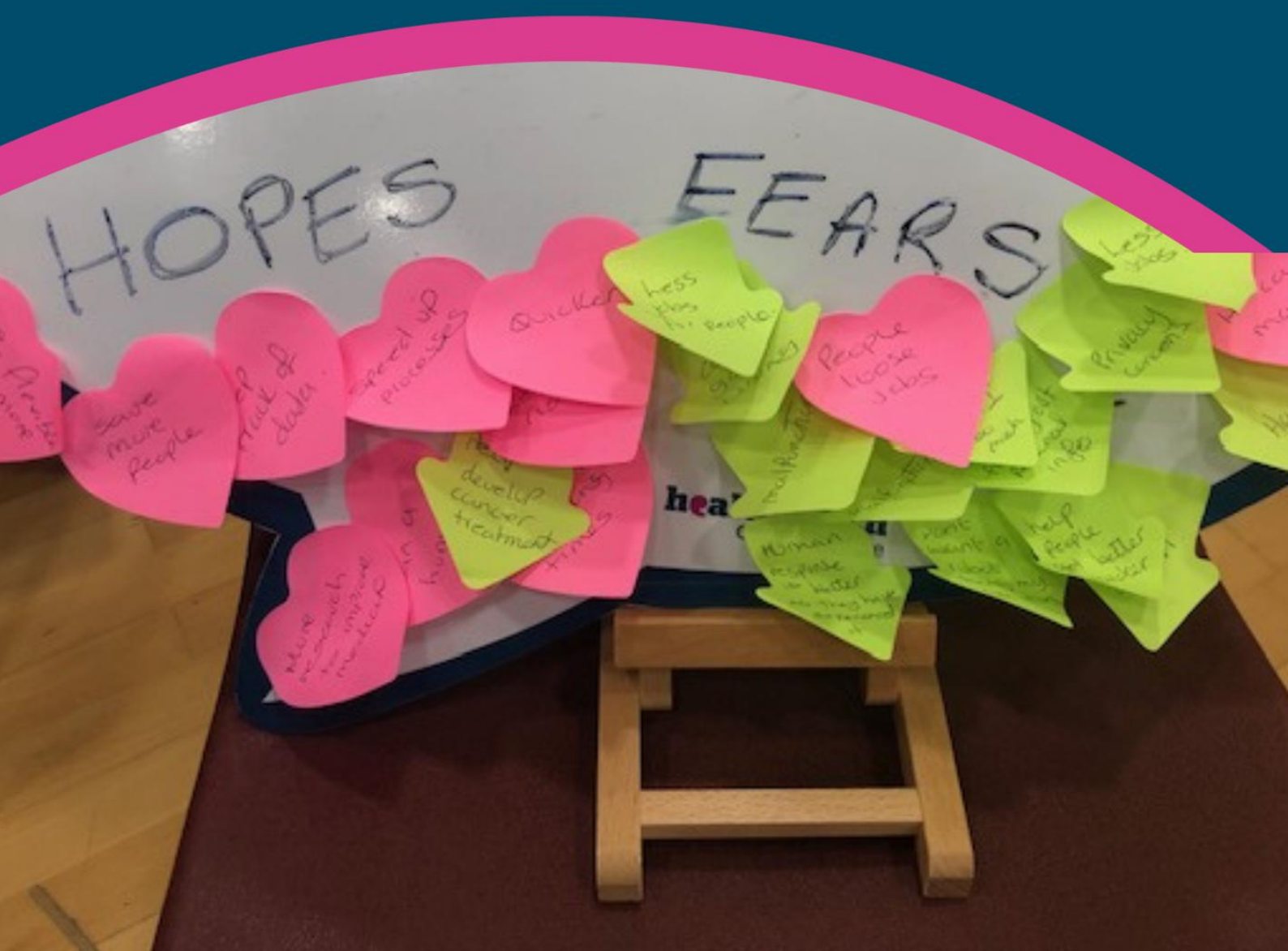


Young People's Experiences of Mental Health Services Survey Report October 2025



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About Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

We are your local health and social care champion. We are independent and have the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to local feedback and improve standards of care.

About this report

This report shares the findings from our 2025 Mental Health Survey. We heard from young people aged 17–25 (and some parents/carers) about their experiences of local mental health services.

The report highlights:

How young people access support.

The impact of waiting for services.

Their experiences of services.

The challenges of moving into adult services.

Some of the headline findings were shared at the Healthwatch Summit on the 8th October 2025, which brought together 200 participants to focus on improving mental health.



Executive Summary

Why we did this survey

Mental health is one of the biggest issues raised with Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Young people tell us that support is difficult to access, waiting times are long, and the move from children to adult services can feel confusing and stressful.

To explore this further, we launched a survey in summer 2025 to hear directly from young people aged 17–25 about their experiences of mental health services. Parents and carers were also invited to complete the survey on behalf of a young person, sharing the young person's views as much as possible.

The survey was designed to be quick and easy, combining tick-box questions with opportunities for people to leave their own comments. It ran from 15 April until 20 September 2025.

Who took part

- 125 people completed the survey.
- 117 (94%) were young people answering for themselves.
- Respondents had experience of a wide range of local services, including services provided by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust, Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), YOUNited, Centre33, local council commissioned services and other NHS and voluntary sector providers.

What we found

The survey results paint a mixed picture of young people's experiences with local mental health services.

- Of the 125 young people who answered this question, 40 (32%) were referred by their GP, 39 (31%) by their school or college, 22 (18%) self-referred, 10 (8%) were referred by someone else, and further 9 (7%) were referred with the support of someone else and 5 (4%) people were referred by hospital services.
- Waiting times: Only 29% were seen within four weeks, 10% waited over a year.
- Impact of waiting: Due to long waits 65 young people said they struggled with everyday things, 60 found school or work harder, and 58 said their mental health got worse while waiting.
- Experience of youth services: 48% rated their overall experience as good or excellent, while 12% rated it poor. A further 38% said their experience was only OK and 2% were unsure. Comments showed that many felt they were

not listened to, they had to wait too long or that services were poorly joined up.

- Transition to adult services: Among those who experienced transition to adults services, 46% said the move was not successful. Some people said they had to chase things up themselves, didn't know who to contact, or felt unsupported during the change.

What young people want to change

- Faster access to help, with shorter waiting times.
- Clearer information about where to go and what support is available.
- Better communication between different services, and more joined-up care.
- More involvement in decisions about their own treatment and support.

Why this matters

These findings highlight the real impact that delays and disjointed care have on young people's lives. Behind each statistic is a young person who may be struggling, and their voice deserves to be heard.

The results will also be shared with local commissioners, providers, and decision-makers across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, ensuring that young people's views inform real changes to how services are designed and delivered. By publishing this report, we want to make sure that young people's voices are not just heard but acted on.

Introduction

Why focus on young people's mental health?

Mental health is one of the biggest issues raised with Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Local people often tell us that services are hard to navigate, waiting times are too long, and support is not always joined up. Young people in particular say that they can feel ignored, left out of decisions, or unsure where to turn when they need help.

When we set our strategic goals for the future (2025–2030), mental health came through strongly as a top priority. Communities, service users, and professionals all told us that young people's mental health is an area that urgently needs improvement.

Why we launched this survey

We wanted to hear directly from young people aged 17–25 about their experiences of local mental health services. This age group is especially important because it often marks a transition point — moving from children's to adult services — which can be unsettling and disruptive if not managed well.

By focusing on 17–25 year olds, we hoped to capture:

- How young people access support.
- What it feels like to wait for help.
- Their views of services once they get there.
- Experiences of the move into adult services.

Parents and carers were also invited to respond, sharing the young person's views as far as possible.



Working in partnership

This project has been developed together with local partners who also want to see mental health services improve. These include:

- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT CAMHS)
- The SUN Network
- Centre33
- MIND Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and South Lincolnshire
- Fullscope
- Integrated Care System (ICS)
- Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council

By sharing what young people tell us with the organisations responsible for planning and delivering services, we aim to make sure that local decision-makers act on what matters most.



Methodology

Survey design

We designed a accessible survey that could be completed in 10–15 minutes. The survey combined:

- **Closed questions** – simple tick-box responses about services used, referral routes, waiting times, and overall experience.
- **Open questions** – space for young people (or carers) to describe their experiences in their own words.

This mixed approach allowed us to collect both statistical data and personal stories, giving a richer picture of how services are working for young people.

Who could take part

- Young people aged **17–25** with experience of local mental health services.
- Parents and carers completing on behalf of a young person, sharing the young person's views as much as possible.

Promotion and recruitment

The survey ran from 15 April 2025 and closed on 20 September 2025.

We promoted it via the following channels:

- The survey was shared via the Healthwatch website, Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, and through partner organisations.
- Partner organisations, including Integrated Care Board, Centre33, CPFT, YOUNited, Local Councils and The SUN Network and other voluntary sector organisations.
- Schools, colleges, and other local community networks.

Response numbers

A total of **125 people completed the survey**. Almost all (94%) were young people answering for themselves. A total of 8 parents and carers completed it on behalf of young people.

Ethics and confidentiality

All responses were anonymous. Where quotes are included in this report, they are presented in a way that protects the identity of the respondent. We made clear in the survey information that findings would be shared publicly but without any identifying details.

Incentive

To thank young people for their time, respondents were offered a £15.00 Love2Shop voucher for completing the survey.

Limitations

As with any survey, there are limitations to what these results can tell us:

- **Self-selection bias:** People who chose to take part may be those with particularly strong positive or negative experiences.
- **Not fully representative:** With limited responses, the results may not reflect the views of all young people across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- **Snapshot in time:** The survey was open over summer 2025.

Despite these limitations, the survey provides valuable insights into the experiences of young people at a key stage in their lives. The findings offer clear messages for local services and decision-makers.

Survey Responses

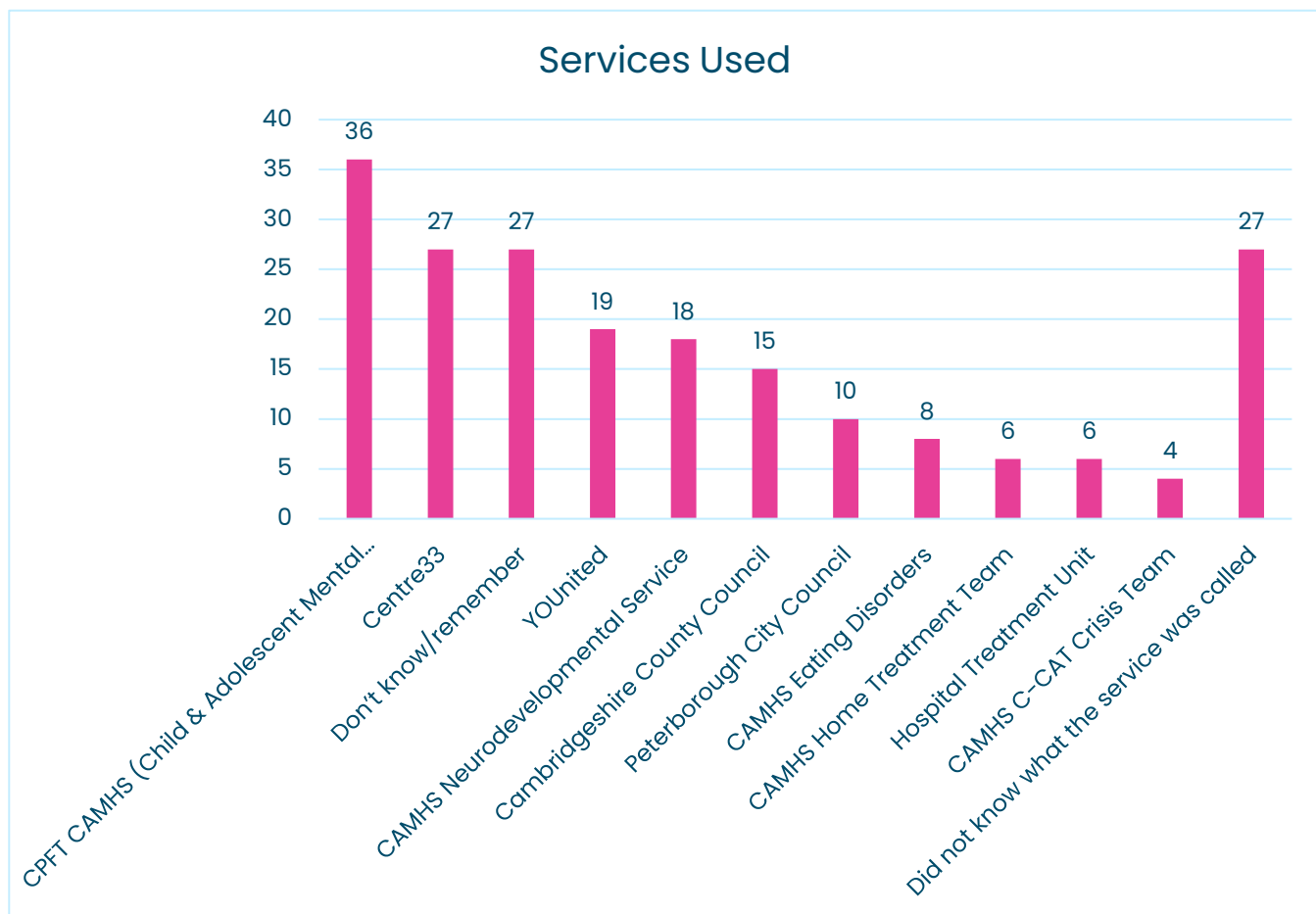
Which mental health services have you used?

