



# Young Listeners Project

How would young people improve the health and care services they use?

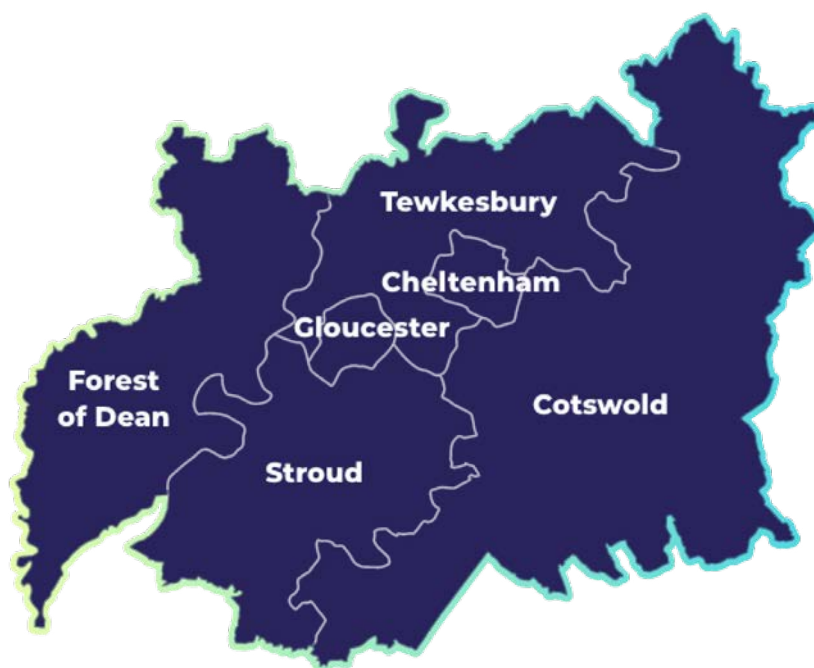
# About us

Healthwatch Gloucestershire is the county's health and social care champion.

We're here to listen to your experiences of using local health and care services and to hear about the issues that really matter to you. We are entirely independent and impartial, and anything you share with us is confidential. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice to help you to get the care and support you need.

As an independent statutory body, we have the power to make sure that NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to your feedback and use it to improve standards of care. This report is an example of how your views are shared.

Healthwatch Gloucestershire is part of a network of over 150 local Healthwatch across the country. We cover the geographical area of Gloucestershire County Council, which includes the districts and boroughs of Cheltenham, Cotswold, Forest of Dean, Gloucester, Stroud, and Tewkesbury.



Front cover: Healthwatch Gloucestershire Young Listeners, first in-person engagement at the Galaxy Club.

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# Introduction

We believe that health and social care providers can best improve services by listening to people's experiences.

We know there are few opportunities for young people to discuss the care they receive and the impact this has on them, so we decided to give them a platform to discuss how they feel about the local health and care services they use. We launched our Young Listeners Project in March 2021. This was designed and led by a group of young volunteers, who engaged with other young people in the county and recorded their views and experiences.

## Our aim

We wanted to find out how young people in Gloucestershire feel about the local health and care services that are aimed at them, and make sure their views are used to influence changes that will improve young people's health and care experiences in the future.

# What we did

## Recruiting Young Listeners

We advertised the Young Listener volunteer role on our website and social media channels, through local press and radio, and we reached out to local networks.

We knew recruitment would be a challenge due to the uncertainty of COVID-19 and the ever-changing restrictions. We were delighted to recruit four enthusiastic young people from across Gloucestershire, aged between 19-23; Sasha, Todd, Robyn, and Abs became our Young Listeners.

## Training

One of the many benefits of becoming a Young Listener was the opportunity to complete AQA accredited training programmes. With guidance and support from our Youth Engagement Officer, our Young Listeners learnt new skills to help with personal development and community engagement, including effective communication, inclusion, and safeguarding.

**Volunteer with us** **healthwatch Gloucestershire**

**Aged 16-24? Become a Young Listener**  
Find out what young people think about the health and care services they use and what changes they want to see.

**Why get involved?**

- Gain a professional reference and experience for your CV.
- Acquire new skills, knowledge, and accredited training.
- Meet other young people in Gloucestershire.
- Influence and improve health and social care services in Gloucestershire.
- Enjoy a rewarding volunteering experience that will benefit your community.

