

Children and Young People's Strategy – Engagement and Consultation Summary

In July 2025 the Children and Young People's Partnership Board decided that they wanted to develop a strategy, showcasing what young people are proud of in Rotherham and why it is good to grow up here. *"We said that there were loads of things we could shout about, like youth clubs, leisure centres, Clifton Park, how it's culturally inclusive, the green spaces, Grimm and co, museums, our local accent, Pride festivals, Wow festival, Uplift festival, the Arc cinema, the food options we have, historical buildings, Gulliver's, and how there is plenty to do like the splash zone and bike tracks".* (Children and Young People's Partnership Board minutes)

Initial consultation was carried out at Rotherham Show on the 6th and 7th September 2025 whereby a survey was launched with children and young people to gain their views. Accessed via a QR code, with a catchy title of 'Children & Young People, We Need Your Help! By answering five questions about what's important to you', the survey included:

- I feel proud to live in Rotherham because
- My favourite adults/grown-ups in Rotherham are
- My favourite things to do are
- My favourite places to go are
- I would like living in Rotherham more if

Following Rotherham Show the survey was cascaded out across Family Hubs, Children's Centres, websites, reception areas, GP's, Pharmacy's. Libraries, Schools Newsletter, healthwatch networks, voice and influence groups and across 14 voluntary and community sector networks. The survey closed on 30th September ready to take the results to a Children's Strategy Workshop on 1st October 2025.

Children and Young People's Strategy Survey Results:

259 children and young people, between the ages of 5 and 25, took part in the survey.

The main age ranges of participants included 35% between the ages of 16 and 17, 20% were 10 and 11 year olds, 16% were 8 and 9 year olds and 14% were 12 and 13 year olds.

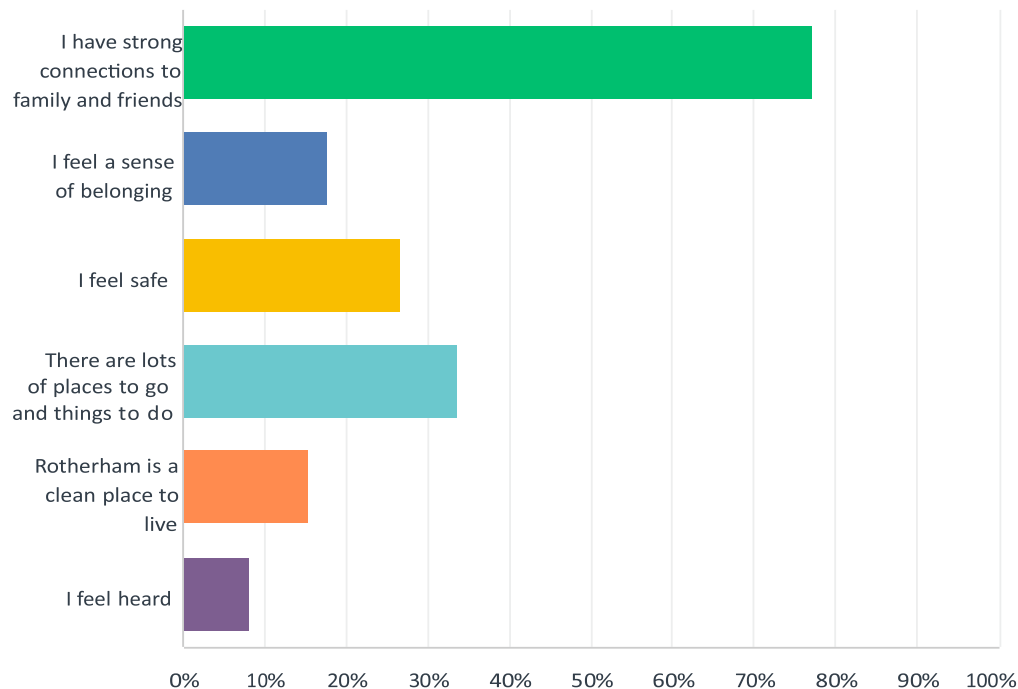
54% of participants think of themselves as 'girls', 42% as 'boys', 3% 'preferred not to say' and 1% described themselves 'in another way'.