There were 125 respondents, some selected more than one service which resulted in 203 responses.

Respondents reported a wide range of services, reflecting the complex system of NHS and voluntary sector support available locally. The most frequently mentioned were:

Services used	Number of respondents	
CPFT CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services)	36	18%
Centre33	27	13%
Don't know/remember	27	13%
YOUnited	19	9%
CAMHS Neurodevelopmental Service	18	8%
Cambridgeshire County Council	15	7%
Peterborough City Council	10	6%
CAMHS Eating Disorders	8	5%
CAMHS Home Treatment Team	6	3%
Hospital Treatment Unit	6	3%
CAMHS C-CAT Crisis Team	4	2%

Did not know what the service was called	27	13%
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Who is filling in this survey?

We asked who was completing the survey. In summary, the vast majority of responses (94%) were completed by young people aged 17–25, with a smaller proportion (6%) completed by parents or carers on behalf of a young person.

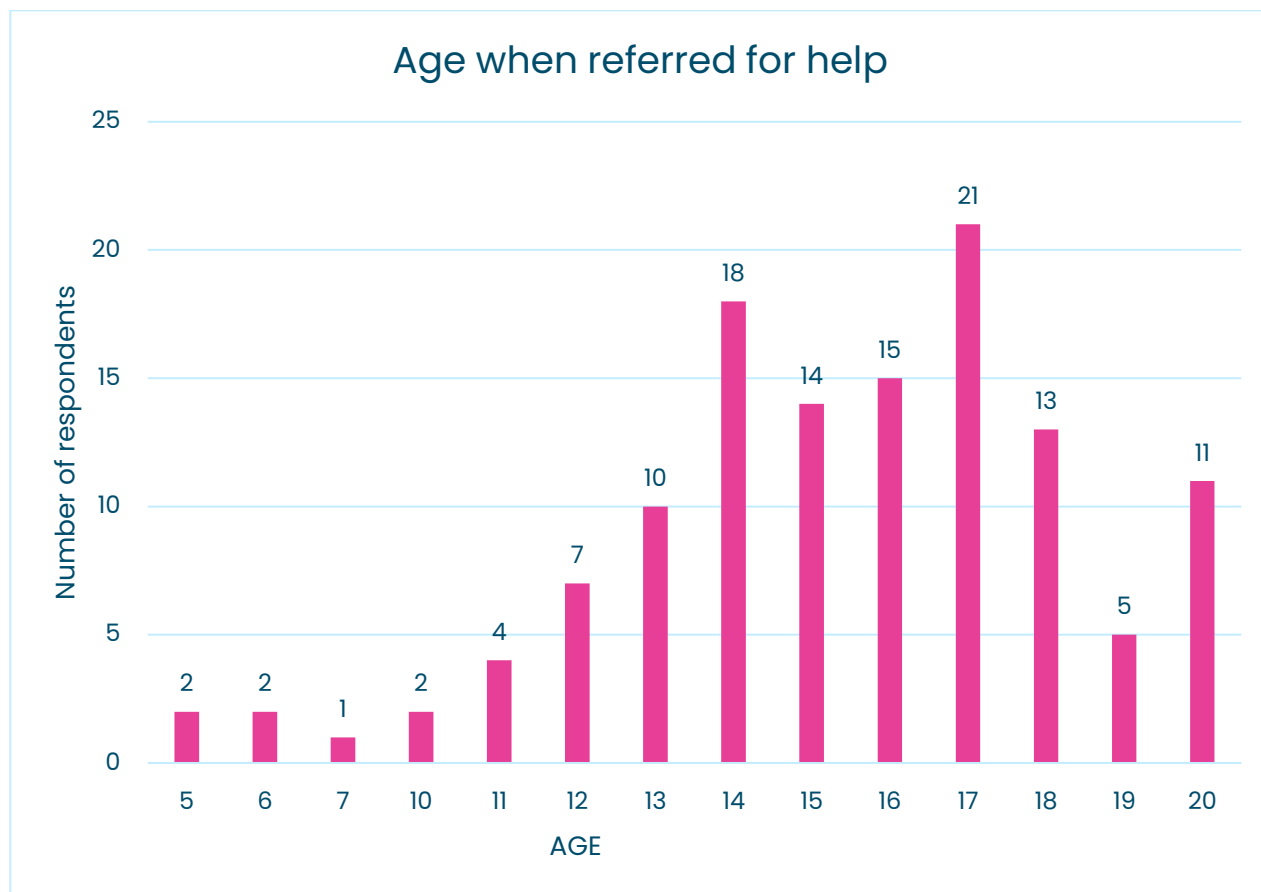
This confirms that the dataset primarily reflects the first-hand experiences of young people themselves, aligning with the survey's aim to capture lived experiences of mental health care and transitions between youth and adult services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Response Option	Number of Respondents	Percentage
I'm a person between the age of 17 and 25 years old	117	94%
I'm a family member/parent/carers of a young person	8	6%
Total responses	125	100%

Section 1 – Getting Referred for Help

Q1. How old were you when you were referred for help?

There were 125 respondents to this question.

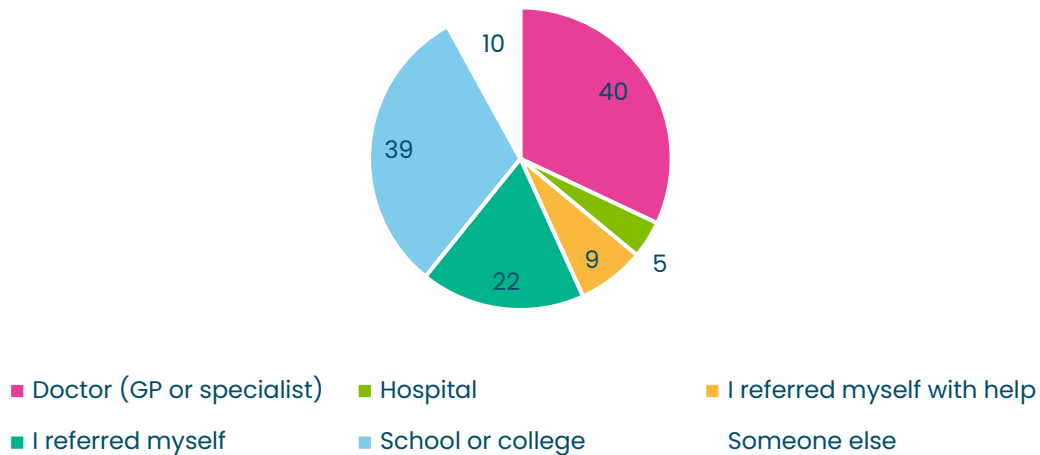


Only 1–2 respondents were first referred between ages 5 and 7. The number of referrals increased from age 11 and then declined again after age 17.

Q2 – Who referred you to the service?

There were 125 respondents to this question.

Who referred you?



Most respondents (79 people, 63%) were referred by a GP or their school/college, and 22 (18%) self-referred.

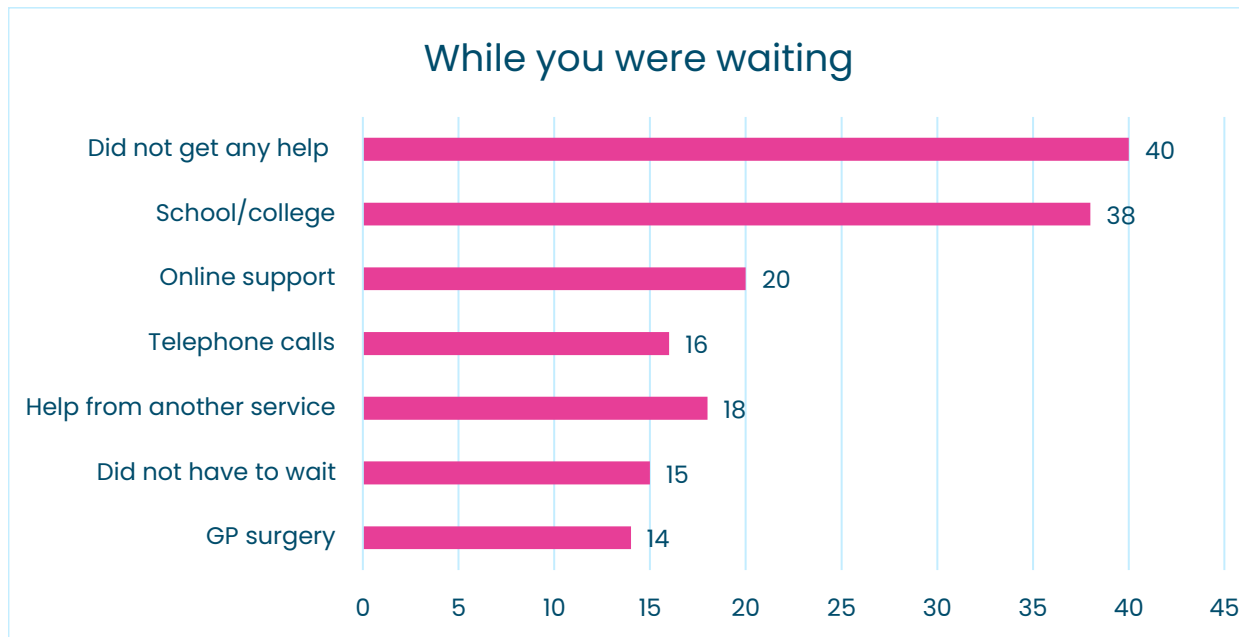
In the free-text responses, young people also mentioned being referred by:

- Parents
- Foster parents
- Social services
- A mix of college and GP
- An ex-partner
- A safeguarding team

Q3 – While you were waiting, did you get any help?

This was a multiple response question, that received 161 responses.