**Get in touch**

0800 652 5193 healthwatchgloucestershire.co.uk  
volunteering@healthwatchgloucestershire.co.uk

## Planning the project

Our Young Listeners wanted to focus the project on topics that are important to young people and that would spark their interest; they chose the following three areas.

- **Mental health** – They felt this is one of the most important areas of young people’s health and care. It is prevalent in their lives, and they are advocating for more awareness.
- **Relationship support** – The pressure of creating and maintaining relationships was acknowledged. Our Young Listeners explained how it is especially hard to create new friendships once leaving education and they felt more support for young people would be appropriate.
- **GP attitudes, inclusivity, and accessibility** – The ability to contact GPs has become increasingly hard since the pandemic and the Young Listeners were interested in seeing how much of an impact this had on young people.

They designed three surveys, focused on these topics, to capture young people’s feedback about local health and care services. The surveys included open questions and free text boxes, so that people could include as much or as little detail as they wanted and highlight other important issues or expand on their answers.

## Delivering the project

### Local engagement

Our Young Listeners attended local youth clubs, groups, university open days and ambassador sessions to collect young people’s feedback around the topics within our surveys. They captured the feedback in various formats, such as recording open discussions or writing down people’s comments. They engaged face-to-face with 45 young people aged between 16–24. Engaging face-to-face helped the speakers and listeners unite in shared experiences and encouraged them to talk.

### Online survey

All three surveys were promoted and made accessible online via our social media, website, and posters with QR code links. Being able to reach and engage with young people online was useful due to COVID-19 and the restrictions this placed on face-to-face communication. We gathered 40 responses across our three online surveys.



Young Listeners collecting feedback at Future Me

### Who we spoke to

By March 2022 our Young Listeners had received 85 responses from young people across Gloucestershire. We understand that health inequalities are so important in effecting people’s experiences of health and social care. The young people who gave their feedback came from a variety of age ranges, genders, and backgrounds. (See Appendix A: Demographics, for more information about the young people we spoke to.)



## What people told us

### Key messages

We analysed the young people's feedback and identified some common themes in what they told us.

- Young people feel they are not always taken seriously and listened to by their GPs.
- There is more focus on critical services being available instead of early intervention.
- Most young people do not know what services they are entitled to or have access to in their area.
- Young people feel that most social care services are only aimed at a 'younger audience' (children and young teens), and less at young people who are not in education.
- The transition from childcare services into adult services is bad and lacks clear lines of communication.
- There are few services that help with the emotional and physical transition into adulthood.
- COVID-19 has had a huge impact on young people's lives, including maintaining and making new relationships and mental health.
- Young people want to be involved in promoting and creating services aimed at people their age.

# Summary of findings

## Young people's experience with their GP

We received 34 responses to our survey about GPs. Young people were quick to mention the lack of confidence they felt around seeing a GP. 32% (11) answered that they feel they are not taken seriously by their GP. This makes them not want to reach out and ask for help because of the fear of being dismissed or faced with a bad attitude.

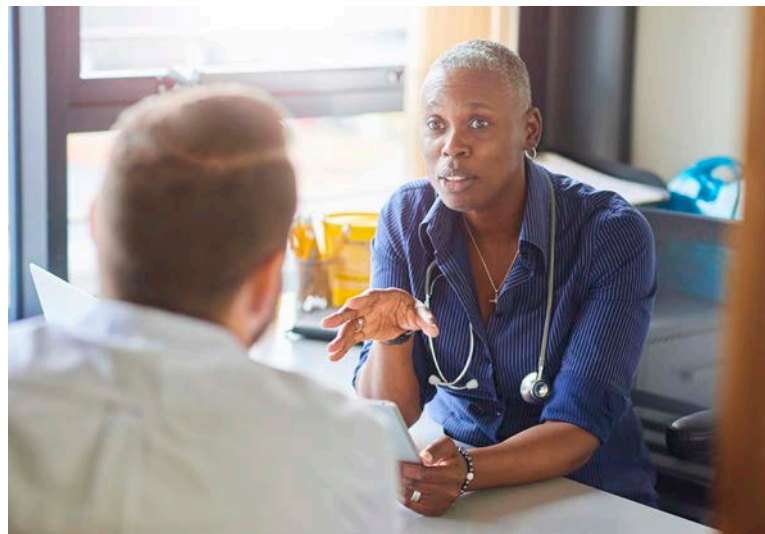
A recurring theme was that young people thought they would only receive useful advice or help if they were in a crisis.