79% of participants described their ethnic background as 'White British', 5% 'preferred not to answer', 3% stated 'other white background' and 13 children and young people described their ethnicity from a range of backgrounds such as Pakistani, African, White and Asian.

32% of participants have a disability or a condition which has lasted or expected to last for at least 12 months. Of which, 49% have a learning disability, 29% have a mental health condition and 24% have a long-term illness or health condition.

Children and young people were given the option to tick more than one answer to each of the questions and this is reflected in the percentage scores.

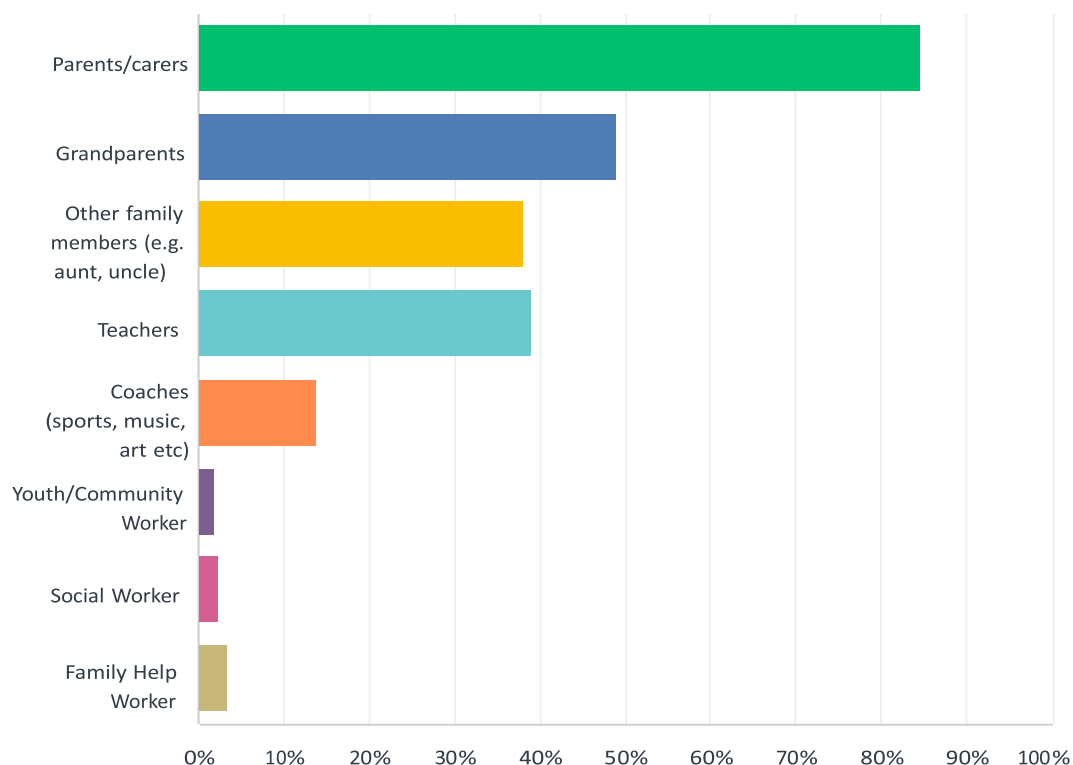
Children and young people feel proud to live in Rotherham because:



Top 3 answers:

1. I have strong connections to family and friends (77%)
2. There are lots of places to go and things to do (34%)
3. I feel safe (27%)