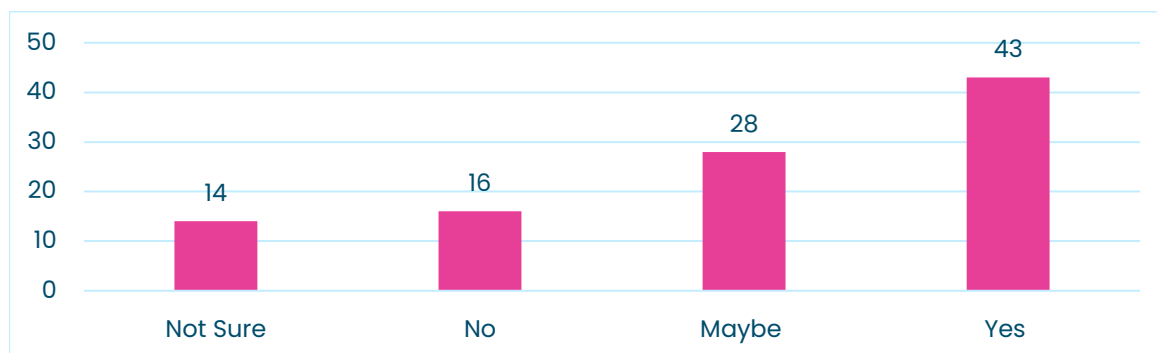
Of the responses, 40 indicated they did not get any help while waiting to be referred, while 38 said their school or college provided support during the wait.

In the free-text response, young people included additional services:

- Leaflets
- Emails with links to services
- Helplines
- Secondary school counsellor
- Samaritans

Q3a – If you didn't get any help, do you think it would have made a difference?

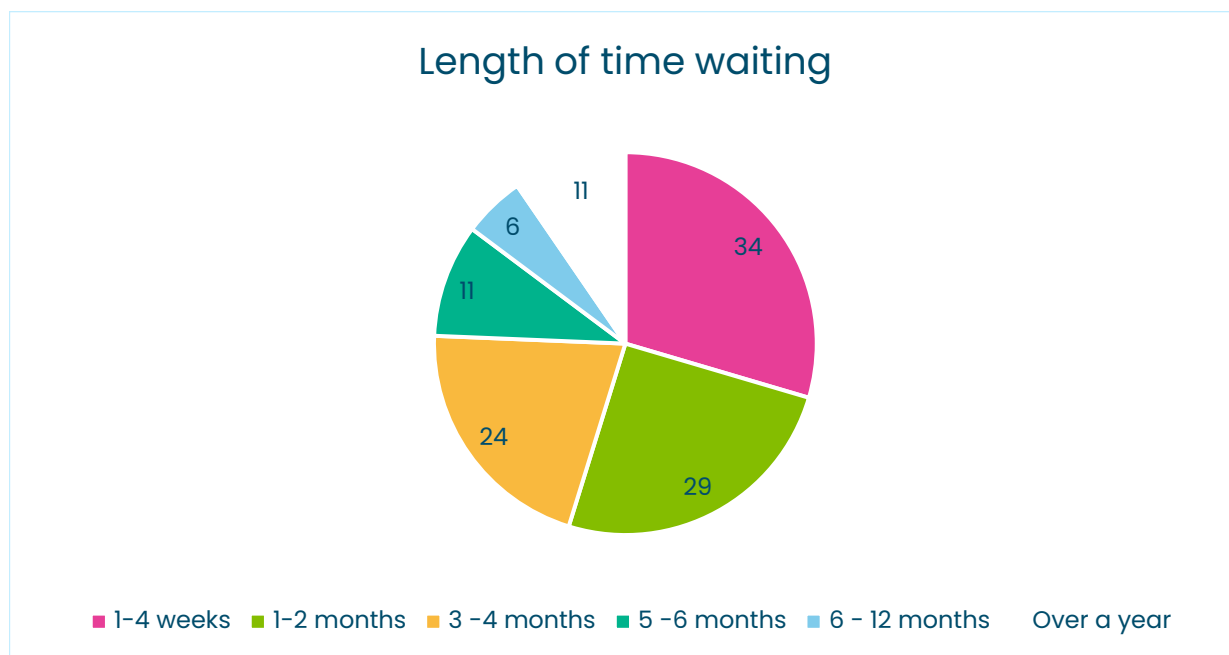
There were 101 respondents to this question.



Of the 101 respondents, 43 people (43%) felt that getting help while waiting would have made a difference, 42 (42%) were unsure or said it might have, and 16 (15%) said it would not have made a difference.

Q4 – How long did you wait before getting help?

There were 115 respondents.



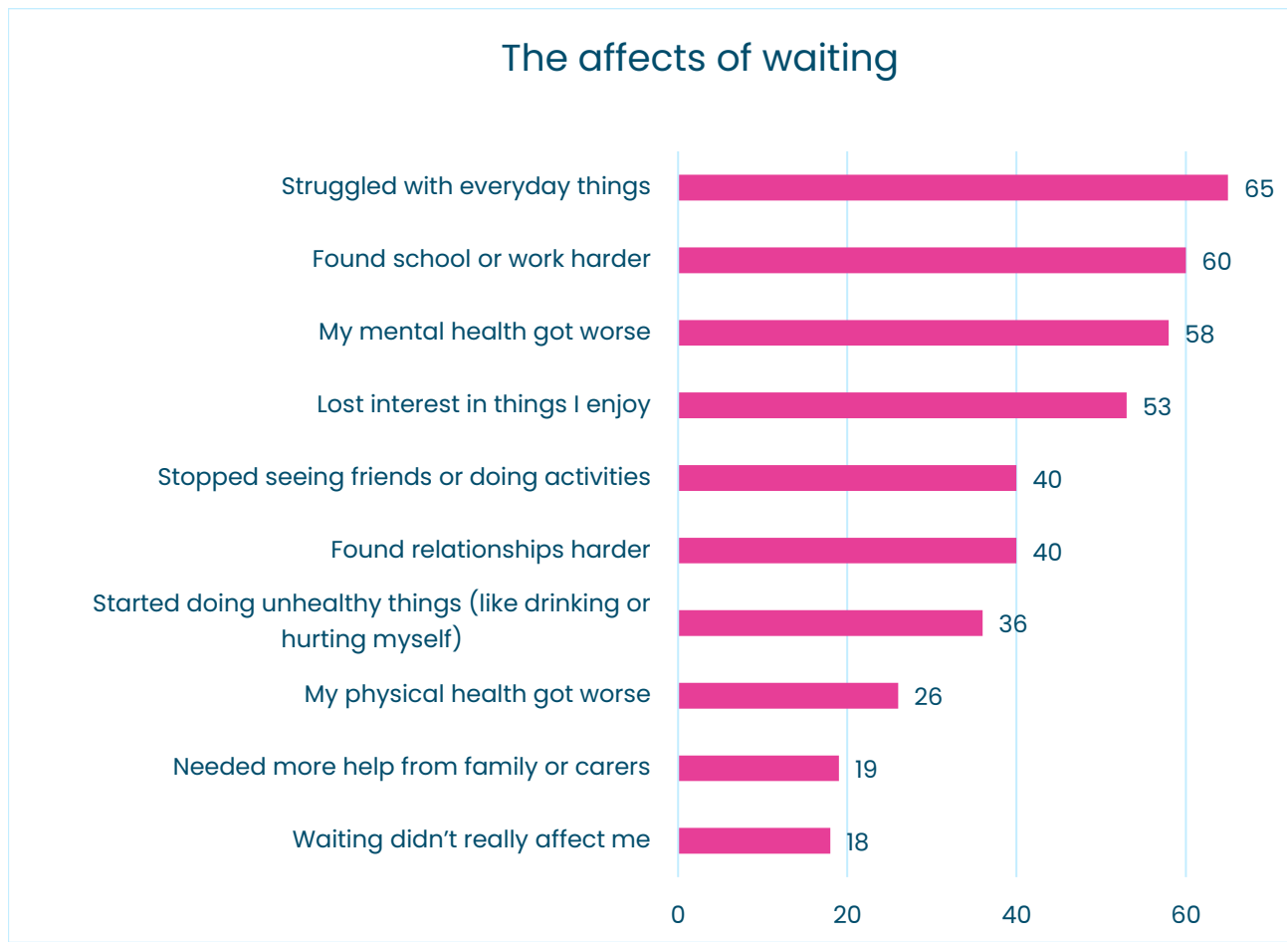
Across 115 respondents, 63 people (55%) waited between one and two months for help, 41 (36%) waited between three and twelve months, and 11 (9%) waited over a year before receiving support.



Q5 – Did waiting for help affect you?

This was a multiple response question, which received 415 responses.

There was also a free text option, but there were no free text responses given.



Young people reported a wide range of negative effects while waiting for support. Most commonly, 65 said they struggled with everyday tasks, 60 found school or work harder, and 58 said their mental health got worse. 53 young people lost interest in things they enjoy. 40 young people stopped seeing friends or doing activities, and 40 found relationships harder. Smaller numbers reported beginning unhealthy behaviours (36), worsening physical health (26), or needing more support from family or carers (19). Only 18 said that waiting didn't really affect them.

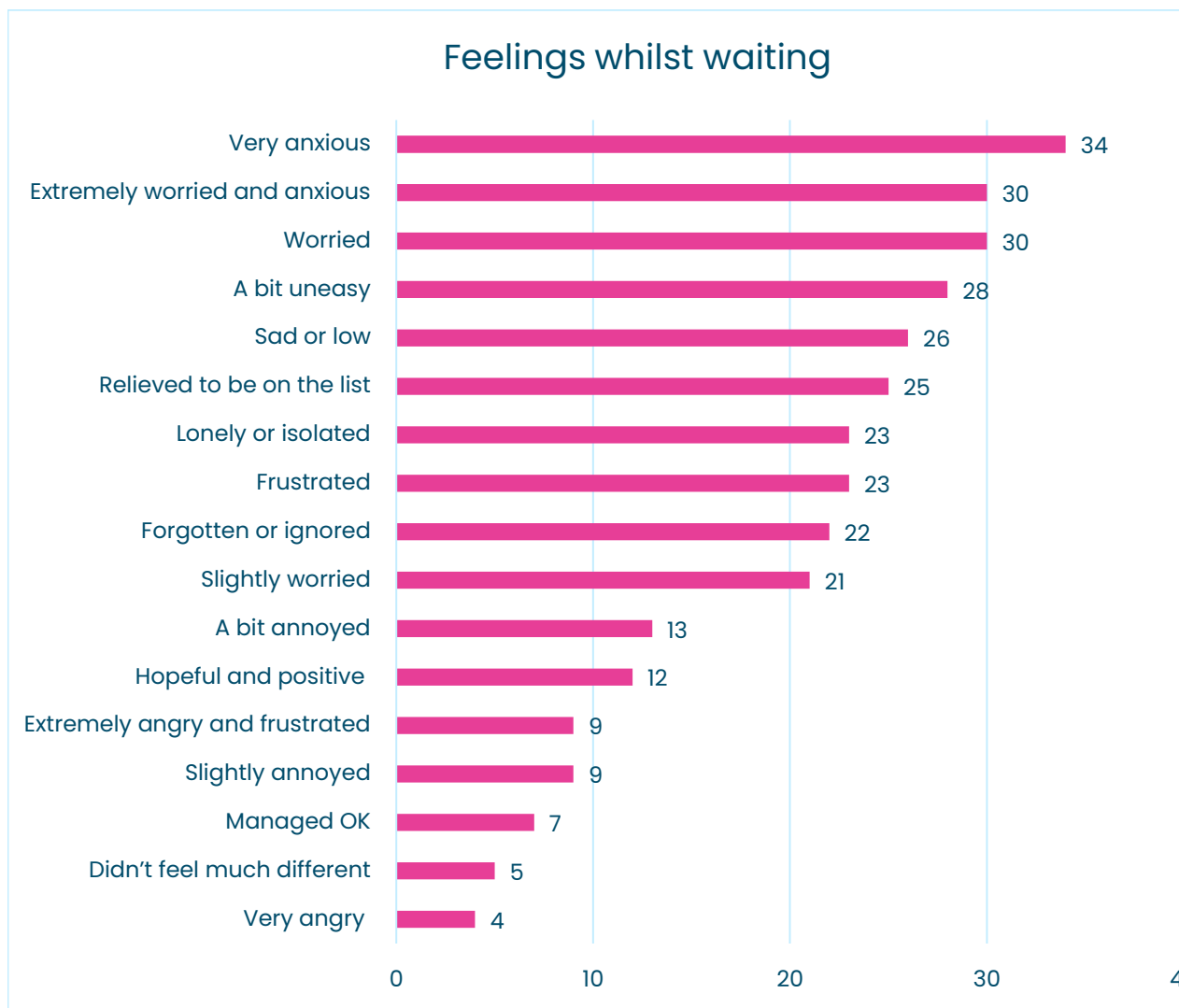
Q6 – How did you feel while you were waiting?