**I feel like I have to exaggerate my symptoms, especially with my mental health and wish I didn't have to do that to be taken seriously.**

**If it doesn't sound life threatening, they do not act immediately.**

When asked how GPs could improve young people's experience, they said they want to feel listened to and respected by their GP.

**They could be more understanding. They seem to dumb us down a lot and do not listen and always ask me what do my parents think, when it has nothing to do with them. I am an adult, and I don't think they care; nothing ever really comes out of the appointments.**



It became apparent that the young people we spoke to want to feel as though the worries and feelings they express in a consultation are validated and explored. Young people want GPs to approach their concerns in a gentle manner.

## Relationship support for young people

The Young Listeners chose to investigate this topic because they believe young people need relationship support services due to the pressure of having and making relationships throughout life.

This survey received 18 responses. 55% (10) said they find relationships difficult, with many feeling that these difficulties increase with age. Those aged 20-24 commented that once you leave school or an education setting it becomes significantly harder and there are fewer social groups aimed at this age group.

When asked if they find relationships hard, many agreed that the stress of creating and maintaining relationships had an impact on their mental health.

**The older I get the harder [relationships] are to make.**

**I feel more vulnerable and question my likeability.**

On top of the pressure that young people already feel when it comes to navigating relationships, COVID-19 was raised during discussions. 61% (11) insisted that it had impacted their relationships, and many felt intimidated about making relationships.

**It's more intimidating to go out and make friends now.**



Only 38% (7) of young people said that they would have the confidence to seek the guidance they need with relationships. A main reason given for why people are reluctant to ask for help was concern they would be judged.

All 18 people who answered the survey said that young people would benefit from relationship support. They felt they would benefit from hubs or peer support groups set up specially to help young people to connect.

**No I wouldn't feel confident, I would feel a little bit embarrassed to ask for help. It's not spoken about a lot so I would feel like I'm the only one that has a problem in their relationship.**

## Young people's mental health services

Mental Health has become a huge topic over the last few years, with young people particularly advocating for more support. Young people felt there were positives and negatives to the increase of awareness and openness to discussing mental health.

### Talking about mental health

33 young people took part in this survey, and only 33% (11) said they would feel confident talking about their mental health and that they were reassured by the support available.

**More workplaces/organisations speak openly about it and have things in place to help their teams.**

**It's less of an awkward topic now.**

42% (14) told us they would not feel confident talking about their mental health. They explained that their surroundings, who they could confide in, and not being believed, made them lack confidence. They fear they will be met with an attitude instead of the right care.

**I feel more comfortable talking about it in situations like this [discussion group] than over a 10 minute rushed doctor appointment. I worry they think I am insane.**

Young people told us there needs to be more services available in Gloucestershire to help manage their mental health and get the right support.



## Impact of COVID-19

When we asked about the impact of COVID-19, 82% (27) told us that it had impacted on their mental health. Many explained that their anxiety and isolation had increased during the pandemic.

No break from COVID being the topic of conversation, worrying about lots of different things COVID related, and coping strategies weren't always accessible.

I felt very lonely.

## Better communication to help build trust

The lack of communication between mental health and other health care services also poses a challenge to young people approaching and trusting services. When services are not integrated and cannot communicate and share information about a young person, this means the young person must repeatedly tell their story and begin again to form trust.

Opening up and talking about [mental health] issues isn't the easiest.

[Needing to] restart every step every time I go to a new service is emotionally draining.

It is important for young people to establish trust with their health care staff. To make sure that services are provided in the most accessible and accommodating way, it is important that this be considered.

## Need for early intervention not just critical care

A key theme was that young people want services designed to support them during all stages of mental health care and not just when it is considered critical. Being able to communicate with professionals and feel as though they will be well received would encourage young people to act quickly to get the help they need.

