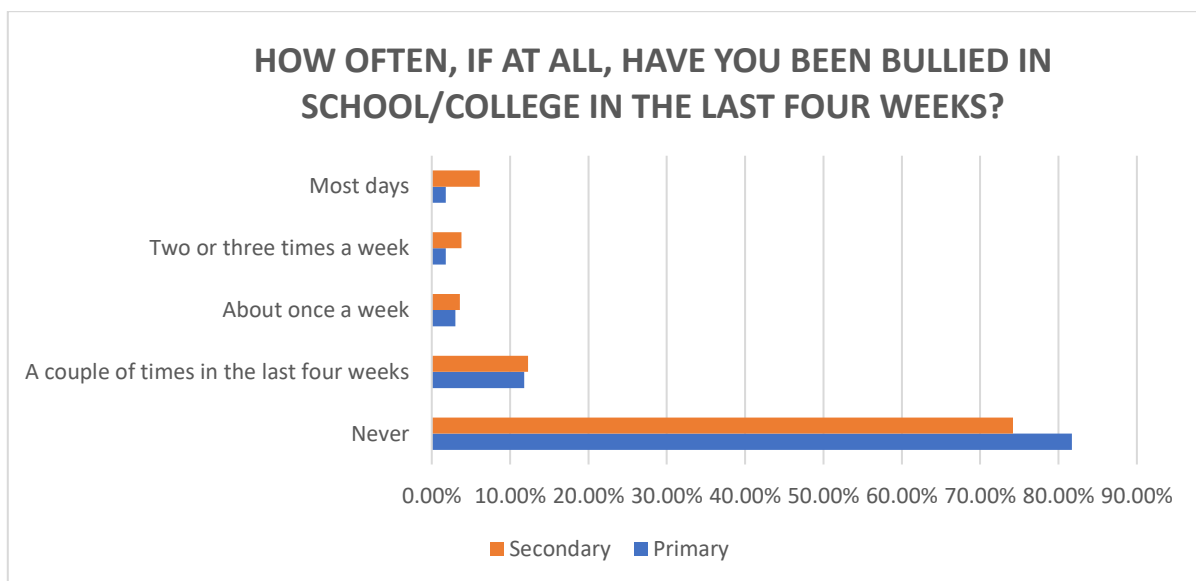


Figure 12.3

69.1% of primary school children felt their school deals with bullying very well or quite well but only 53.6% of secondary pupils. Over a quarter of secondary pupils felt their school did not deal with bullying very well or not at all.

70.4% of primary aged children felt they were coping well with levels of school work compared to only 49.4% from secondary. Of the 22.6% from secondary who said they were not coping well stated that getting more support to help prepare them for exams, dealing with stress, having less work given to them and someone to talk to, would help improve this.

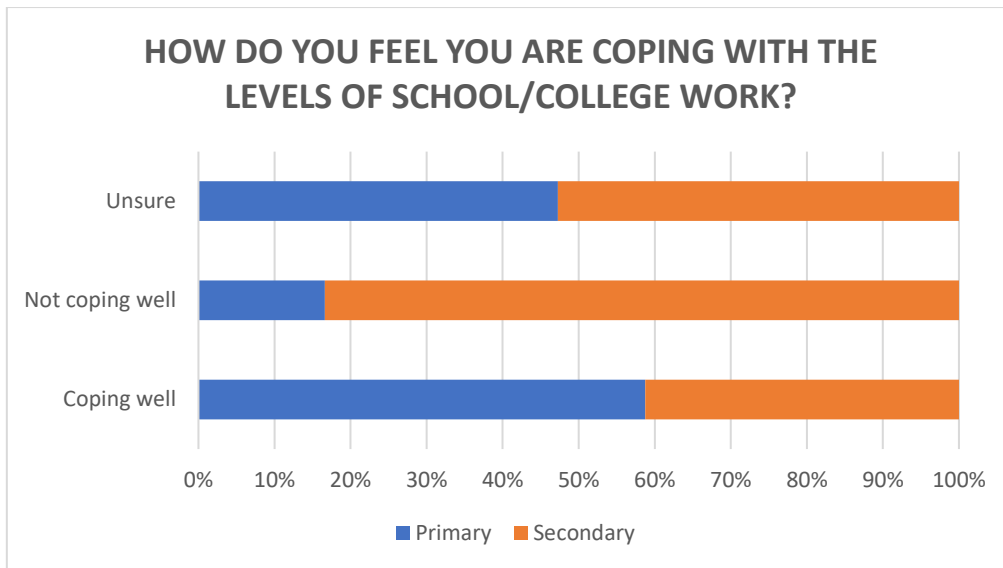


Figure 12.4

75% of primary school children were looking forward to going to secondary school. Of the quarter of children who were not looking forward to secondary school, they stated this was due to being scared of moving away from their friends, increased pressure at secondary schools with hard work, fear of teenagers and being bullied and strict teachers.