This was a multiple response question, which received 321 responses.

There was also a free text option, which one respondent described the feeling of being 'numb'.



"I felt numb"



A total of 49 respondents said they managed ok or had positive feelings while waiting, while another 49 reported low mood or isolation. Far more young people experienced stronger negative emotions: 80 felt frustrated, angry or forgotten, and 143 reported feeling anxious or worried.

In the free-text, respondents were able to make comments, they included:

6

"I was referred when I was 14 and didn't get seen until I was nearly 17."

"My school counsellor helped, but they couldn't do much. I just had to wait."

"By the time I got help, I was in crisis."

"I kept being told to wait and that other people needed help more."

"Once I got a therapist, they were great — it just took too long to get there."

9

Section 2 – Your Time with the Youth Mental Health Service

Q1 – How old were you when you started getting help?

We asked young people how old they were when they first received help from a mental-health service. 125 respondents answered this question.

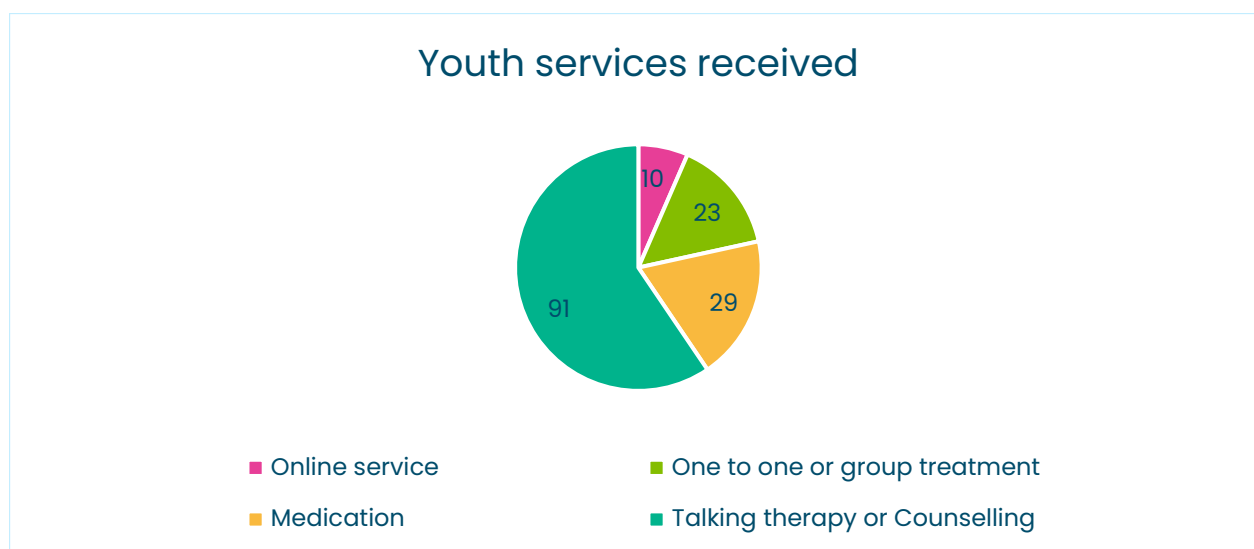
	Number of respondents	Percentage (of 125)
5 years old	1	0.8 %
6 years old	2	1.6 %
7 years old	2	1.6 %
8 years old	1	0.8 %
9 years old	1	0.8 %
10 years old	3	2.4 %
11 years old	2	1.6 %
12 years old	6	4.8 %
13 years old	9	7.2 %
14 years old	17	13.6 %
15 years old	17	13.6 %
16 years old	14	11.2 %
17 years old	18	14.4 %
18 years old	10	8%
19 years old	6	4.8 %
20 years old	7	5.6 %
I didn't get help because I had grown to an adult whilst waiting	9	7.2%
Total	125	100 %

Most respondents were first referred for support between ages 13 and 18, with the highest numbers at ages 14 and 15 (17 respondents each) and age 17 (18 respondents). Smaller numbers were referred at younger ages, starting from age 5. Additionally, 9 respondents said they did not receive help because they turned to adulthood while waiting, meaning they reached adulthood before support was provided.

Q2 – If you did get help from youth services, what kind of help did you receive?

This was a multiple response question, which received 153 responses.

There was also a free text option.



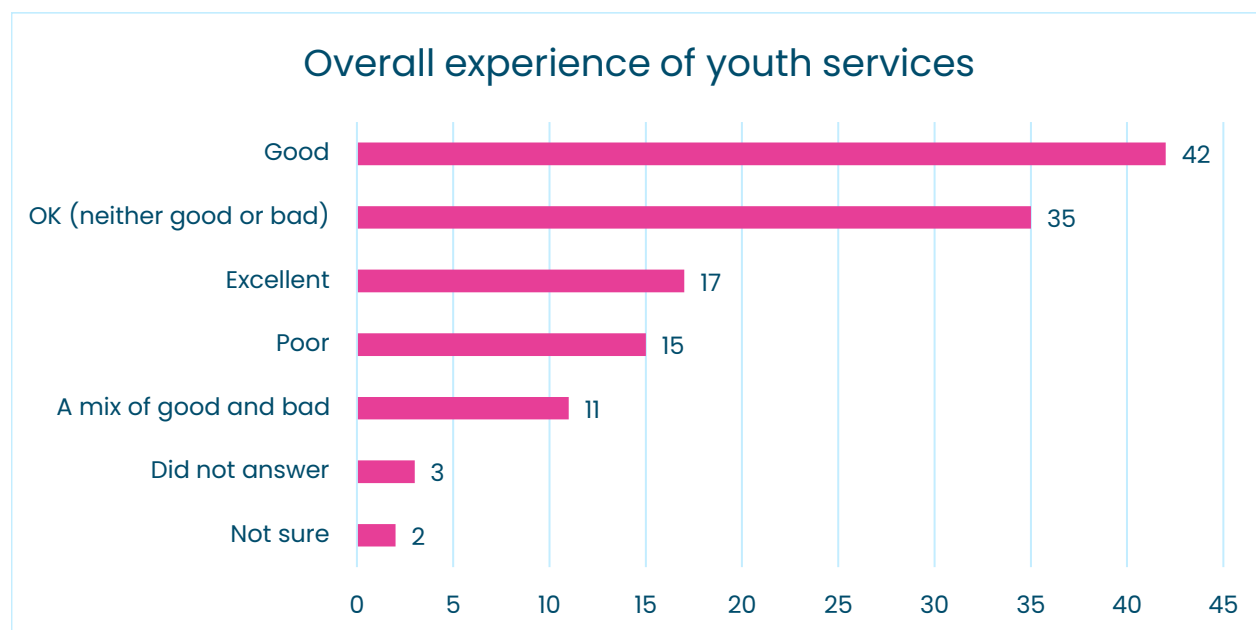
A total of 91 respondents received talking therapy or counselling from youth services. Smaller numbers accessed other forms of support, including 29 who received medication, 23 who took part in one-to-one or group support, and 10 who used online support.

In the free-text, respondents were able to include additional services or comments, they included:

- Inconsistent therapy
- Video therapy
- Portage Support

Q3 – Overall, how was your experience?

122 respondents answered this question, 3 people did not select an option.



Of the 122 respondents, 59 (48%) rated their experience with youth services as excellent or good. 46 (38%) felt their experience was only OK or a mix of positive and negative. A smaller proportion, 17 (12%), described their experience as poor, while 2 (2%) were unsure.

Q4 – What went well?

This was a multiple response question, which received 246 responses.

There was also a free text option.



"The first person I spoke to was nice, but didn't give the help I needed, I felt I wasn't taken seriously which overall made me feel worse"



What went well with youth services



The feedback shows that young people had several positive experiences with youth mental health services. The strongest theme was feeling listened to, reported by 60 respondents. Many also felt they received the help they needed (39), had clear explanations (36), and built good relationships with their worker or therapist (34). Fewer respondents said they were seen quickly when needed (25) or that their family/carers were involved if they wanted them to be (20). A smaller number felt their care was well organised (16) or that they were helped to become more independent (16). Overall, feeling heard and supported were the most common positive experiences.

In the free-text, respondents were able to make additional comments, they included:

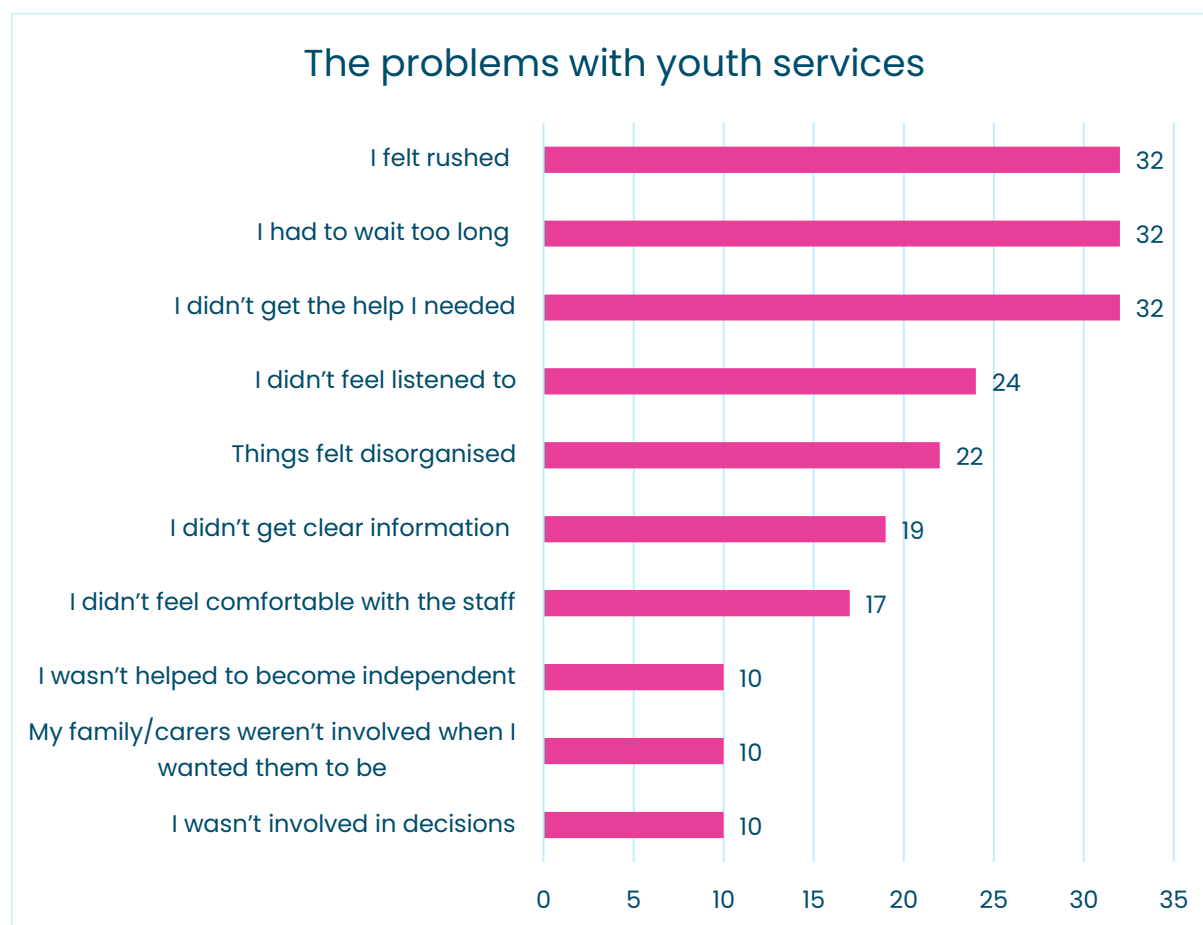
"Nothing went well"

"Second and third sessions were good, but the fourth was really bad, felt they didn't care at all"

Q5 – If things didn't go well? What were the problems?

