

Hear Y: Young Voices, Big Action

Discussions & Outcomes
Problems & Solutions
Consensus & Key Points



Mental Health Provisions & Support for Young People

- All proficiently trained in how to work with mental health, whether in crisis or otherwise.
- Having safer & positive role models. Including safe adults.
- It can be easier talking to someone independently because you feel less judged.
- Having more places that offer nighttime support, like the YMCA does, for these crisis moments, or when needing to talk to someone safe.
- Having easy access to community centres, having safe people to take you or go with.
- Finding ways to be less isolated, and helping those who are used to it, due to mental health, threatening or dangerous behaviours from others.
- Working within tight-knit communities as they have the potential to gang up on someone, push people out, boost feelings of isolation etc.



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Mental Health Provisions & Support for Young People

- Youth Boredom
- Poor advertising for youth clubs, centres etc.
- Youth Driven workshops, events etc I.e., Music, or ASD groups etc.
- People needing to be relatable when working with young people, better vetting and more empathic people. First hand experience is key.
- More human-to-human interactions.
- More person-centred mental health support for young people before giving them medication.
- More financial inclusion.
- Make professionals have “real” conversations with young people, this is across the board from schools, to places like CAMH etc.
- More places to talk – Safe spaces for Drop-ins.



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Conclusion & Recommendations: Mental Health & Provisions for Young People

- Young people today face significant challenges, from feelings of boredom and isolation to the struggle of finding safe and relatable support systems. The lack of effective advertising for youth services, along with professionals who may not always be empathetic or relatable, further compounds these issues. To truly support youth, we must take a person-centred approach that prioritizes human-to-human connections, safe spaces, and financial inclusion while ensuring professionals engage in real, honest conversations.
- To address these challenges, youth provisions should focus on accessible, community-driven initiatives that empower young people through workshops, social activities, and spaces where they feel heard and understood. Expanding mental health support beyond medication and ensuring there are safe, well-trained professionals available always—especially during crisis moments—should be a priority. The role of positive role models and safer adults is essential in creating a nurturing environment for youth to express themselves without judgment.



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Conclusion & Recommendations: Mental Health & Provisions for Young People

- The YMCA is well-placed to facilitate many of these changes. By increasing nighttime support services, improving outreach through better advertising, and establishing more safe drop-in spaces staffed with trained professionals, it can provide the much-needed human connection and security that young people crave. Encouraging community mentors and peer-led initiatives will ensure that youth feel represented and supported by those who truly understand their struggles.
- Ultimately, fostering inclusivity, open conversations, and proactive mental health initiatives will help young people feel less isolated, more connected, and better equipped to navigate their future.



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Community Safety & Young People's Relationship with Authorities

- It's not safe for women/ BIPOC when it comes to reporting things to the police generally.
- BIPOC tend to feel as though the police are not here for them, this can be inclusive of those living in certain locations, or of a certain class.
- Police should treat offences seriously, arresting people for harassment.
- More positive role models to reduce incidents in public – ties in with other conversations had over different subjects.
- Why is everyone so angry? (Overlaps with mental health).
- Banning knives = Pointless.
- Police don't want to talk to us.
- Violent incidents just based on appearance/location
- Carrying knives for protection. 'I don't want to be that person'
- Fear for life when leaving the house due to potential outcomes
- Tried to make a report – police wouldn't take statements due to the area.
- Young mum, hit by a teenager in the street, never investigated.

Community Safety & Young People's Relationship with Authorities

- Can't be caught talking to police as this is 'snitching'
- Untrustworthy – Take more time to listen.
- Young people reciprocating the behaviour that they are seeing.
- One-sided respect.
- Stripping away individuality.
- No Shouting – Listen
- Injustice.

- Need approachable policemen.
- Intimidation tactics need to be addressed.
- More work to rebuild the relationship between authorities and the people.
- Less intense and threatening uniform.
- More understanding between the youth/public and the police.
- More conversations and interactions.