There needs to be more preventative measures to stop mental health issues spiralling into early adulthood.



Healthwatch Gloucestershire Young Listeners





# Recommendations

Based on what our Young Listeners heard from other young people, we recommend the following to help improve young people's health and care services in Gloucestershire.

- More support groups and hubs for young people who have left education.

 **I think there needs to be more aimed at [age] 20 and over. We still need the help, just because we're labelled 'adults' it doesn't mean we want to deal with everything alone or put the pressure on our friends.** 

- Educational institutions, youth groups, and anywhere that is youth focused would benefit from having a local directory of services available for young people within the area. This could involve having a team or a member of staff available to answer questions and provide guidance and support.
- GP surgeries need to be more approachable for young people and have a better understanding of what pressures are put on young people and the impact this has on their physical and mental health. One suggestion is to have an area in GP surgeries specifically designed for young adults, including resources available to them and also a team designed to engage and support them.
- Services should be designed to provide care and support for young people during all the stages of mental health and not just when it is at a critical point. Early intervention could reduce the stress on emergency services and help prevent young people needing mental health care in the future.
- Include young people in making decisions about the healthcare services aimed at them. It is evident that the young people of Gloucestershire are willing to put forward their opinion and insight. Their input could help make services more welcoming and accessible for young people.

 **A support system for young people by young people. Talking to someone who is going through the same thing would be easier.** 

- Clearer lines of communication between health and care service providers are needed. Improving the referral process or having one GP assigned to a young person will help to create a better relationship and build trust between services and young people.

# Stakeholder responses

Edel Keating, Quality and Engagement Manager,  
Education Services, Future Me Gloucestershire

“Future Me Youth Representatives were enthusiastic to share their views on mental health, relationships, and experiences of GP services as they agreed with the Young Listeners that these are important and relevant topics for so many young people. Services for young people can only benefit from listening to the views, experiences, and ideas of those who use or need these services. We look forward to seeing the positive impact of the Young Listeners’ work on these service areas.”

[Future Me Gloucestershire | Glosfamilies Directory](#)



Becky Parish, Associate Director, Engagement and Experience,  
NHS Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group

“Firstly congratulations to Healthwatch Gloucestershire Young Listeners (Abs, Robyn, Sascha and Todd) and Youth Engagement Officer (Jessica) for an excellent project and report. The new One Gloucestershire Integrated Care System (from 1 July 2022) is placing a huge emphasis on working with people and communities and hearing about areas and issues they want the ICS to consider as it develops a new strategy for next year. This report comes at an excellent time to influence this from a young persons’ perspective. It is clear from the report recommendations that young people want services and support organised in ways that are more accessible and relevant to them.”



## Thank you

We would like to thank all the young people who took the time to share their opinion and their experience with our Young Listeners. A particular thanks to the those who spoke to our Young Listeners face-to-face at the following organisations:

- Galaxy Club
- The Music Works
- Winchcombe School
- Future Me Gloucestershire Youth Representatives
- Gloucestershire County Council Ambassadors
- Hartpury University and Hartpury College
- University of Gloucestershire

Lastly a huge thank you to our Young Listeners who put in a tremendous amount of work to create a platform for young people to share their views.