This was a multiple response question, which received 208 responses.

There was also a free text option.



The most common issues young people reported with youth services were feeling rushed, waiting too long, and not getting the help they needed, with 32 respondents selecting each of these. Many also felt unheard (24), experienced disorganisation within services (22), or lacked clear information (19). Some did not feel comfortable with staff (17), while smaller numbers said they were not supported to become independent, their family or carers were not involved when they wanted them to be, or they were not included in decisions (10 each). Overall, delays, lack of support, and communication issues were the main concerns.

In the free-text, respondents were able to include additional comments:

"Advice wasn't too great, I got listened to but not much more"

"The counsellor believed I was struggling because I was trans, and would only speak to me about my identity"

"The woman let my mum stop her referring me for an autism assessment because she thought of autism as a stereotype"

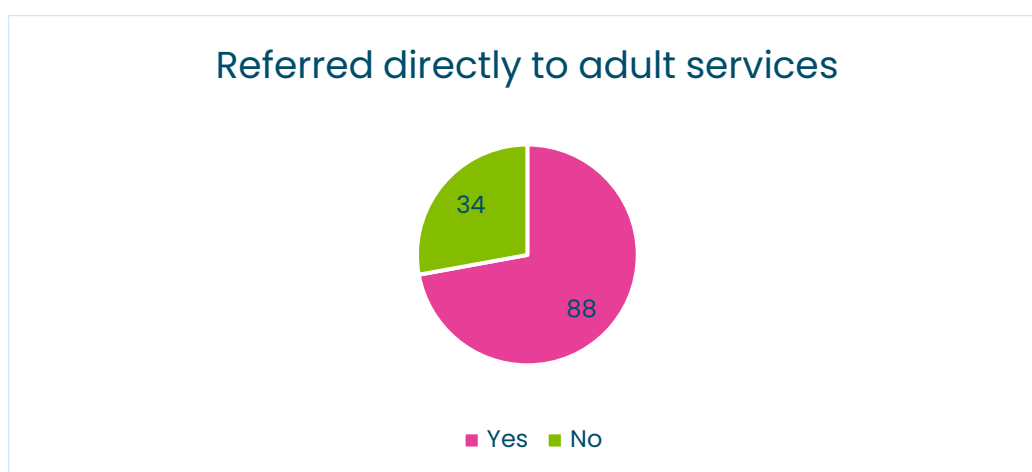
"I only got 6 weeks of help"

"I didn't want to go but was forced (by parents)"
,

"It went well"

Q6 – Were you referred directly to adult services?

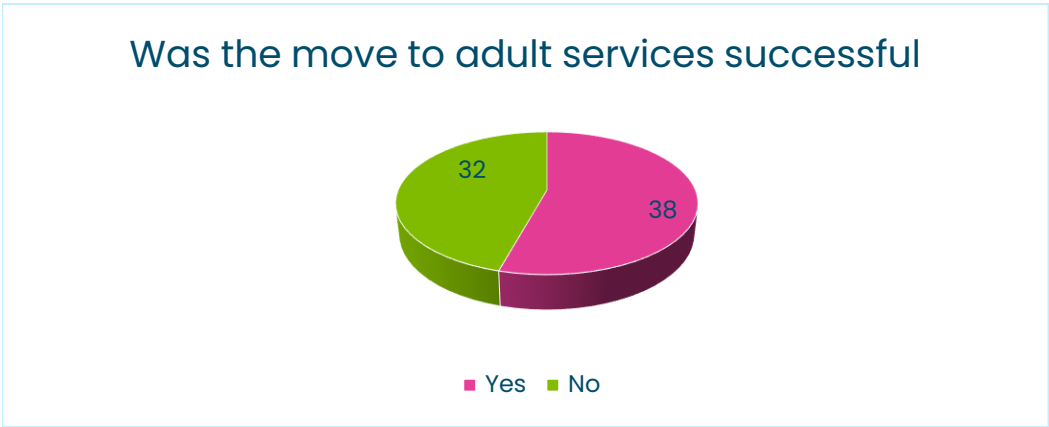
122 respondents answered this question, 3 people did not select an option.



88 (72%) people were referred directly to adult services, the remaining 34 (28%) were not directly referred.

Q7 – If you answered Yes to Question 6, did you feel your move was successful?

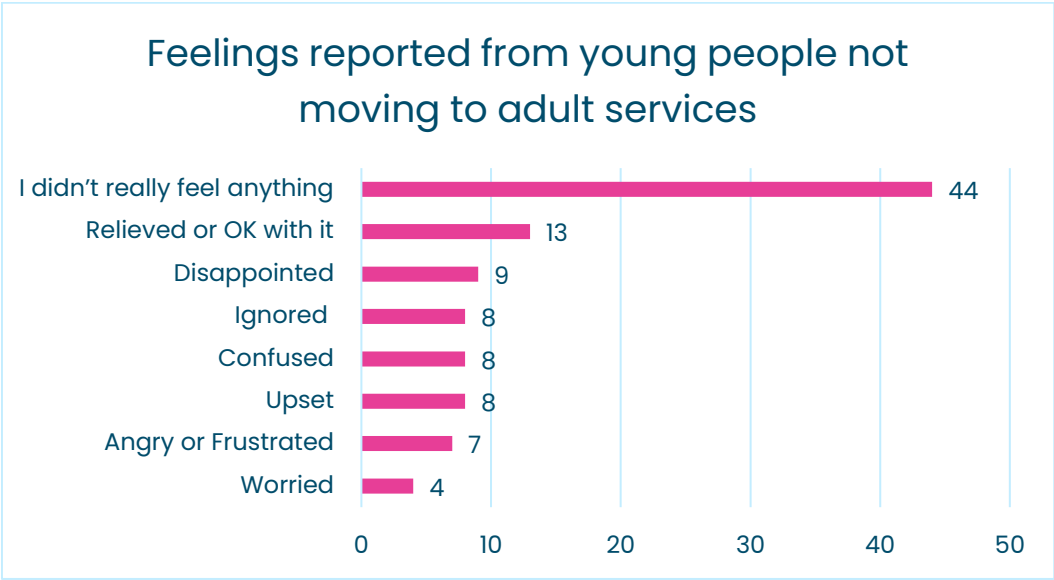
70 respondents answered this question.



38 (54%) people said the move to adult services was successful, the remaining 32 (46%) said it was not successful.

Q8 – If you did not move to adult services, how did you feel about not moving?

This was a multiple response question, which received 101 responses. There was also a free text option, but there were no free text responses given.

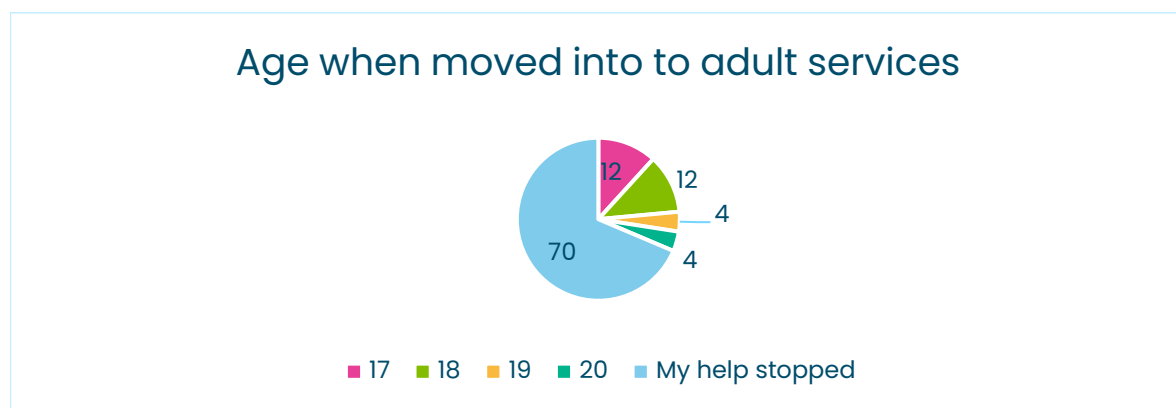


Most young people who did not move on to adult services reported feeling neutral about it, with 44 saying they “didn’t really feel anything.” Smaller numbers felt relieved or OK with it (13), while others experienced negative emotions including disappointment (9), feeling ignored (8), confused (8), upset (8), angry or frustrated (7), or worried (4).

Section 3 – Moving from Youth to Adult Services

Q1 – How old were you when you moved to adult services (or did your help stop)?

102 respondents answered this question.



The largest group of young people (70 respondents – 68%) said their help stopped before they moved into adult services. 12 (12%) people moved into adult services at age 17, and another 12 (12%) transitioned at age 18. Much smaller numbers moved at later ages, with 4 (4%) people transitioning at age 19 and 4 (4%) at age 20. Overall, most respondents did not continue into adult services, and only a small proportion moved over at age 19 or 20.

Q2 – Did someone explain in advance that you would move to adult services?

45 respondents answered this question.

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	23	51%
No	22	49%
Total	45	100 %

Of the 45 respondents that answered this question, 23 said moving to adult services was explained in advance, 22 said they were not talked to in advance.

Q3 – Did you feel ready to move to adult services?

44 respondents answered this question.

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	28	64%
No	16	36%
Total	44	100 %

Of the 44 respondents that answered this question, 28 said they felt ready to move, 16 said they did not feel ready.

Q4 – Were you involved in planning your move?

45 respondents answered this question.

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	24	53%
No	21	47%
Total	45	100 %

Of the 45 respondents that answered this question, 24 said they were involved in the planning of the move to adult services, 21 said they were not involved.

Q5 – Did you have someone to help you through the move?

43 respondents answered this question.

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	22	51%
No	21	49%
Total	43	100 %

Of the 43 respondents that answered this question, 22 said they had someone to help them through the move to adults services, 21 said they did not have someone to help them.

Section 3A – If Your Help Stopped

a – Did you want the help to stop?

70 respondents answered this question.

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	19	27%
No	51	73%
Total	70	100 %

Of the 70 respondents that answered this question, 19 said they wanted the help to stop at youth services, 51 did not want it to stop.

b – If no, how did you feel about your help stopping?

This was a multiple response question which received 128 responses.



The most common feeling reported when help stopped was being let down, chosen by 24 young people. 21 said they were worried about the future, and 15 felt like they didn't matter. 14 people felt lost and unsure what to do, upset or hurt, or confused. 13 reported feeling angry, 10 said they didn't feel much, and only 3 felt relieved.

c – Were you told it would stop?

57 respondents answered this question.

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	30	52%
No	27	48%
Total	57	100 %

Of the 57 respondents that answered this question, 30 said they were told it would stop at youth services, 27 were not told.

d – Did they explain why you were not moved to adult services?

51 respondents answered this question.

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	8	15%
No	43	85%
Total	51	100 %

Of the 51 respondents that answered this question, 8 said they received a reason why they did not move to adult services, 43 said they did not receive an explanation.

e – Were you told how to get help again if you needed it?

64 respondents answered this question.

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	41	64%
No	23	36%
Total	64	100 %

Of the 64 respondents that answered this question, 41 said they were told how to get help again if they needed it, 23 said they did not get told this information.

f – Were you referred to another different service?

67 respondents answered this question.

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	17	25%
No	50	75%
Total	67	100 %

Of the 67 respondents that answered this question, 17 were referred to another service, 50 were not referred on.