Conclusions & Recommendations Community Safety & Relationships with Authority

- There is a clear and urgent need to address the relationship between the police and communities, particularly for women, BIPOC individuals, and those living in marginalized areas. The fear of reporting crimes, the perception that police are not there to support certain groups, and the experiences of harassment, intimidation, and injustice contribute to widespread distrust. Many young people feel unsafe leaving their homes due to potential violence, and the idea of carrying weapons for self-protection—despite not wanting to—highlights the severity of the issue.
- For meaningful change, police must take reports seriously, treat harassment as a real offence, and actively listen without intimidation or dismissal. The use of intimidation tactics, aggressive uniforms, and an unwillingness to engage only reinforces the divide between law enforcement and the public. Instead, police officers should be approachable, engage in real conversations, and work to rebuild relationships through consistent, community-focused efforts.



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Conclusions & Recommendations Community Safety & Relationships with Authority

- Additionally, fostering positive role models in communities could help reduce incidents of violence and encourage better behaviour through leadership and example. Addressing the root causes of anger, including mental health struggles and systemic inequalities, is essential to breaking cycles of frustration and conflict.
- Ultimately, a shift towards mutual respect, understanding, and open communication is necessary. More community engagement, visible accountability, and policies that prioritize fairness over intimidation will be key in restoring faith in the justice system and ensuring safer public spaces for all.



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Conclusions & Recommendations Community Safety & Relationships with Authority

The YMCA can play a key role in bridging the gap between communities and law enforcement by fostering trust, providing support, and creating safer environments.

1. Safe Spaces & Support

- Encourage YMCA hubs for reporting concerns safely. i.e., the YMCA campus, youth clubs etc.
- Partner with legal aid and mental health services.

2. Police & Community Relations

- Host informal meetings to build trust.
- Advocate for less intimidating policing and respectful engagement.

3. Positive Role Models & Leadership

- Promote our mentorship programs for young people.
- Promote conflict resolution and self-defence training.

4. Addressing Fear & Protection Mindsets

- Offer alternatives to violence, such as education, employment support, and more inclusive forms of expression and managing strong emotions
- Tackle systemic issues through public discussions and advocacy.
- By fostering approachability, respect, and youth empowerment, the YMCA can help create a safer, more connected community.



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Positive Role Models for Young People – Qualities

- Positivity
- Self-awareness
- Family
- Peaceful
- Friends
- Honesty
- Transparency
- Kindness
- Good personality
- Active Listening

- Doctors
- YMCA/Youth Workers
- Celebrities
- Podcasters
- Sense of Humour
- Consistency
- Lived experience
- Relatability
- Empathy
- Positive Mindset

- Teachers/School.
- Hard to connect to most.
- Employing a relatable safe person – separate to teachers.
- Prioritise those with Diagnosis.
- Have them do role play.
- Students should be involved in interview process.
- ‘If you are not naughty, diagnosed or academic, you get ignored’

- Someone who can model the things you want to be and someone to help you identify what you do not want to be.
- Providing spaces in which young people can explore who they are, not trying to follow others



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Conclusions & Recommendations for Positive Role Models for Young People

To create safer, more supportive environments for young people, we must embrace positivity, self-awareness, honesty, and empathy as key values. Young people need relatable role models—including youth workers, teachers, podcasters, and even celebrities—who can model the right behaviours and help them identify who they do and don't want to become.

A youth provision that truly serves young people should prioritise:

- Safe, inclusive spaces where youth can explore their identity without pressure to conform.
- Relatable mentors outside of traditional authority figures, such as youth workers with lived experience.
- Active listening and transparency to build trust.
- Support for those with diagnoses, ensuring no one feels ignored.
- Youth involvement in decision-making, including hiring processes for staff who work with them.
- Interactive learning, including role-play and real-life skill development.



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Conclusions & Recommendations for Positive Role Models for Young People

How the YMCA Can Help

The YMCA is in a strong position to facilitate these changes by:

- Creating community hubs where young people can seek support.
- Employing youth workers with lived experience to provide guidance.
- Offering mentorship programs that focus on self-awareness, resilience, and life skills.
- Advocating for change in schools and institutions to ensure no young person feels overlooked.
- By prioritizing connection, relatability, and personal growth, we can empower young people to make positive choices and feel valued in their communities.