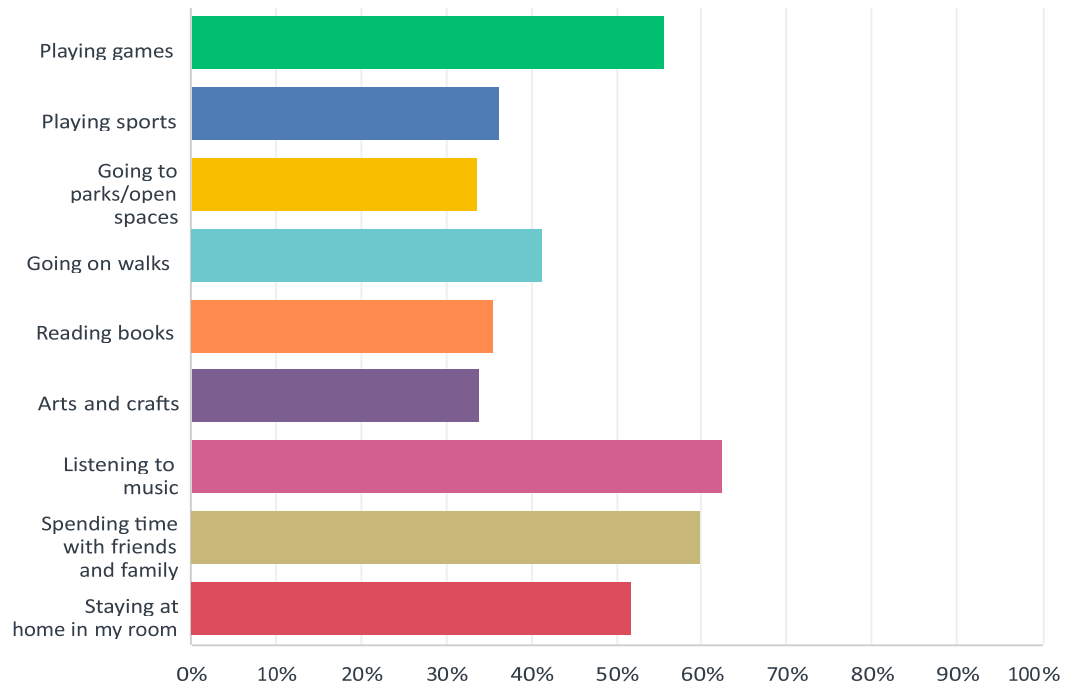
Children and young people's favourite adults/grown-ups are:



Top 3 answers:

1. Parents/Carers (85%)
2. Grandparents (49%)
3. Teachers (39%)

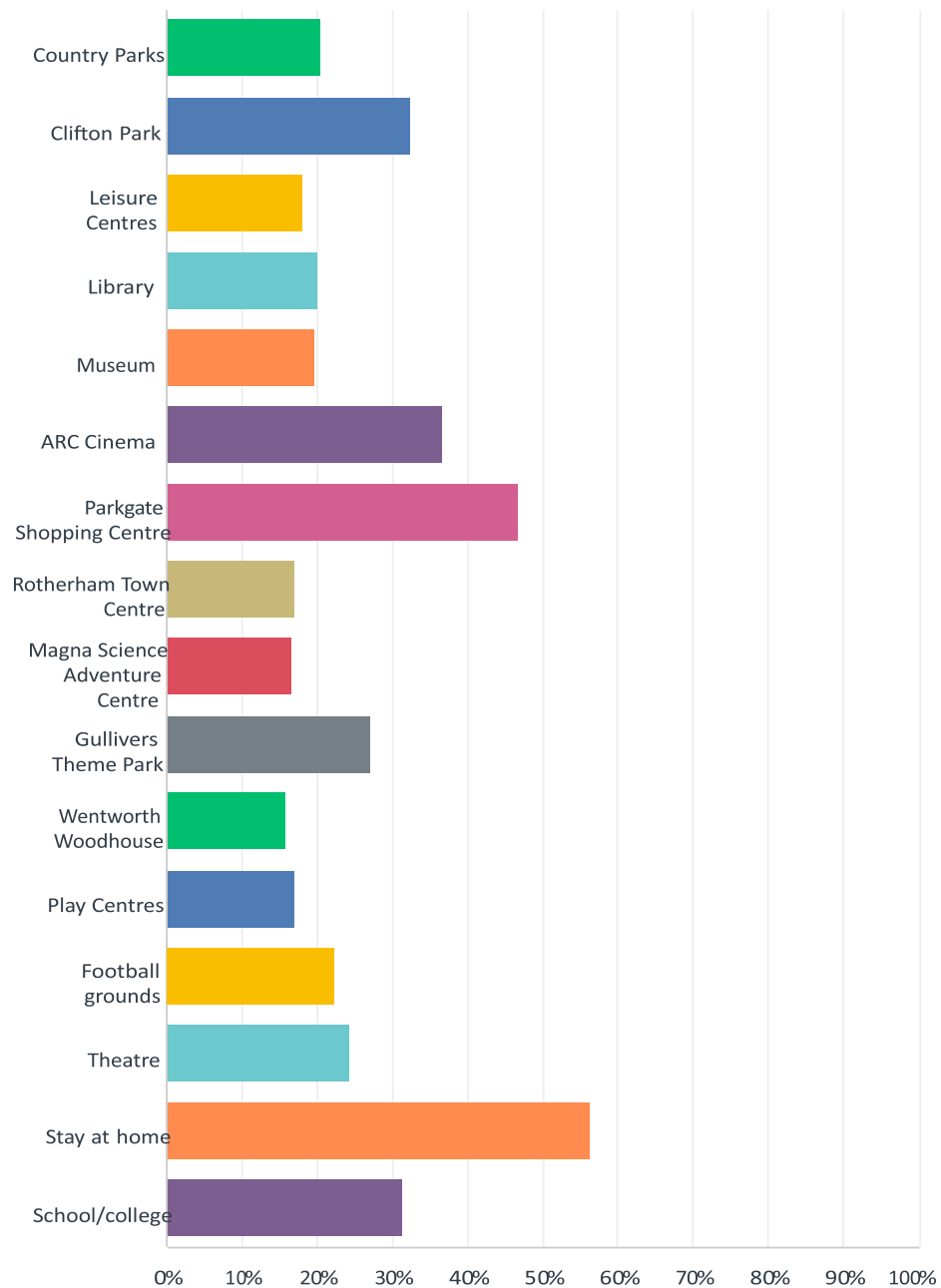
Children and young people's favourite things to do are:



Top 3 answers:

1. Listening to music (63%)
2. Spending time with friends and family (60%)
3. Playing games (56%)

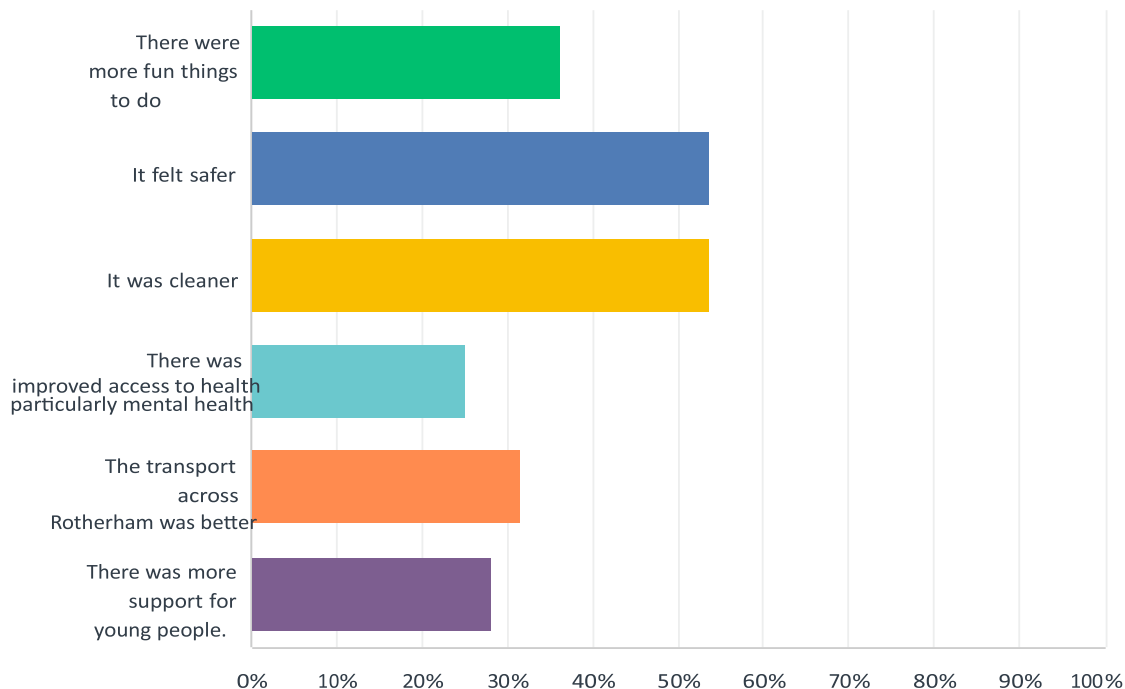
Children and young people's favourite places to go are:



Top 3 answers:

1. Stay at home (56%)
2. Parkgate Shopping Centre (46%)
3. ARC Cinema (37%)

Children and young people would like living in Rotherham more if:



Top 3 answers:

1. It felt safer and it was cleaner (joint) (54%)
2. There were more fun things to do (36%)
3. The transport across Rotherham was better (32%)

Additional views and comments included:

Safety:

- I would like Rotherham to be less unsafe and has a friendly environment for disabled and young children.
- I would also say that especially a place that close to schools, the town centre is not doing great. When you look at hospital or Clifton parks side, there lovely. But especially the drunk people and people who randomly come up to you and enforce their religious beliefs on you are creating a big problem around Rotherham. Don't get me wrong, I adore Clifton Park, Grimm& Co, the library and the arc cinema (especially its prices - they're really student friendly compared to Meadowhall and etc) but there are some factors that ruins all of these.
- Rotherham has gotten a scarier place to live within the last few years. There are more drug problems, violence and gangs around the streets. I just wish it felt safer to go out. For example, I'm worried to go in parks and such because some areas are a bit dodgy now and there's a lot of people about who aren't exactly friendly. Theres plenty of nice people but I think a lot of people, like me, would agree that it feels unsafe sometimes to go out.
- Rotherham town centre is bad and scary, and places aren't safe for me and my friends or our parents.
- It is very dodgy near Parkgate.

Fun things to do – more:

- Museums, zoos, grass areas
- Shops
- Mc Donald's, Starbucks, Cinemas, Arcades
- Play areas, parks
- Teachers listening pupils More help teacher More people/understanding/listening

Children and Young People's Strategy Workshop:

On 1st October 2025, a workshop was held with young people to analyse the feedback from the survey and to start writing the strategy. 13 young people took part in the workshop, representing the following voice and influence groups:

- Young Inspectors
- Youth Cabinet
- In Care Youth
- Smiles for Miles
- Guiding Voices

Workshop Feedback:

Rotherham is a great place to grow up because...

- We have a very nice cinema and parks with historical sites like Wentworth Woodhouse, Keppel and Meadowhall near. Also, there are a lot of youth cabinets and activities.
- They have nice calming places, places of variety, beautiful areas. It has a huge religious span including inclusivity, beautiful buildings like the minster, other buildings.
- Encourages youth groups to voice the silent kids.
- Inclusivity – arms forces parade, pride parade – everyone is recognised.
- Of family and friends
- It has nice green spaces
- Also, people have a lot of family in Rotherham
- All clubs are fun
- It has fun things to do like guiding voices
- It listens to kids and young people. Its good because they want young people to be heard.
- Rotherham is good because its improving building
- There are many activities to do and wide variety of food places to stop at, it also has nice places like Clifton Park. Rotherham has much diversity in its ethnicity and religion, helping people to understand others to unite.

Additional comments from the survey:

- Rotherham is the best place I have ever lived in
- There is lots of food restaurants for me
- There's lots of kind people

- I feel respected and accepted for who I am
- I get to see my friends and have fun with them
- Because it's a place of happiness

Rotherham will be even better when...