In the free-text, respondents were able to tell us those alternative services:

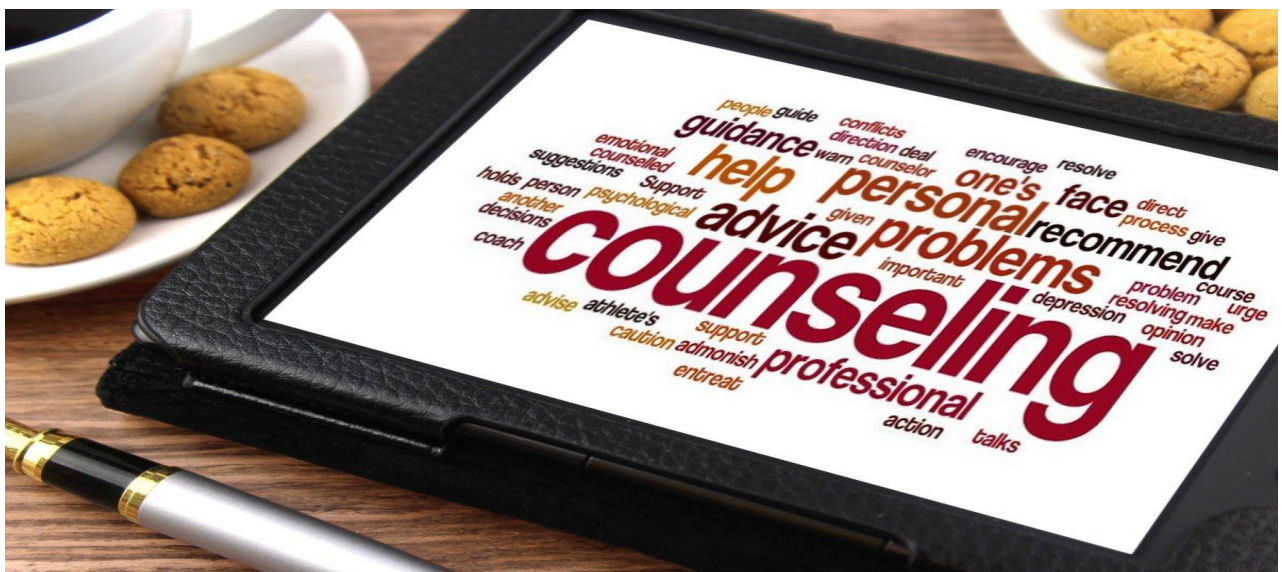
- Centre33
- Counselling services
- Group therapy

g – If Yes to f, how satisfied were you with that other service?

36 respondents answered this question.



Most young people were satisfied or unsure about their experience with services. 15 respondents said they felt neutral or were not sure, and 13 were mostly happy or satisfied. A smaller number, 6, were very happy and satisfied, while 2 respondents said they were a bit dissatisfied.



Section 4 – Your Experience with Adult Mental Health Services

Q1 – Are you getting any help from adult mental health services now or in the last five years?

92 respondents answered this question. This can include people who were not involved with youth services.

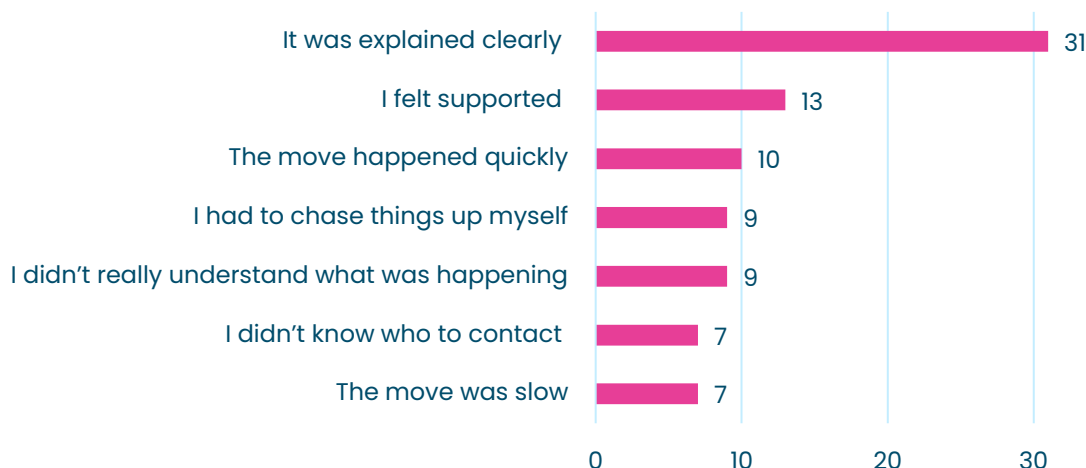
Response	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	51	55%
No	41	45%
Total	92	100 %

Of the 92 respondents who answer this question, 51 are or were receiving adult mental health services support in the last 5 years, and 41 people did not.

Q2 – If you moved from youth services, how did moving from youth to adult services go for you?

This was a multi response question which received 86 responses.

How moving to adult services went



Most young people who moved to adult services said the process was explained clearly, with 31 selecting this. 13 felt supported during the move, and 10 said it happened quickly. However, 9 had to chase things up themselves and 9 didn't really understand what was happening. Smaller numbers said they didn't know who to contact (7) or that the move was slow (7).

Q3 – Was there a gap between getting help from youth and adult services?

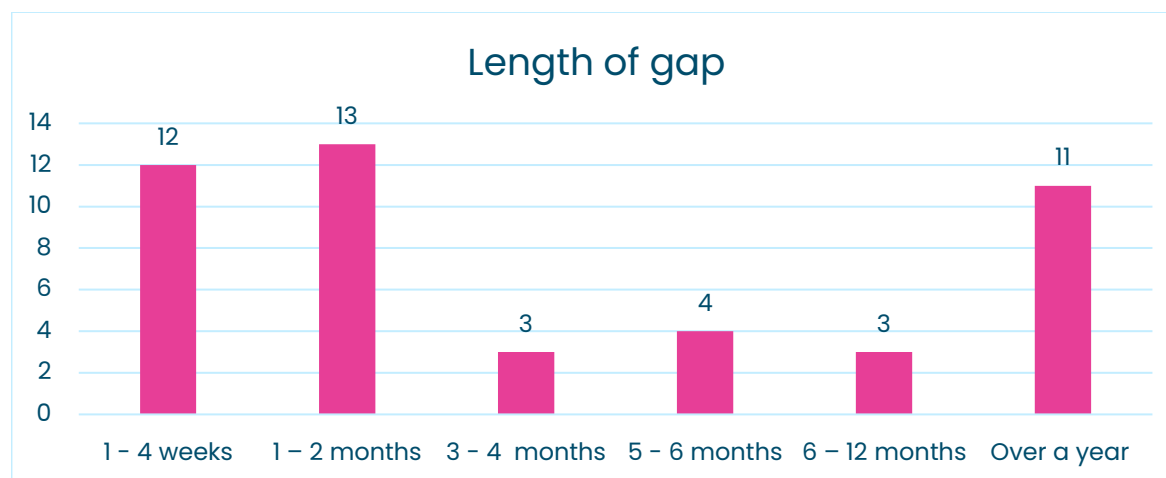
70 respondents answered this question.

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	35	50%
No	35	50%
Total	70	100 %

Of the 70 respondents that answered this question, half said there was a gap between youth and adult services, and half said there was no gap.

Q3a – If yes, how long was the gap?

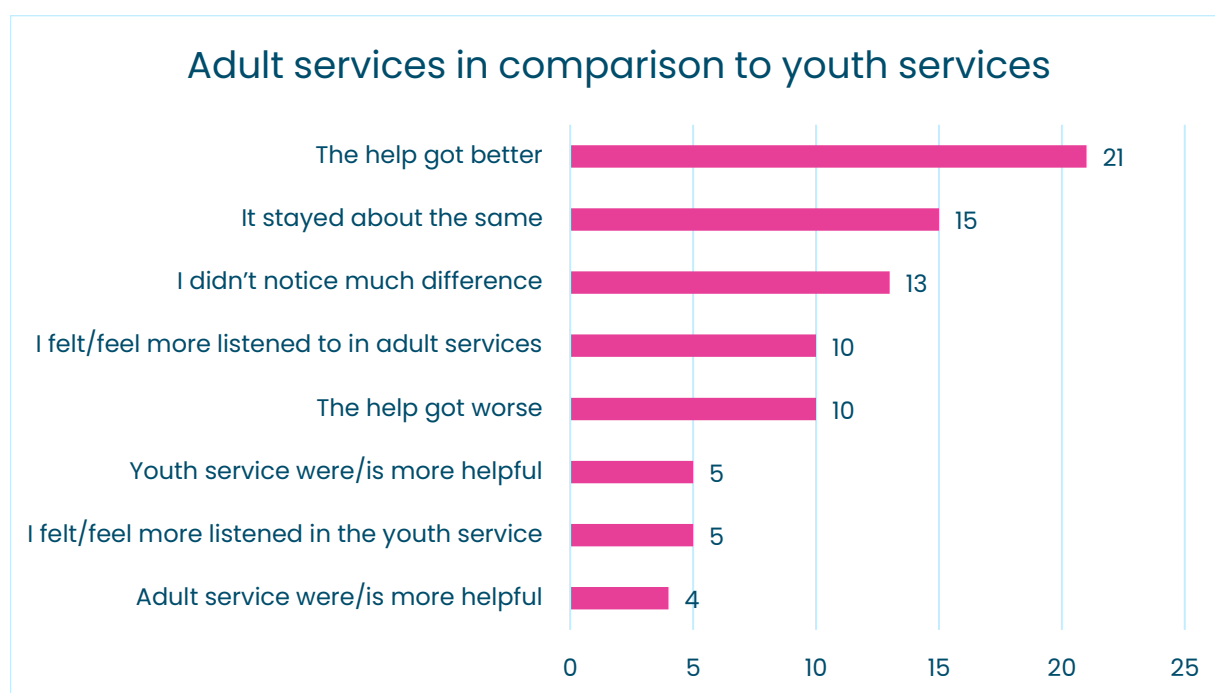
46 respondents answered this follow-up question.



The length of time young people waited before receiving support varied widely. 13 (28%) waited 1–2 months and 12 (26%) waited 1–4 weeks, but 11 (23%) reported waiting over a year. Smaller numbers waited 3–4 months (3 – 7%), 5–6 months (4 – 9%), or 6–12 months (3–7%).

Q4 – How does the help you get in adult services compare to youth services?

This was a multi response question which received 83 responses.



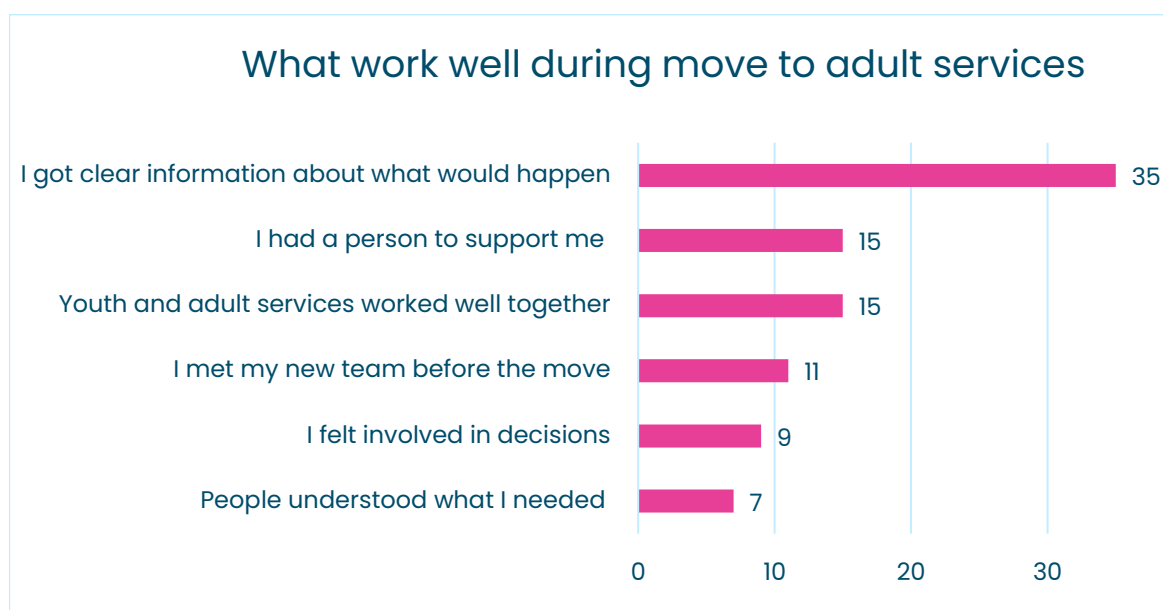
Most young people felt adult services were an improvement, with 21 saying the help got better. 15 said things stayed about the same and 13 didn't notice much difference. Smaller numbers had mixed experiences: 10 felt more listened to in adult services and 10 felt the help got worse. A few found youth services more helpful (5) or felt more listened to in youth services (5). Only 4 said adult services were more helpful overall.