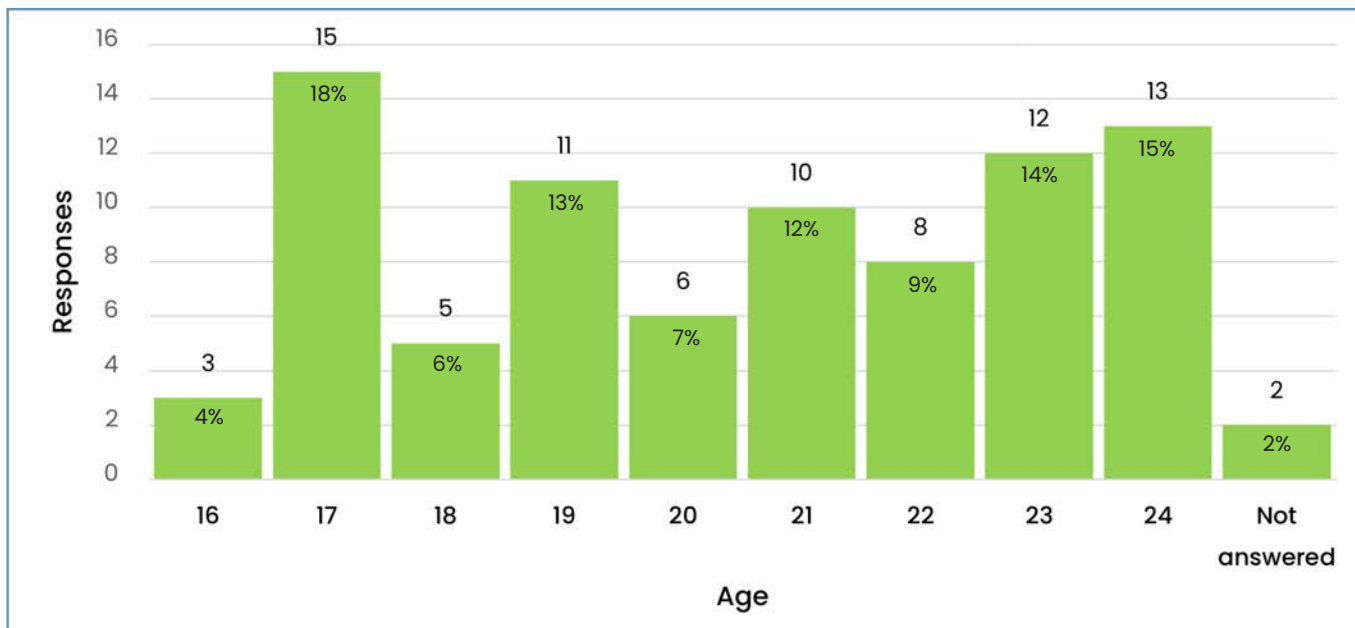
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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Demographics

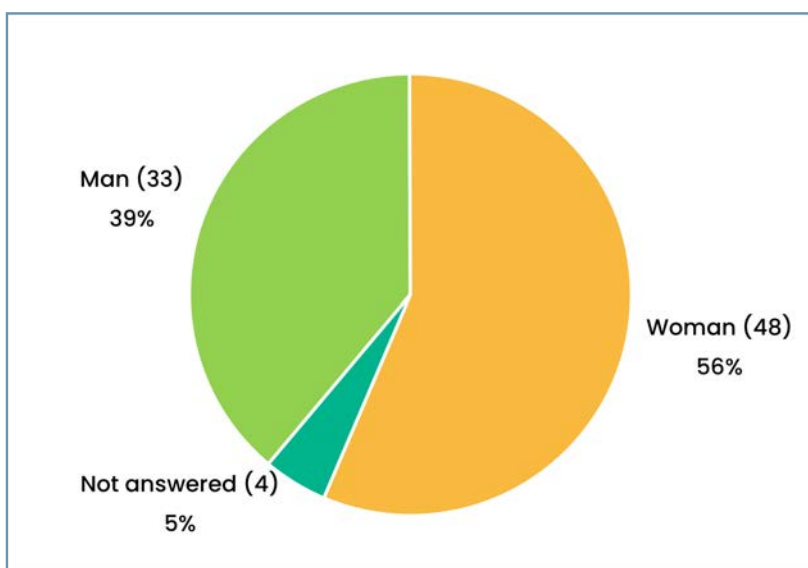
By March 2022 our Young Listeners had received 85 responses from young people across Gloucestershire. The people who shared their views and experiences with us were evenly spread between the ages of 16-24, and they represented the ethnically diverse population of young people in Gloucestershire. Most of the groups we met were of mixed gender, though more of the people we engaged with identified as female (59%) than male (39%). 53% of those we engaged with have a disability.