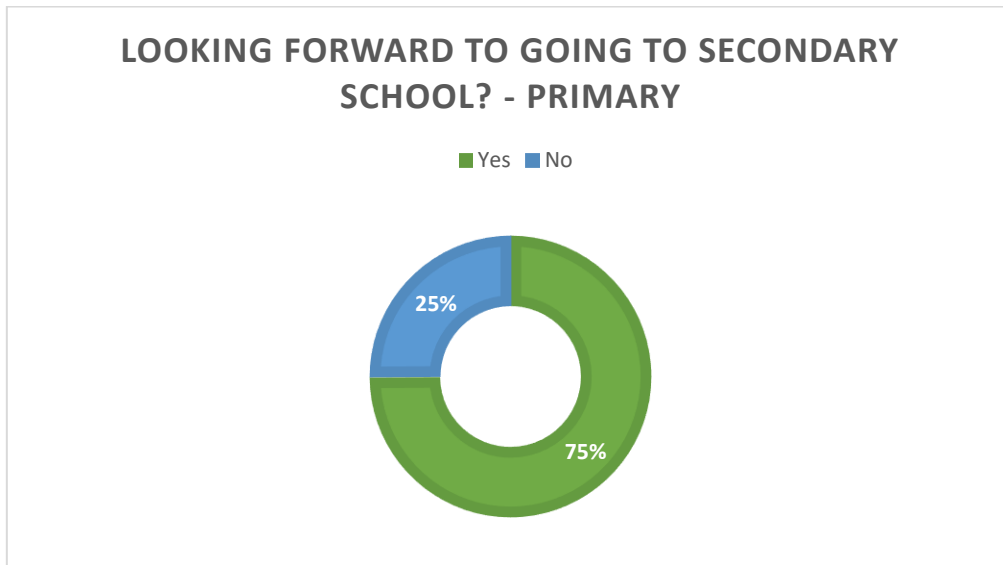


Figure 12.5

The secondary age group were asked a few more questions about their education. Only 41.4% felt a valued member of their school/college community with 35.4% stating they were not sure and 23.2% stating they did not feel a valued member. For those who didn't feel valued, it was because they were unknown in the school, they felt left out, didn't get recognised, "Teachers give more praise and attention to the naughty people when they are good than actually good people", "I feel like no one there actually likes me", There were many young people who didn't know why they felt this way.

Those who did feel valued, made comments like, “I’m happy around others and they treat me well” and “I get praised”.

One of the issues raised by secondary aged young people surveyed was what to do after GCSEs so a question was asked to secondary age pupils about whether they felt the school provided them with the advice and guidance they needed to make informed choices about their future, with 47% stating they did, however a third were unsure and 20% felt they didn’t provide the advice and guidance on post-16 options.

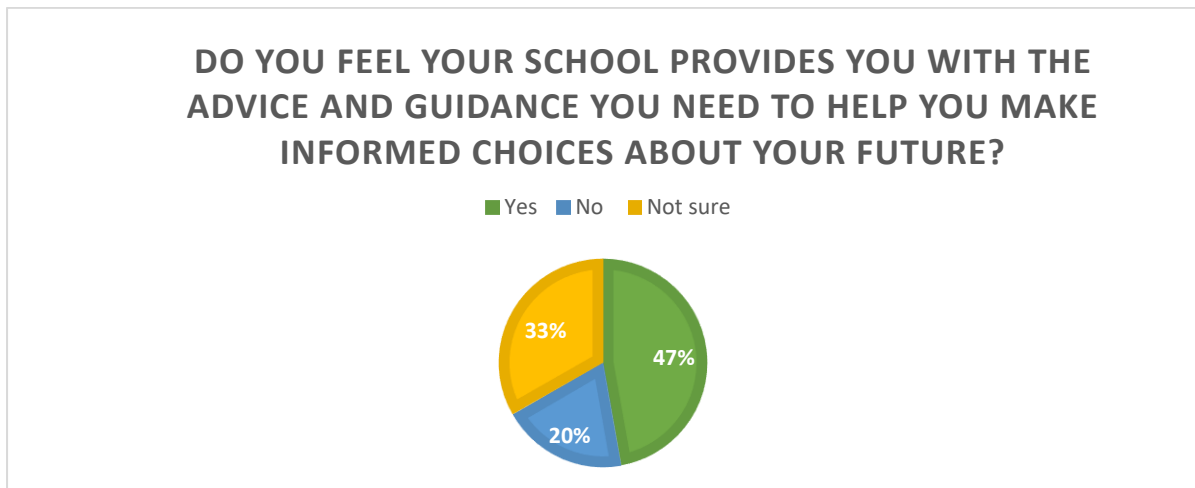


Figure 12.6

The information they felt would help them to make decisions included how to apply for a job, qualifications required, different career options and choices available to young people, applying for further education, and how to start a business alongside opportunities to build their confidence.

They were also asked if there were any skills not taught in school which they would like to learn about. As many survey results have shown in the past, life skills, money management and taxes were things they wanted to learn about, but self-defence was another popular answer.



Figure 12.7 – Responses for “Skills not taught in school which you would like to learn about”

13. Youth Activities

This section focussed on activities for children and young people in Sandwell. Figure 13.1 shows that at a primary age 68.95% of children felt the activities were good enough but only 50.4% of secondary pupils felt this.