Section 5 – How the Move Between Services Went

Q1 – What worked well during your move?

This was a multi response question which received 92 responses.



The most common positive experience during the move to adult services was getting clear information about what would happen, selected by 35 respondents. 15 said they had a person to support them and 15 felt youth and adult services worked well together. Smaller numbers met their new team before the move (11), felt involved in decisions (9), or said people understood what they needed (7).

Q2 – What do you wish had been different?

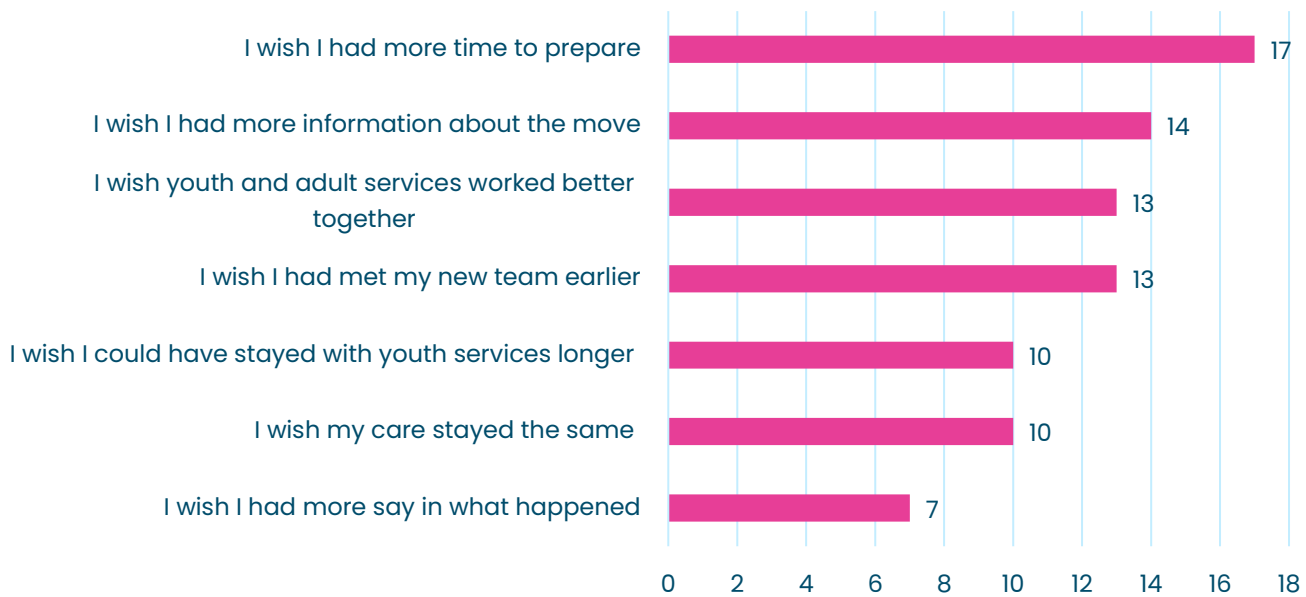
This was a multi response question which received 84 responses.



“One worker supported me through the change, without them, I think I would have dropped out completely”



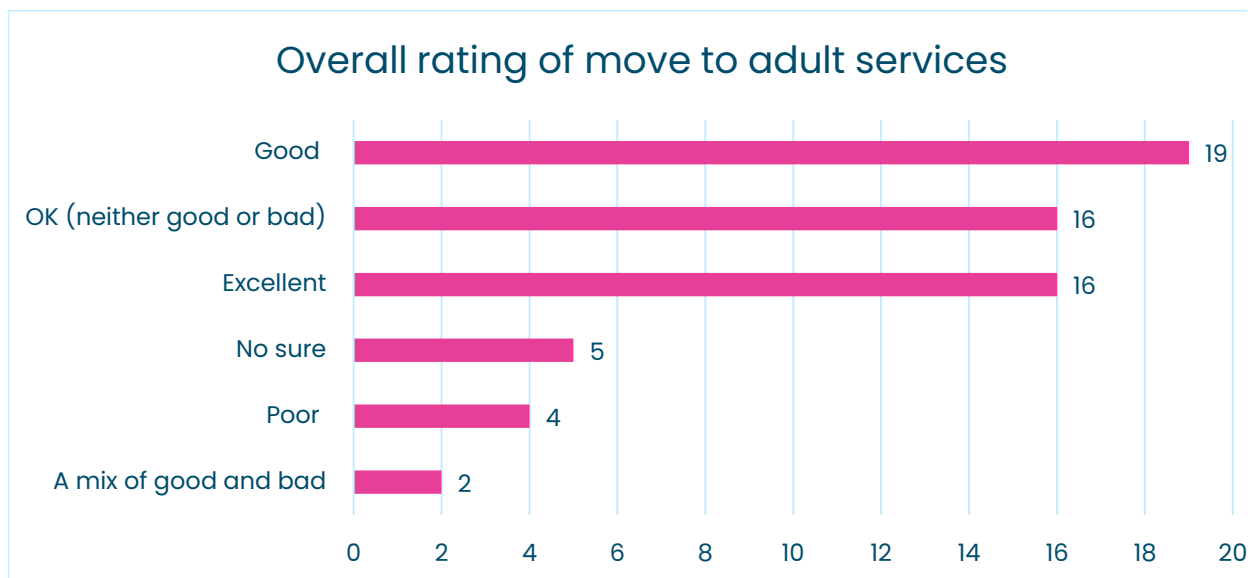
What could be done differently



The main thing young people wanted done differently was having more time to prepare, chosen by 17 respondents. 14 wished they had more information about the move, while 13 wanted youth and adult services to work together better and 13 wished they had met their new team earlier. Smaller numbers said they wished they could have stayed with youth services longer (10), that their care had stayed the same (10), or that they had more say in what happened (7).

Q3 – How would you rate the move between services overall?

There were 62 responses to this question.



Most young people rated their move to adult services positively. 19 said the experience was good, and 16 rated it as excellent. Another 16 felt it was OK. Smaller numbers were unsure (5), rated it as poor (4), or said it was a mix of good and bad (2).

Q4 – Is there anything else you would like to tell us?



"I was being badly bullied and spoke to the school counsellor a few times but nothing really happened... I still struggle with the effects now."

"I am getting better with time."

"My experience has been poor – I was told to take medicine and go privately as services were oversubscribed."

"I've not got help from adult services as we've been told the waiting list could be over a year."

“Adult services didn’t help my son to transition; they said he doesn’t fit their criteria.”



Summary

This survey asked young people aged 17–25 about their experiences of mental health services, including getting help, waiting times, support received, and the move into adult services. A total of 125 people took part, with 117 (94%) responding for themselves and 8 (6%) parents or carers answering on behalf of a young person. Respondents had experience of NHS and voluntary sector provision including CPFT CAMHS, YOUNited, Centre33, and other local services.

Getting help and waiting times

Across 125 responses, 40 people (32%) were referred by a GP, 39 (31%) by school or college, 22 (18%) self-referred, and 24 (19%) were referred by hospitals, carers or another organisation.

Only 34 respondents (29%) were seen within 4 weeks. 29 (25%) waited 1–2 months, 24 (21%) waited 3–4 months, and 17 (15%) waited 5–12 months. 11 respondents (10%) waited over a year before receiving support.

Waiting had a negative impact for most young people: 65 struggled with everyday tasks, 60 found school or work harder, and 58 said their mental health got worse. 53 lost interest in things they usually enjoyed, and 40 stopped seeing friends or doing activities.

Experiences of youth services

Of the 122 people who rated their experience, 59 (48%) said it was excellent or good, 46 (38%) said it was “OK” or a mix of good and bad, and 17 (14%) rated it poor or were unsure.

91 respondents received talking therapy or counselling. 29 received medication and 23 had one-to-one or group support.

Positive experiences included feeling listened to (60 respondents) and receiving the help they needed (39 respondents). However, 32 felt rushed, 32 waited too long, 32 didn’t get the help they needed, and 24 didn’t feel listened to.

Transition into adult services

88 respondents (72%) were referred directly to adult services and 34 (28%) were not. Among the 70 who rated their transition, 38 (54%) said it was successful and 32 (46%) said it was not.

35 respondents (50%) said there was a gap between youth and adult support. Of those, 12 (26%) waited 1–4 weeks, 13 (28%) waited 1–2 months and 11 (23%) waited over a year.

When transitions did not happen, 51 out of 70 in Section 3, (73%) did not want their support to end. Of these, 24 felt let down, 21 were worried about the future and 15 felt like they did not matter. 43 out of 51 said they were not given a reason why support stopped.

Experiences of adult services

Of 92 respondents, 51 (55%) had received adult mental health support in the last five years and 41 (45%) had not.

Among those who compared services, 21 said support got better after moving to adult services, 15 said it stayed the same, 13 noticed no difference, and 10 said it got worse.

In summary, people described long waits for support, during which their mental health often worsened and everyday life, school, work, and friendships became harder. Although some young people felt listened to and well supported, others said they did not receive the help they needed, felt rushed, or were left waiting for too long. The move from youth to adult services was a particular concern, with many describing gaps in care or support ending without clear explanation. Experiences of adult services varied, with some feeling their care improved while others felt it stayed the same or got worse.

Overall, the findings show that while services can make a real difference, long waits, inconsistent support, and difficult transitions continue to create barriers to young people getting the help they need.

Recommendations

Recommendations

For Local NHS providers and Commissioning Partners

1. Reduce waiting times – implement earlier triage and targeted investment to prioritise timely access.
2. Provide contact while waiting – regular check-ins, updates, or signposting to community resources can prevent deterioration.

3. Improve transitions – establish joint transition procedures between children’s and adult services, with named key workers.
4. Increase flexibility – offer online, drop-in, and community-based sessions to fit young people’s lives.
5. Strengthen coordination – develop shared care plans across agencies to prevent repetition and ensure continuity.
6. Embed co-production – actively involve young people with lived experience in shaping mental health strategies.
7. Promote equity of access – ensure inclusive provision for young people with SEND, disabilities, neurodivergent conditions, and minority backgrounds.
8. Sustain partnerships – continue coordinated action between Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Integrated Care Board, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust, The SUN Network, MIND, the local authorities and other community offers to deliver ongoing improvement.

For Schools, Colleges, and Community Organisations

6. Maintain accessible wellbeing support – early help at school or college was often described as vital.
7. Improve signposting – make clear where to get help locally, including Centre33, YOUNited, and voluntary sector partners.
8. Encourage peer support – many young people said informal support spaces helped while waiting for formal care.

Voices of Young People

Access and Referral



“My GP referred me, but it took a long time to actually hear back from services.”

“School counselling was the only help I got while waiting – it wasn’t enough.”

"I didn't know you could self-refer until a friend told me."

Waiting Times

"I waited over a year. By the time I was seen, things had already got a lot worse."

"A few emails with links to services isn't the same as proper support."

"The waiting list felt like forever. I stopped believing I would ever get help."

Experiences of Services

"When I finally got to see someone, they were kind and actually listened."

"The staff were supportive, but I had to keep retelling my story to different people."

"Some sessions helped, but it ended too quickly and I was left on my own again."