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Expanding Accessibility & Engagement for Youth

To ensure greater reach and inclusivity, it's crucial to offer a variety of accessible engagement methods that resonate with diverse backgrounds, interests, and learning styles.

Below are expanded and proven ways to boost youth engagement and accessibility:

Creative & Cultural Engagement

- Reading & Writing – Book clubs, poetry slams, and storytelling workshops.
- Music – Songwriting, open mic nights, music production, and DJ workshops.
- Movies & Videos – Film screenings, youth-led documentaries, and social media content creation.
- Art & Design – Painting, digital media, graffiti walls, and community murals.

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Physical & Wellness-Based Engagement

- Sport & Outdoor Activities – Football, basketball, boxing, skateboarding, climbing, and adventure programs.
- Gym & Fitness – Strength training, yoga, dance, and group workout sessions.
- Nature & Environment – Outdoor retreats, gardening projects, and eco-initiatives.

Social & Community-Focused Engagement

- Church/Religion & Spirituality – Faith-based groups, interfaith discussions, and community support circles.
- Cultural Events & Celebrations – Inclusive festivals, heritage days, and multicultural food nights.
- Gaming & Esports – Competitive gaming, coding clubs, and VR experiences.



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Expanding Accessibility & Engagement for Youth

Personal & Professional Growth Opportunities

- Workshops & Life Skills Training – Public speaking, financial literacy, and CV writing.
- Mentorship & Role Models – Linking youth with relatable mentors and professionals.
- Entrepreneurship & Business Skills – Startup incubators, youth markets, and side hustle support.

Digital & Online Accessibility

- Social Media & Influencer Outreach – Engaging youth through Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.
- Podcasts & Webinars – Youth-led discussions on social issues and aspirations.
- Online Communities & Forums – Safe spaces for discussions and support.

How This Expands Accessibility

- By diversifying engagement methods, we ensure young people from all backgrounds can find an entry point that resonates with their interests. Offering a mix of in-person, virtual, creative, and structured activities helps break down barriers—whether those be geographical, financial, cultural, or social.
- This wider net of engagement ensures that no young person is left behind, creating a more inclusive and empowered generation.



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Youth Voices, YMCA's Role & MP Support – A Unified Approach

Young people have made it clear: safety, trust, and real support are essential. Many feel the police are unapproachable, intimidating, and inconsistent in handling reports, particularly for women and BIPOC communities. Experiences of violence, fear, and injustice shape their daily lives, making carrying knives for protection feel like a necessity. Young people want to be heard, not dismissed. They need relatable mentors, safe spaces, and positive role models—whether from youth workers, teachers, podcasters, or celebrities—to guide them. Trust must be rebuilt between authorities and communities, starting with active listening, fair treatment, and breaking down intimidation tactics.

What the YMCA Can Do

1. The YMCA is in a powerful position to create change by:
2. Establishing safe, inclusive spaces where young people can explore their identity without fear.
3. Employing relatable youth workers with lived experience to provide guidance.
4. Running mentorship and role-play programs to develop life skills and emotional resilience.
5. Ensuring no young person feels ignored, especially those with diagnoses or non-traditional needs.
6. Advocating for youth-led decision-making, including involvement in hiring staff who work with them.



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Youth Voices, YMCA's Role & MP Support – A Unified Approach

How MPs Can Support Change

1. MPs have a role in addressing systemic issues and supporting grassroots efforts by:
2. Pushing for police reforms to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability in handling reports.
3. Funding youth programs to support mentorship, safe spaces, and mental health services.
4. Addressing education gaps, ensuring schools provide support for all young people, not just the academic or diagnosed.
5. Championing policies that promote youth involvement in local decision-making.

By working together, young people, the YMCA, and MPs can create a future where youth feel safe, heard, and empowered



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