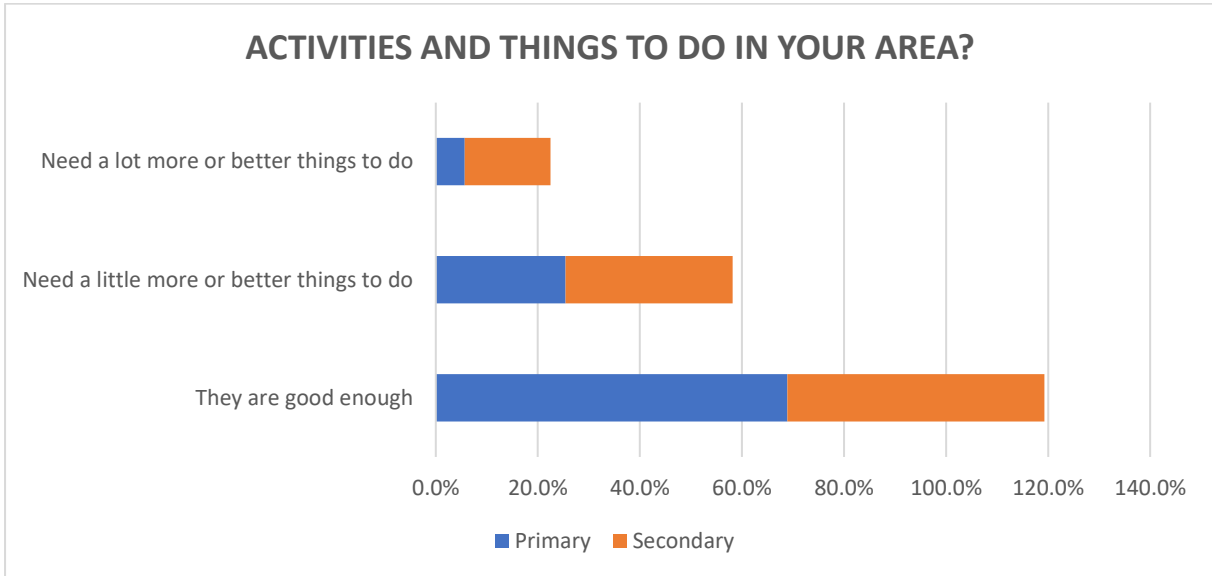


Figure 13.1

Those who stated a little or lot more things are needed were asked to elaborate and explain what kind of activities they would like to see and where. Figure 13.3 shows the vast range of requests, but the main activities, children at both ages, requested were more football playing opportunities, including more football pitches, (particularly astroturfs), facilities and teams in general for all age groups. Basketball was another popular activity requested and sports clubs in general. Both age groups referred to having more parks or better youth provision in parks, such as climbing areas for primary. They wanted parks and activities to be located near to where they live.



Figure 13.2 – Responses for “What activities would you like to?”

The locality of activities makes a difference to young people, as figure 13.3 demonstrates. The barriers to them doing activities they would like to do, are that they

are not near them, they don't have the time or anyone to go with. Many are also unsure of what activities are available.

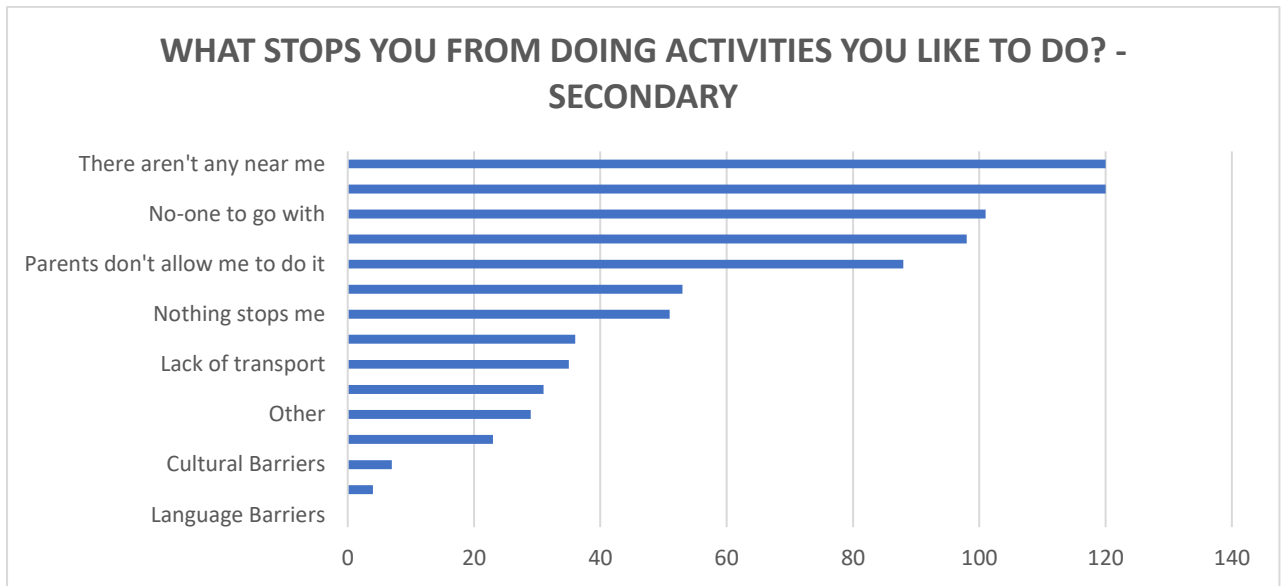


Figure 13.3

14. Child's Voice and Helping

The children and young people were asked about child's voice and how much they are listened to at school and out of school.