**Figure 1. Age range of respondents**



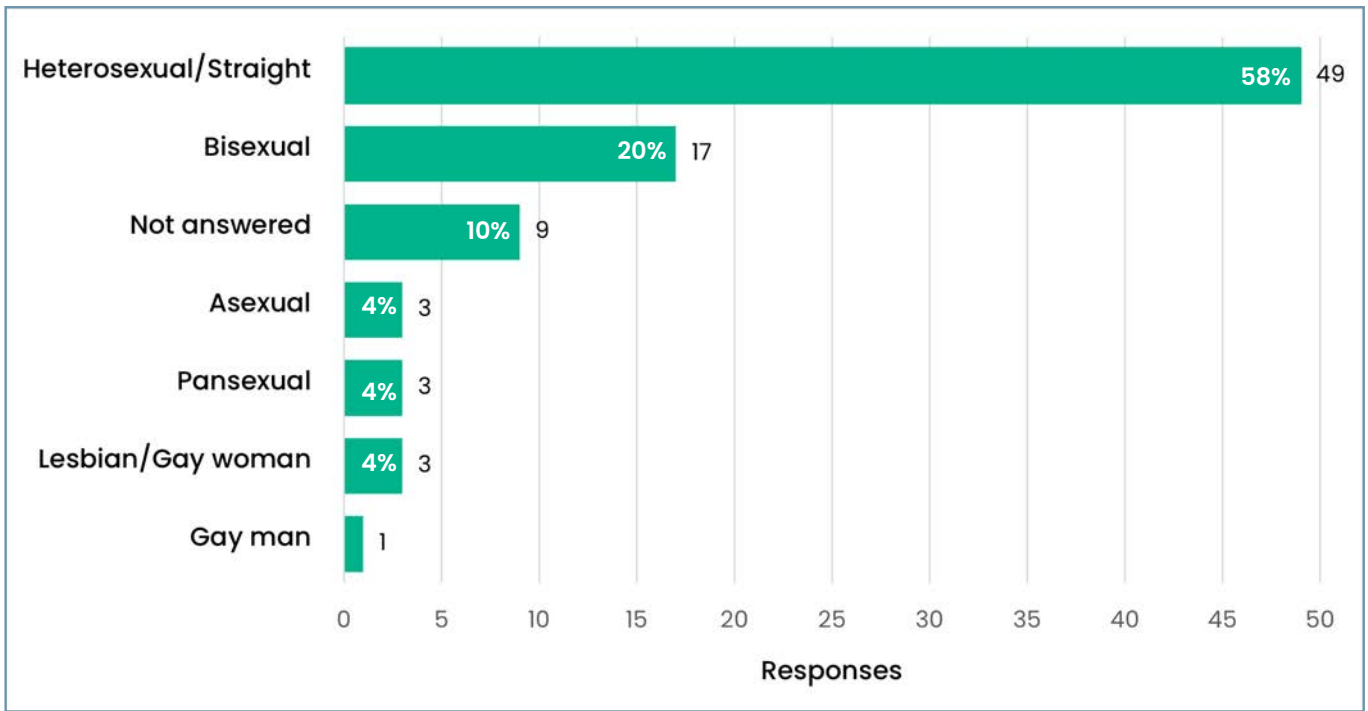
The responses received were evenly spread between the ages of 16-24.

**Figure 2. Gender identity**



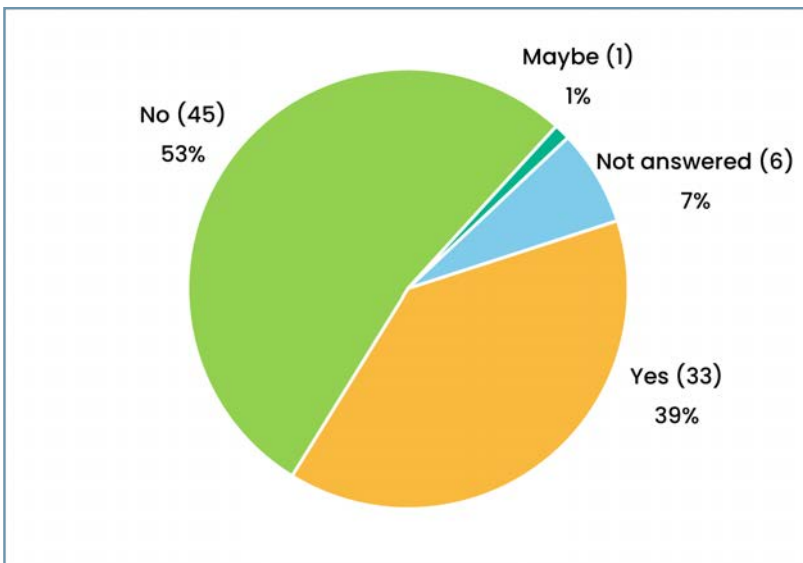
Young people told us what gender they identified as. Most of the groups we met were mixed when it came to gender, making the results a good representation of the gender youth groups within Gloucestershire.