- It becomes cleaner – parks, glass everywhere, loads of rubbish
- Get a Rotherham cleaned up – get paid
- Tell youth workers problems and easy access to report
- More mental health support
- Better transport
- Safer criminals

Additional comments from the survey: I would like living in Rotherham more if:

There were more sports facilities:

- Like tennis and badminton near where I live
- More skate parks
- More places to play football
- Variety of activities, bowling, mini golf
- Ice skating
- More activities aimed at teenagers
- Martial arts and self-defence
- I would really like for youth clubs to be somewhere more interactive e.g. magna, jump

There were more events:

- Music venues for gigs
- Festivals
- Places for music festivals - would have to have diverse music, personally I enjoy rock and mosh pits etc but rap pop every genre should be represented
- Free entertainment for teenagers

There was more support for mental health:

- More support in schools

How Rotherham values children and young people:

Extracts from other plans the young people would like to include in the strategy include:

Council Plan:

- In Rotherham around 2,740 babies are born each year. We are delivering baby packs to Rotherham families to ensure every family has essential items from the beginning of the child's life.
- £1.8 million has been given to improve the watersplash area at Clifton Park and play areas across Rotherham until 2027.
- 120 creative traineeships (part time paid jobs) have been created through the Children's Capital of Culture since 2022.

Safer Rotherham Partnership Strategy:

- Vape awareness sessions have been delivered to 4000 students in schools.
- Between 2022 to 2025 £887, 428 worth of illegal tobacco and vape products were removed from sale.
- As a result of increased patrols, unacceptable behaviour and anti-social behaviour reduced by 50%.

Health & Wellbeing Strategy:

- Support is provided to people to form healthy habits, reducing unhealthy alcohol use and vaping.
- Support is provided to people to manage long term conditions like asthma and diabetes

Rotherham Cultural Strategy:

- 375 activities have been co-produced with young people, attracting 357,000 participants in the build-up to Rotherham becoming the world's first Children's Capital of Culture in 2025.
- By 2026, we will create 1500 new volunteering opportunities, 100 new apprenticeships and 1500 new jobs in the creative, digital, cultural, leisure and tourism sectors

Suggestions around values include:

- They have many good places for kids, but they need more for teenagers.
- Promote videos or news articles showing the effects of vaping, smoking and drinking like heart diseases, kidney failure, long term failures and addiction.
- Try reaching out to schools or convincing the council to fund mental health helpers in school so that kids that are not recognised can finally receive the help they actually need.
- Instead of mentioning obesity rates as it might sound mean you could promote sport, leisure centres, or reach into schools to promote afterschool sports.
- Get schools to promote more healthy options to decrease obesity rates, also makes children youth workers and schools to promote a good sense of responsibility.
- Produce a series of videos about anti-social behaviour and how it can cause consequences.
- Capital of culture – 120 jobs = amazing – should spread around South Yorkshire.
- More support sessions for teens who are struggling with mental health would be better.
- Water park money could be used for youth sessions and for slides and entertainment.
- Some young people need support more than others
- Vapes should be banned in every school because students leave school and start vaping. So what about the kids with heart conditions and asthma, wont this develop their developing bodies and young adults should have support for this so they don't go onto alcohol when they are stressed.

Since the Children and Young People's Partnership Board started in November 2023, so far, it has influenced:

1. Created a 'Rotherhamised' campaign about vaping
2. Created a climate action group for young people to attend
3. Increased nature recovery volunteering opportunities which are also age appropriate
4. Wrote a letter to schools challenging them about locking toilets
5. The Young Inspectors developed a questionnaire about buses and inspected the bus station feeding back concerns around safety with the transport team and they influenced the campaign around the use of safe cycle lanes
6. Hate Crime Team extended their offer to those who are not educated in school (elective home education service). The Hate Crime Pledge has also been shared, as well as the guidance that the Youth Cabinet developed on how to report hate crime so that these can be displayed in the community.
7. 'Safety' and 'Having fun things to do' were included in the Council Plan as a result of the young people's voice
8. CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) launched a new referral form and self-referral process and agreed to work with young people on what a drop in service would look like
9. Influenced priorities in the Rotherham Together Plan (themes to focus on over the next few years to deliver improvements for local people and places)

This is what it is like to live in Rotherham...