When asked whether their schools have a school council, 96.4% of primary said they did and 74.1% of secondary said they did. However less than 15% of each group were involved in their school council.

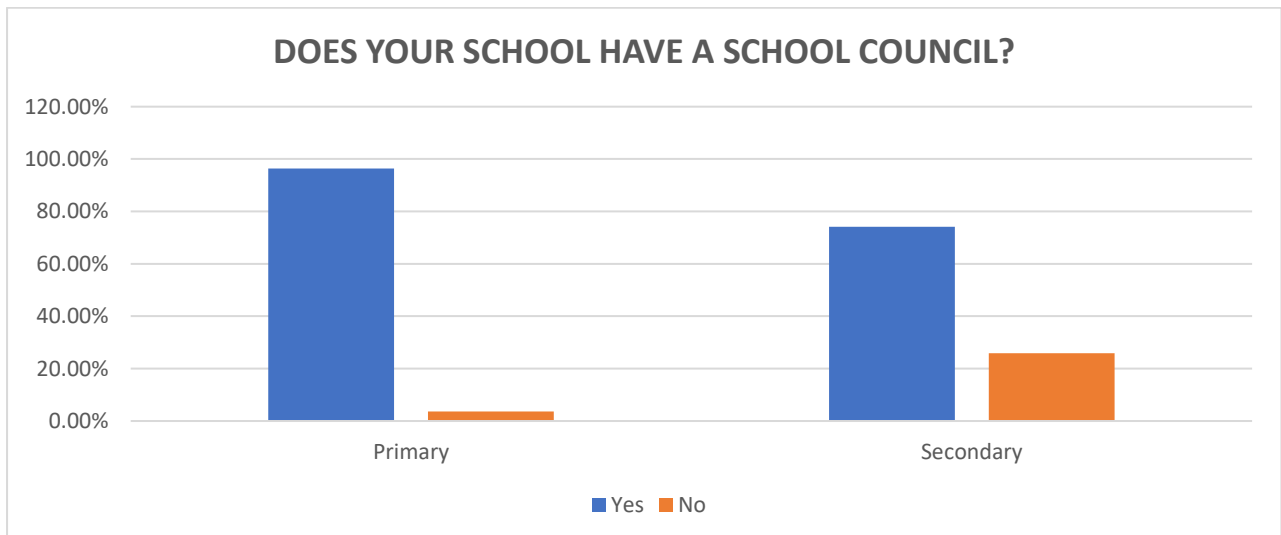


Figure 14.1

77.3% of primary school children who were part of the school council stated they felt that they had made a difference in their school but only 59.1% of the secondary aged pupils who were part of their school council felt they had.

When asked if there was a way of having their voice heard, 52.6% of primary age said yes, and this was through having a school councillor to speak to, an ideas box, having regular meetings, speaking to the head boy or girl, through assemblies and speaking to teachers. However, 42.9% were unsure, which was similar to secondary where 44.9% said they were not sure. Of the 48.2% who stated there was a way of having their voice heard, the answers were similar to primary, with a few other methods such as “Listening to you card”, “R u ok card”, “anonymous box” or speaking to the pastoral team.

At a secondary age, young people felt their views about the local area were not listened to much as shown in figure 14.2 below.

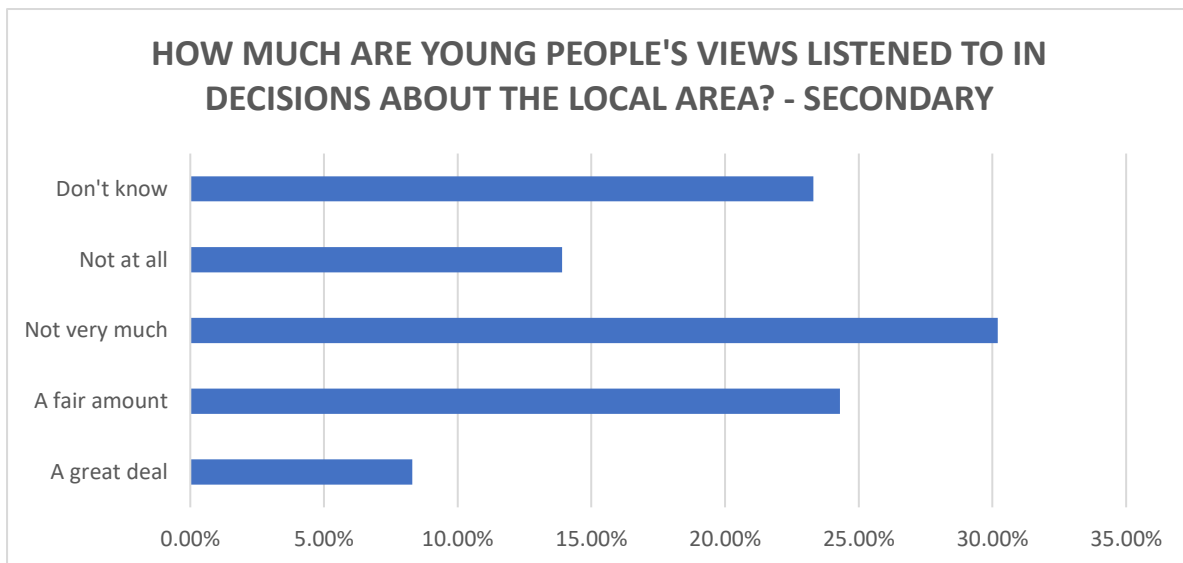


Figure 14.2

In this section the final question asked to young people was if they were in charge of Sandwell Council for one day, what problem would they solve and how would they solve it. The common things were littering, knife crime, crime in general, bullying, mental health and giving people a voice.