**Figure 3. Sexual orientation**



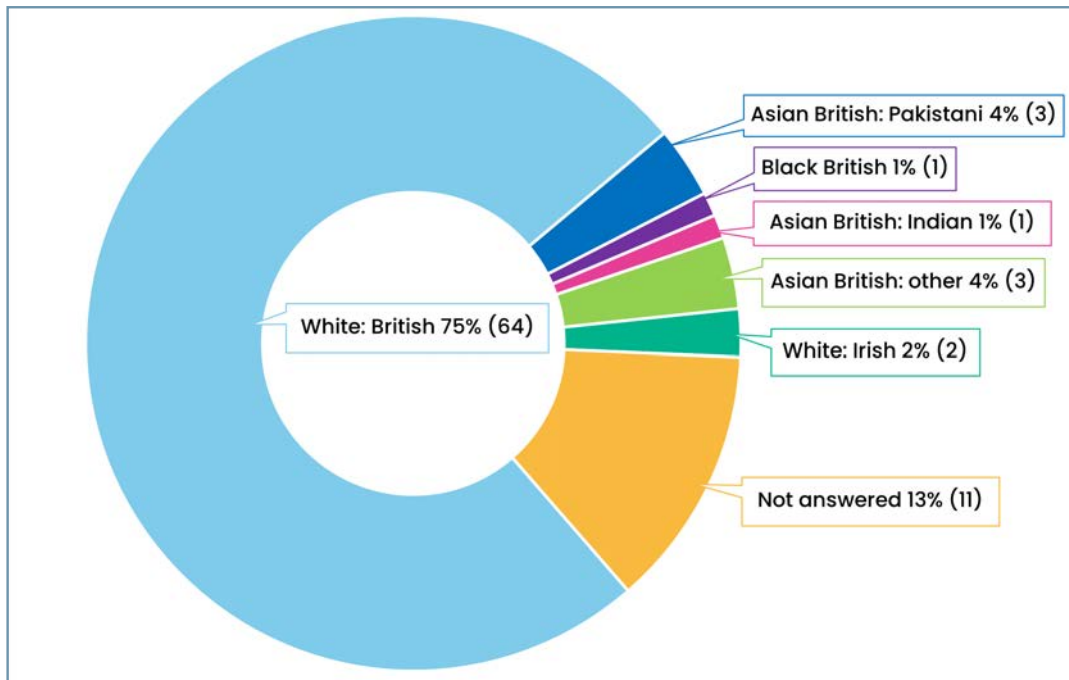
We are committed to ensuring everyone is heard and receives equal care and treatment. Sexual orientation can play a huge roll in people’s experience with health and care services.

**Figure 4. Disability**



Gloucestershire hosts various youth groups designed for disabled people. Attending these groups gave us useful insight on the impact that health and care services have for young people with disabilities.