Transition to Adult Services

"As soon as I turned 18, I felt like I fell off a cliff – no one explained what was next."

"There was a big gap between CAMHS and adult services. I didn't know who to call."

Alternative and Community Support

"Centre33 and Samaritans were there when NHS services weren't."

"I had to go private because the waiting times were too long. Not everyone can afford that."

"Peer support groups kept me going when I didn't get help from services."



Demographics and Equality Monitoring

Q1 – Where do you live?

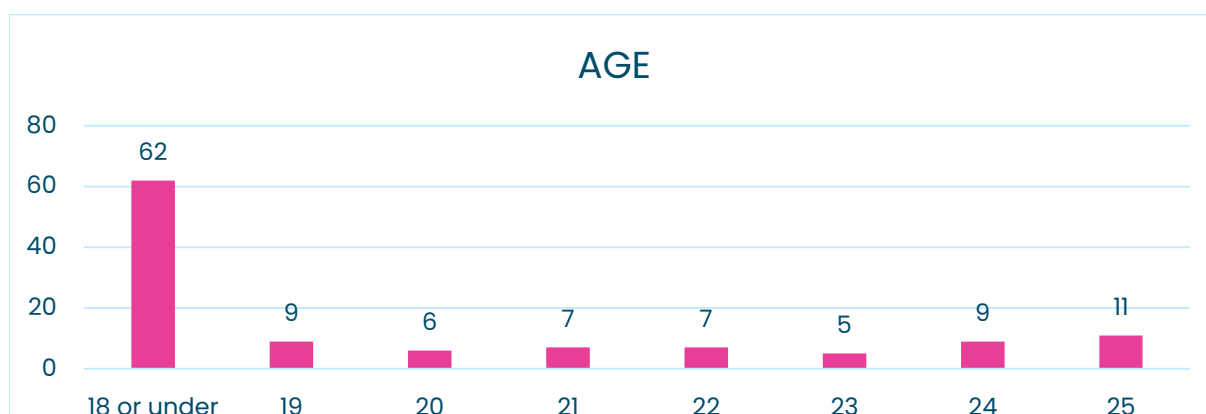
121 respondents answered this question.



Most respondents lived in Peterborough (48 people, 40%) or Cambridge (35 people, 29%). Smaller numbers were from Huntingdonshire (14 people, 12%), Fenland (12 people, 10%), East Cambridgeshire (9 people, 7%), and South Cambridgeshire (3 people, 2%).

Q2 – How old are you now (at the time of completing this survey)?

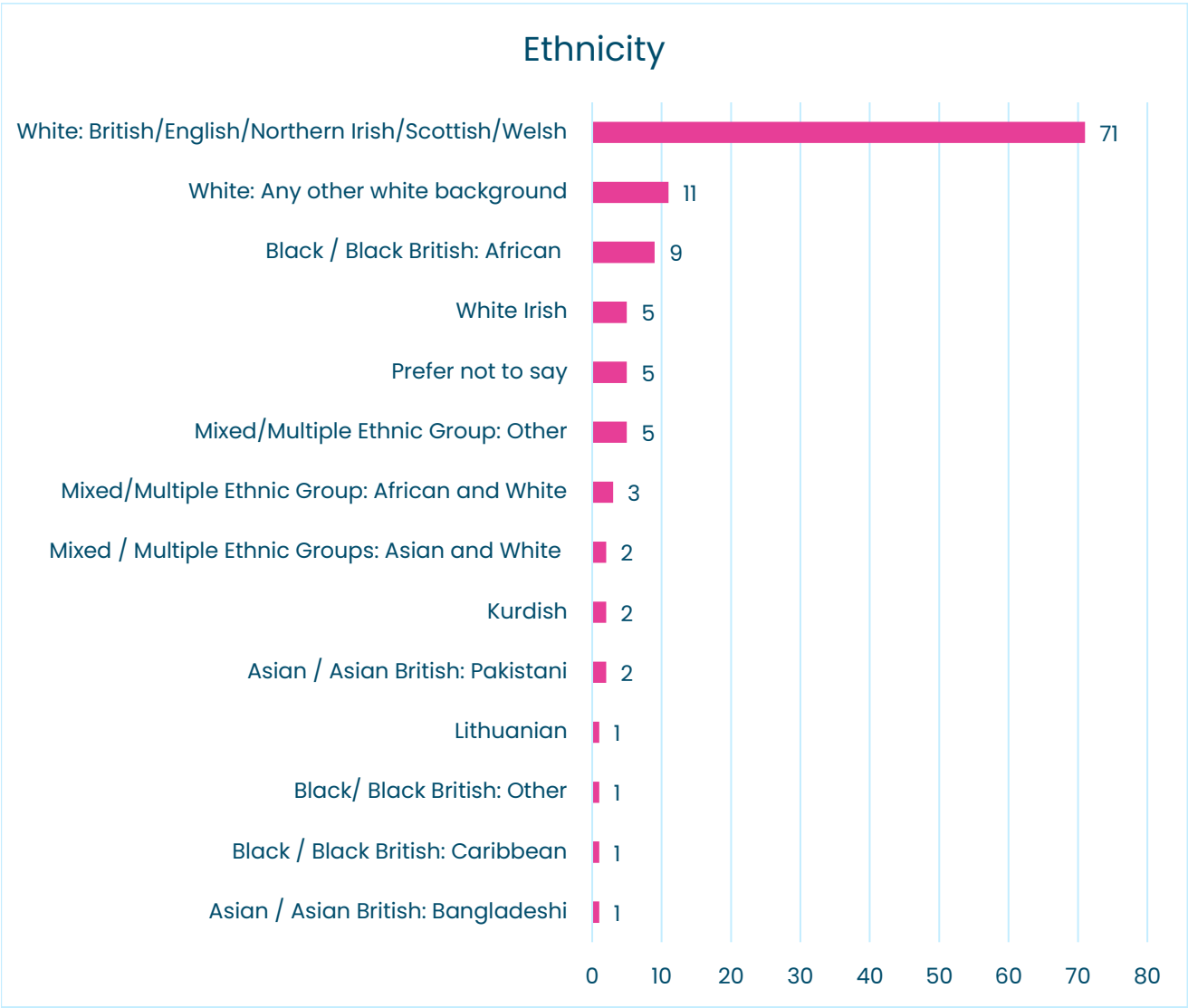
116 respondents answered this question.



Most respondents were age 18 or under, with 62 people making up 54% of the total. Smaller numbers were reported at older ages: 9 people were 19 (8%), 6 were 20 (5%), 7 were 21 (6%), 7 were 22 (6%), and 5 were 23 (4%). A further 9 people were 24 (8%) and 11 were 25 (9%).

Q3 – Please select your ethnicity

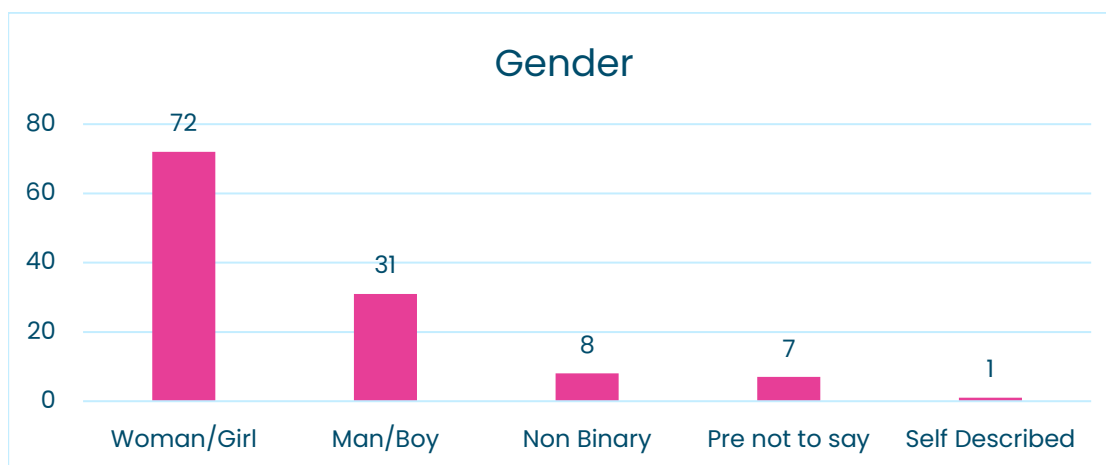
119 respondents answered this question.



Most respondents were White British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh, with 71 people making up 60% of the total. Smaller groups included 11 respondents from any other white background (9%), 9 who were Black/Black British African (8%), and 5 each who were White Irish, preferred not to say, or from another mixed/multiple ethnic background (each around 4%). There were 3 respondents who were African and White (3%), and 2 each who were Asian and White, Kurdish, or Asian/Asian British Pakistani (each roughly 2%). The smallest groups, with 1 respondent each (1%), were Lithuanian, Black/Black British Other, Black/Black British Caribbean, and Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi.

Q4 – Please tell us your gender

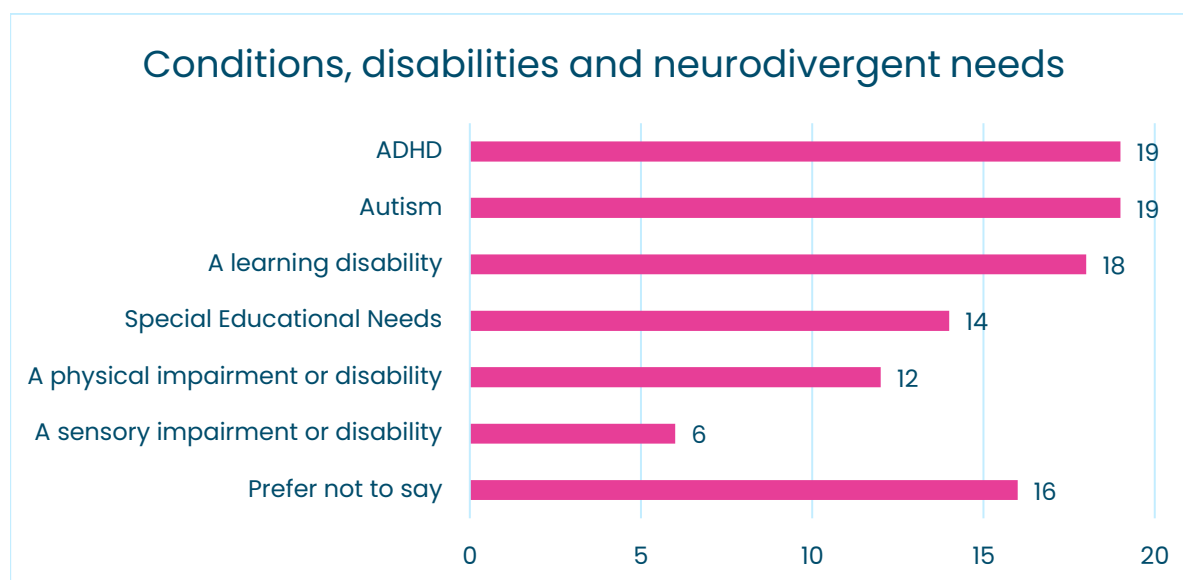
119 respondents answered this question.



Most respondents identified as women or girls, with 72 people making up roughly 62% of the total. Another 31 respondents identified as men or boys (26%). Smaller groups included 8 non-binary respondents (6%) and 7 who preferred not to say (5%). One person self-described their gender (1%).

Q5 – Do you have any conditions, disabilities, or neurodivergent needs?

This was a multi response question which received 104 responses. 61 out of the 125 people who answered this question have no conditions. The remaining 64 respondents have a condition, disability or neurodivergent need.



The most common condition reported was ADHD and Autism, each with 19 respondents. A learning disability was selected by 18 respondents, and 16 preferred not to say. Special Educational Needs were reported by 14 people, a physical impairment or disability by 12, and a sensory impairment or disability by 6. A further 4 people selected "other."

Thank you to all that took part in this survey

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