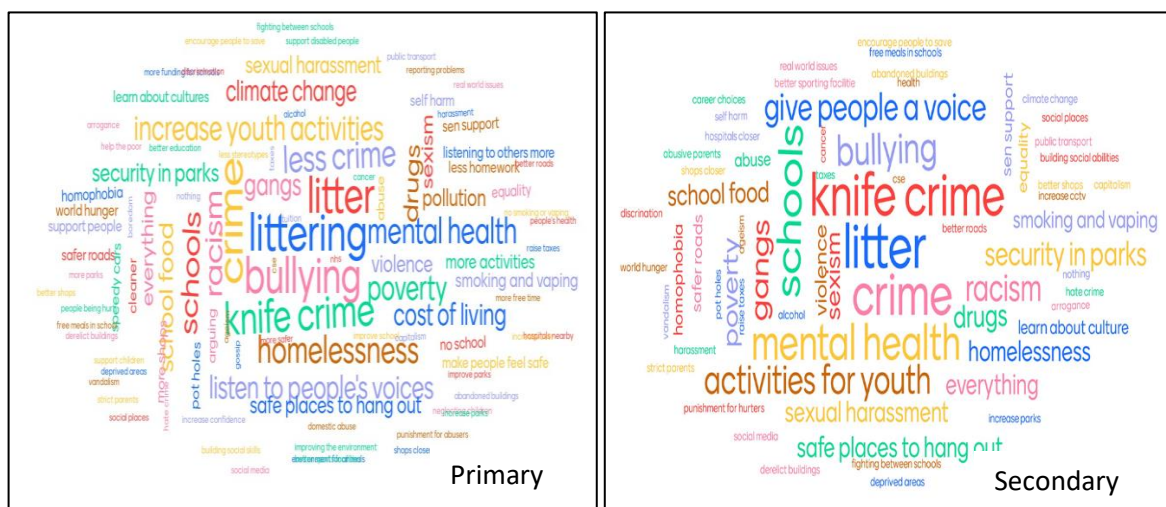


Figure 14.3 – Responses to “What problem would you solve?”

15. Your Future

In 10 years' time secondary children will be aged from 21-26. They were asked what job they see themselves doing in 10 years' time. The choices are shown in figure 14.2, with running their own business and being famous as the top choices. In the other category which was third choice, astronomy, dentists, footballers, gamers, scientists, vets, designers or architects and professions in the music industry were stated. Some of the responses for "Other" stated that they had not made a decision about what they wanted to do yet.