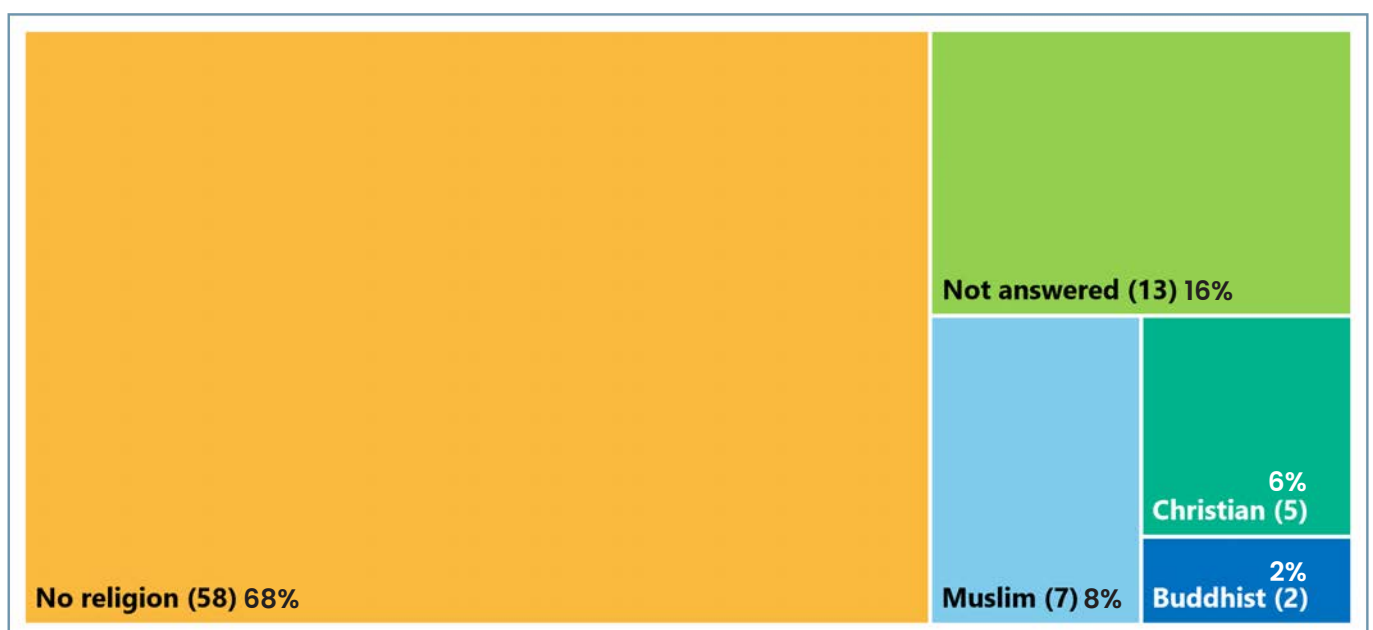
**Figure 5. Ethnicity**



Through this project we engaged with an ethnically diverse population of young people in Gloucestershire. We made a concerted effort to reach out and engage with people who identify as coming from minority ethnic groups. In Gloucestershire, the 2011 census showed that the ethnicity breakdown across the county was as followed:

- 91.6% White:British
- 3.1% White: other
- 2.0% Asian/Asian British
- 1.5% Mixed/multiple ethnic groups
- 0.9% Black/Black British
- 0.6% White: Irish
- 0.1% White: Traveller
- 0.2% Other groups

**Figure 6. Religion or belief**



# Appendix B: Survey questions

## Relationships

1. Do you find relationships difficult?
2. Does it affect your mental health?
3. Has COVID impacted your relationships/ability to get them?
4. Do you think young people would benefit from relationship support? Why?
5. Have you ever had relationship support?
6. Where did you go to get that support (for example, GP, school nurse, friends)?
7. Would you feel confident asking for help when it comes to relationships? Why?
8. Do you think there are services missing that young people would benefit from having access to regarding relationships? Why?
9. Do you have anything you would like to comment on regarding the services aimed at young people?

## Mental health

1. What is your definition of mental health?
2. Are you, or have you been, diagnosed with a mental health condition?
3. If so, did you receive adequate care post diagnosis? What was your experience like?
4. Do you know what services you're entitled to and where to access them?
5. Do you feel confident talking about your mental health? Why?
6. Did COVID impact your mental health? How?
7. Do you think young people's mental health is taken seriously?
8. Do you think there are services missing that young people would benefit from having access to regarding mental health? Why?
9. Do you have anything you would like to comment on regarding services aimed at young people?

## GP attitudes - inclusivity and accessibility

1. Would you feel confident talking to your GP? Why?
2. Has COVID impacted seeing your GP? How?
3. Do you feel cared for, and listened to, by your GP?
4. Do you feel like you're taken seriously?
5. How has your experience been so far?
6. If you had a health concern would the GP, be your first person to contact?
7. How would you like to contact a GP (for example, online, phone, in person)? Is it accessible for you?
8. Does your cultural background impact your confidence when talking to the GP? Why do you think that is?
9. Do you feel you can communicate effectively with your GP?
10. Do you think there is anything GP services could do to improve young people's experience?
11. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding services aimed at young people?

# healthwatch

## Gloucestershire

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