Extracts from other plans the young people feel will be of the most interest to include in the strategy include:

- 70% of Rotherham is open countryside
- Rotherham's wealth of green space, in the form of urban and country parks, nature reserves, woodlands and playing fields, is a major asset.
- Rotherham has strong transport links and is home to the first tram-train in the country.
- There were 4 million visits to Rotherham's attractions last year including Wentworth Woodhouse, Gullivers and Magna amongst South Yorkshire's most popular tourist destinations.
- Estimated population of 271,195
- With 47,100 children (under 15) and 68,600 over 60's.
- 64%.5 of children under 5 are at a good level of development, compared to 65.2% nationally.
- Rotherham has a vibrant voluntary and community sector with over 1,200 organisations and around 40,000 volunteers.
- An increasingly diverse community which includes 31,193 people from minority ethnic groups (11.7% of the population). The Pakistani community is the second largest ethnic group in Rotherham after White British.
- Young people have a good understanding of where to access support including for sexual health advice; support from school nurses, and family and friends were recognised most frequently.

Mental health impacts (Lifestyle Survey):

- 57.2% of respondents rated their mental health as good or excellent, 28.5% rated this as fair, and 14.3% rated this as poor.
- 26.2% of students felt they were not the right size for their age and height and 45.8% felt there was a lot of pressure to have the perfect body image from social media.
- 72.7% of students have been bullied in the last 6 months.
- 16.6% of students have experienced hate crime.
- 21.9% of respondents, 854 people, had used, or created a gambling account and 446 respondents stated they have a problem with spending money on gambling or games.

Food and drink consumption:

- 588 students (13%) rated their diet as poor (1 or 2 out of 5) and the majority felt that their diet was OK
- 1,195 students (26.4%) do not have breakfast.
- 2,694 students (59.5%) drink at least one high-sugar fizzy drink per day.
- 1,797 students (39.7%) drink at least one high energy drink per week (red bull, monster etc).

Favourite places to go:

The young people attending the workshop voted on their favourite places to go in Rotherham:

1. Cinema
2. Football Stadium
3. Parkgate Shopping
4. Parks (Clifton, Herringthorpe, Thrybergh)
5. Specific areas (wards) in Rotherham to hang out and walk around.
6. Youth sessions/groups sessions

Additional places included Meadowhall, visiting stables, Rotherham Minister and funfairs.

259 children and young people who took part in the survey – order of favourite places:

1. Staying at home
2. Parkgate Shopping
3. Cinema
4. Clifton Park
5. School/College
6. Gullivers Theme Park
7. Theatre
8. Football grounds
9. Country Parks
10. Library

Additional places included leisure centres, museum, magna, Rotherham town centre, Wentworth Woodhouse and play centres.

Strategy Design:

During the workshop the young people looked at some examples of strategies and fed back their views around what they liked and disliked.

Liked:

- Short contents page
- Colourful, vibrant strategies which attract attention
- Lots of pictures and graphics and not too much text
- Like inclusiveness of pictures
- Flowcharts
- Timeline of proposals good
- Use of percentages and statistics
- Aimed at young children, shows diverse opinions/needs for children
- Like how they have added predictions and how they will take actions
- Stories – gets the reader's attention
- Promotes young voices
- Likes cartoons (but not too babyish)
- Like how the 12 wishes are organised (Leeds) and plans for each wish
- Like clear easy to read priorities
- Good to have links in the document
- Short summary

Disliked:

- Too long
- Too much writing and targeted to adults
- Font too small
- Layout
- Have not included feedback from young people
- 'What we will do' sections are a bit vague
- No website links on the back page
- No summary
- Some colours not attractive
- Boring layout, too basic
- Poor picture quality
- Wasted pages
- Don't like random topics in the strategy – stick to a few
- Does everything have to be on paper? What about on a film