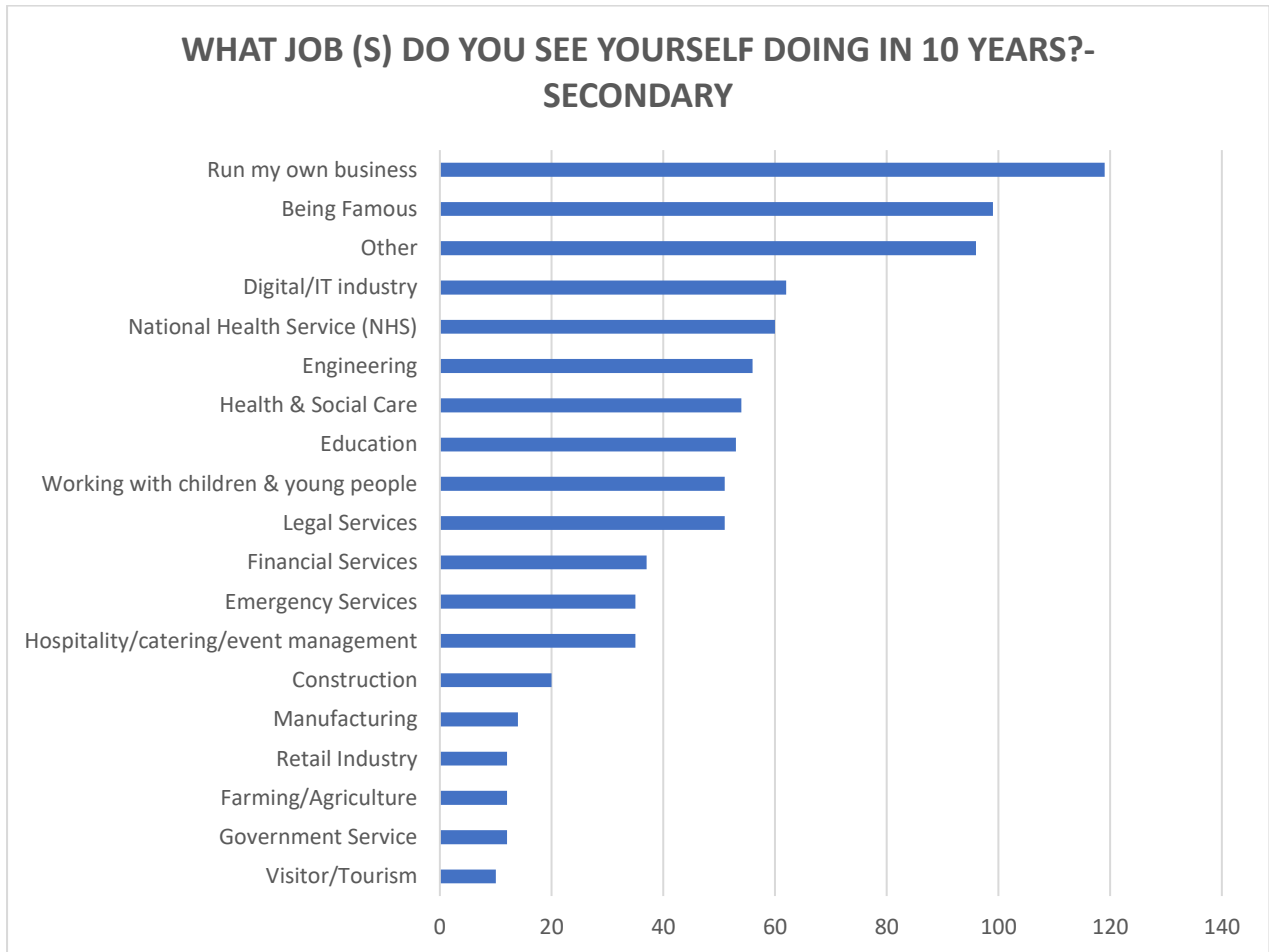


Figure 14.1

The secondary young people were asked if they had tried to find a job within the last 12 months. Figure 14.2 shows that nearly 20% had tried to find a job of which 52% had been successful and 48% unsuccessful. The ones who were unsuccessful said the barriers they faced were their age, lack of qualifications or travel.

HAVE YOU TRIED TO FIND A JOB WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS? - SECONDARY

■ Yes, successfully ■ Yes, unsuccessfully ■ No

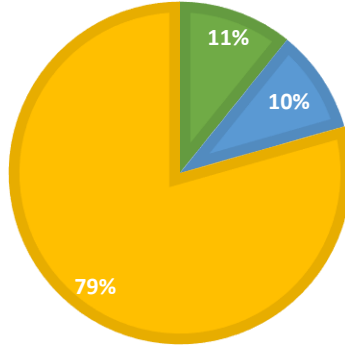


Figure 14.2

In figure 14.3, primary children were asked whether they would like to continue to live in Sandwell when they are older and only 40% responded with yes and 39% were unsure. Secondary aged pupils were asked if they would continue living in Sandwell after college or university and the response was even less at 25% stating yes and 46% being unsure.

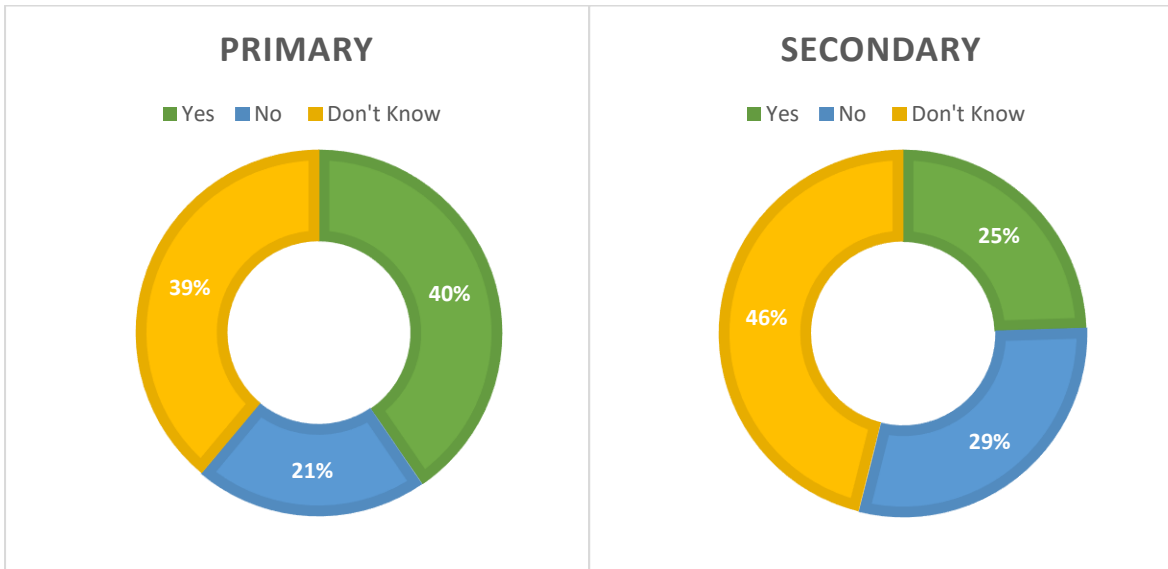


Figure 14.3 – Would you continue living in Sandwell

Of the 29% that said they did not want to live in Sandwell, they were asked a follow up question of what would help them to stay, to which they stated lots of interesting job opportunities and the feeling of being safe. University or Higher education opportunities would also help.

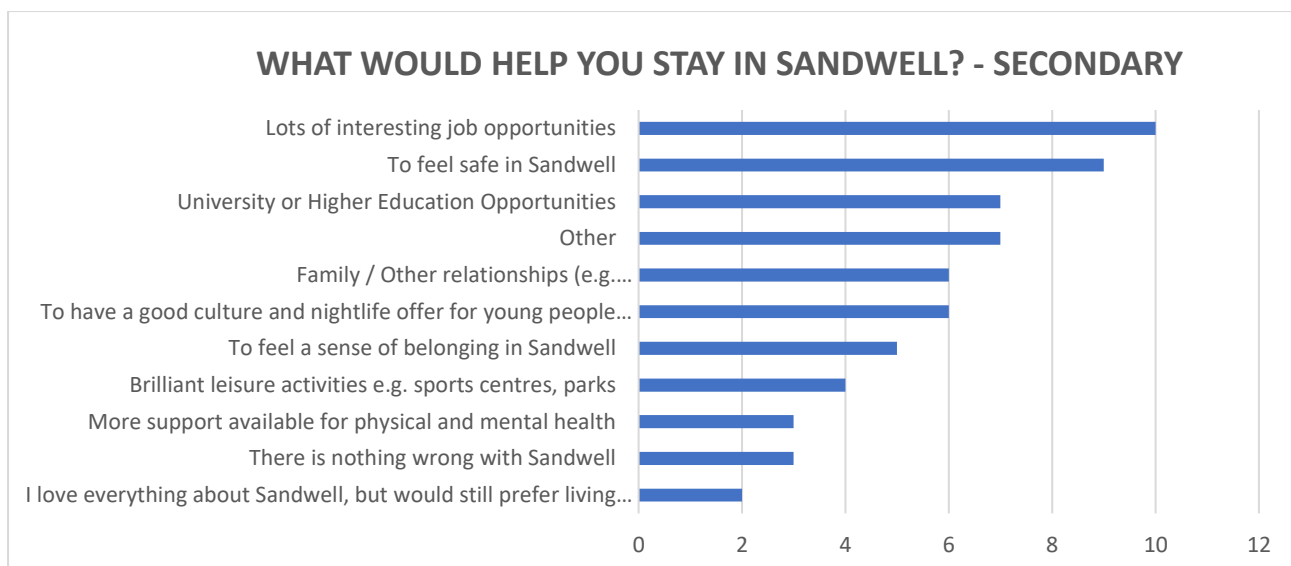


Figure 14.4

16. Being a young person in Sandwell

Finally, young people were asked if there was anything else they wanted to tell us about being a young person in Sandwell. The primary aged children generally made positive comments with many referring to it being fun to be a young person, “It is fun to live a young life and grow old, so I like it. I love playing out with friends, I enjoy going to school and being able to have an education because there are other people out in the world that might not get an opportunity to do things or get a chance to do them as well as us being able to. As a child for me I love being young”.

However, there were some that felt it was difficult and scary and young people have to face many challenges, “Sucks because we have social media and getting bullied, we don’t even have a voice (we can’t vote) if you’re not popular, you’ll become a nobody”.

Secondary aged children provided more insight into the challenges they face through their comments. Many referred to being a young person as “hard” and “difficult”. Some examples include, “It’s a really hard time. People always say that oh being an adult is extremely hard, but they never understand that us young people have a hard time everyday as we must fit in and if we don’t we get rejected by society. It’s like survival of the fittest but instead of physically affecting you, you are mentally destroyed. This is why young people kill themselves”, “Its hard to find out your identity due to influence from social media” and being a young person today is horrible and no one listens”.

Young people feel their voice is not heard, and they deserve to have a voice and an opinion. “Many people assume I’m immature but are surprised once they start talking to me. Not being taken seriously or having my thoughts or opinions heard due to them thinking that I don’t know what I’m doing” and “Misunderstood and not heard”. The few young people at secondary age who did make positive comments were happy to get an education.

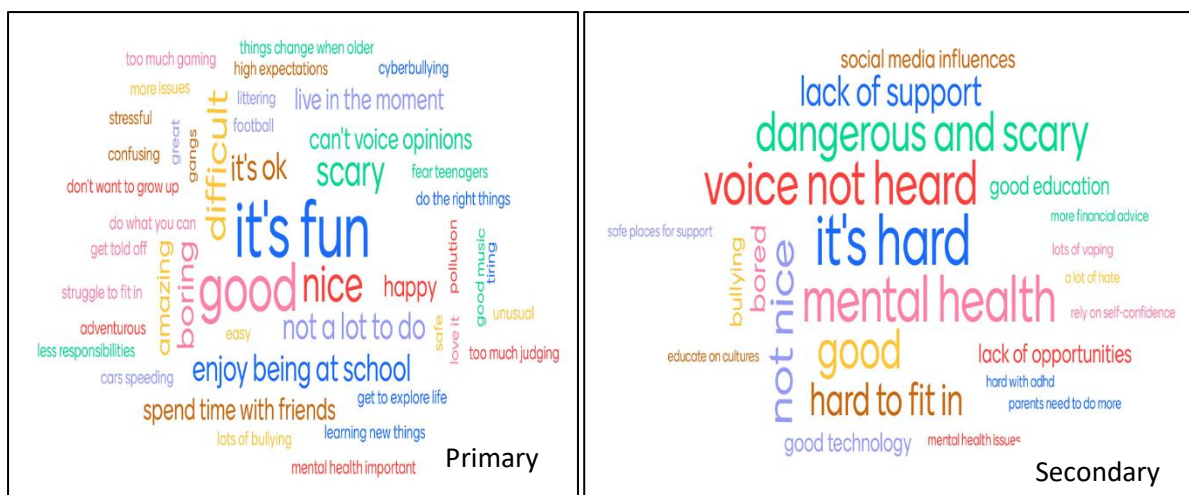


Figure 16.1 – Being a young person in Sandwell

17. Conclusion

This detailed survey report can, even with its limitations, provide a good indication of the needs of young people from their perspective, and also provide some recommendations about what the local authority and other agencies should be implementing to meet the needs.

The pandemic had a huge impact on young people and the aftermath of this period is still having an impact on their education as well as their mental health and wellbeing. Issues which were on the forefront before the pandemic such as knife crime, gangs and violence has been on the rise following the lockdown period and young people have noticed this.

In particular at a secondary age, critical education time has been lost which has mounted pressure on young people for school work and exams which continues to be an ongoing issue. This ultimately also affects their mental health as they feel pressure to do well in their education and they feel schools are focussed on academic achievements rather than educating on important life skills which will help them to live independently, such as money management. Given that the top profession young people would like to do when they are older, is setting up their own business, its not a surprise that they feel entrepreneurial skills are currently a gap in their education.

They also feel further support not just to help them with exams but to support their mental health and wellbeing should be offered in schools, allowing services to showcase their work more as there continues to be a lack of awareness of support services available to young people, both in and out of school such as the School Health Nursing Service and Police Link Officers. Although there are so many partner agencies that work with young people and schools, further work needs to be done to ensure they are known.

One of the main topics raised throughout the survey was bullying. This is an issue which is affecting many young people in Sandwell and one of the issues they highlighted as something they would resolve if they were in charge of Sandwell Council. They suggested that harsher punishments would be a way of resolving the

bullying. It affects both primary and secondary aged children and is happening face to face and online. The challenge young people have identified, is that it is difficult for them to fit in and this for some is a daily battle. Young people often are being bullied for their appearance or their sexual orientation, even though the people bullying are often not aware of what sexual orientation their victims are. Young people feel the punishment for the people bullying is not severe and therefore they continue to display this type of behaviour. With over a quarter of young people of a secondary age admitting they were bullied in the last four weeks, there is further work that needs to be done both in and out of school to tackle this issue.

Young people want someone to talk to and want their voices heard. They feel adults don't listen and their opinions do not count. This is not just through supporting their mental health and wellbeing but in decisions about their local area or regarding school.

Although social media platforms are widely used by young people, Tik Tok has emerged as the most popular for watching and making videos during the pandemic and has continued to grow in popularity for both primary and secondary age groups. However, as a source of information for young people the internet is still the main platform. Work has already commenced on the Just Youth web platform for young people and should continue to be a primary source for young people to find information they require, as the internet and search engines are most utilised by young people, therefore a central platform, when promoted by all agencies would prove to be beneficial.

Young people feel that Sandwell Council should resolve issues such as littering and make Sandwell safer with less crime. They also feel parks can be improved by including more youth provision. As they prefer to have activities which are located closer to them, they highlighted that sporting activities such as more football and basketball provision should be developed in Sandwell nearer to where they live.

Young people in Sandwell are unsure whether they would want to stay in the Borough and many have aspirations to move elsewhere. Better job prospects or higher education opportunities might make them stay as well as Sandwell becoming a safer place to be.

Overall being a child in Sandwell at a primary age can come with its challenges but is generally seen as good, however as a young person transitions from secondary school to adulthood life can become extremely difficult, and, the impact on young people's mental health can be detrimental. Young people have ambition and drive to succeed but also feel pressure to do this from their educational institution, parents and society in general. However, the barriers and influences around them with social media and the need to fit into society have made life very difficult for young people. They want to be acknowledged, listened to and supported to address their needs and issues which unfortunately continue to grow.

The survey results will be shared with Council Directors, Cabinet Members, the wider workforce of the council and partner agencies including schools, Police, NHS, CCG and the voluntary sector. Recommendations will be made which will form part of the Council's strategic objectives and priorities.

SHAPE




To find out more about the SHAPE Programme


 Email: shape_events@sandwell.gov.uk

To access advice and support please visit:

 <http://www.justyouth.org.uk/>

Follow us on our social media channels:

 Instagram: SHAPE_Sandwell

 You Tube: SHAPE Events

 Twitter: @SHAPESandwell

 Facebook: Just Youth Sandwell