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## **Ipswich Opportunity Area: Youth Social Action**

Measuring the levels of young people's engagement in social action – A comparison of 2018-2019 data

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- A total of 236 young people based in Ipswich completed the youth social action survey at time-point one (P1: 2018) and 323 at time-point two (P2: 2019), aged 10-25 years.
- Over 80% of young people who responded to the survey had engaged in at least one form of social action, however this percentage was higher at P1 (90%) than P2 (81%).
- Overall, a total of 37-43% of young people who responded to the survey engaged in regular social action (monthly), there was no significant association between the time at which the survey was completed and the likelihood of participating in regular social action activities.
- When analysing the combined dataset ( $n = 503$ ) there is a statistically significant association between participation in regular social action and deprivation, with young people at the lower deciles (e.g. 10-20% most deprived communities) of the Index of Multiple Deprivation participating in less social action activities.
- Only 24% of young people have engaged in social action to help improve their local community across both time points, this is a lot lower in comparison to participation in other forms of social action. This is in concurrent with current ongoing research, which is uncovering a sense of disconnect between young people and their local community. Social action activities may want to focus on initiatives to encourage community social action using participatory approaches and young people's ideas at all stages of programme development.
- The majority of young people believe there are either not enough choice of social action activities (48%) which was found to be consistent across both time-points. Over a quarter also suggested that there are not enough initiatives at all (42% - 2018; 27% - 2019), however this percentage has reduced from 2018-2019. Over half of young people suggested they would be interested in participating in social action in the future, while 34-37% remained unsure.
- Young people left comments to suggest that safe places for young people to reside with friends, be it youth groups or centres, is of high importance to them. In addition, provision of support and opportunities to meet others is crucial, alongside prospects to create events

and campaign for matters of importance to them (e.g. LGBTQI+, mental health, climate change).

- More needs to be done to promote and raise awareness of youth social action in a meaningful way amongst young people, investigate their perceptions of what youth social action constitutes, identify their ideas and increase involvement in programme development to encourage sustainability.
- Future research and evaluation should consider stratified sampling, response monitoring to increase likelihood of representative demographics and measuring impact of engagement in social action initiatives using mixed methods approaches.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Ipswich was identified by the Department for Education (DfE) as being one of 12 opportunity areas which had comparatively lower opportunities to enable young people to succeed and lower educational performance than elsewhere in England, as identified by comparing Social Mobility and Achieving Excellence Areas Index scores<sup>1</sup>. The primary focus for the DfE identifying opportunity areas is to subsequently focus national and local resources on increasing social mobility within these locations. The programmes are tailored to the regional context, with a whole-education approach from early years to employment.

Young people in Ipswich on average achieve poorer outcomes in comparison to areas within other Local Authority Districts, and according to local datasets, young people in Ipswich are likely to be not in employment, education or training (NEET)<sup>2</sup>. Based on statistical data and wide consultation, the Ipswich Opportunity Area partnership board have identified four programme areas for intervention in the Ipswich education system. One of these priorities focuses upon ensuring all children in Ipswich are prepared to learn for life, by developing key behaviours such as resilience and self-regulation. It is this priority in which the Ipswich Opportunity Area partnership board decided to commission the roll out of a youth social action programme, led and designed by young people, to encourage the development of essential life skills.

Youth social action is young people taking practical action to help others. To create positive social change that is of benefit to the wider community as well as to themselves. Participating in youth social action is perceived to have wide benefits for young people, including building career aspirations, wellbeing and general life satisfaction<sup>3</sup>. According to evidence highlighted by the British Youth Council (2016)<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Education (DfE) Opportunity Area Selection Methodology: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/650036/Opportunity\\_areas\\_selection\\_methodology.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/650036/Opportunity_areas_selection_methodology.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Department for Education (DfE) Social Mobility Opportunity Area Plan: Ipswich (2017-2020) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/696854/Social\\_Mobility\\_Delivery\\_Plan\\_Ipswich\\_v11\\_FINAL\\_WEB.PDF.PDF](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696854/Social_Mobility_Delivery_Plan_Ipswich_v11_FINAL_WEB.PDF.PDF)

<sup>3</sup> Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (2017) National Youth Social Action Survey [http://www.iwill.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/YSA\\_infographic\\_web.pdf](http://www.iwill.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/YSA_infographic_web.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> British Youth Council (2016) Evaluating Youth Social Action: <https://www.byc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/BYC019.docx>

involvement in social action that embeds core principles leads to robust improvements in individualistic qualities like empathy, cooperation, resilience and problem solving, in addition to improvements in levels of psychological wellbeing. It is therefore unsurprising that engaging young people in social action is considered to be one method of improving young people's confidence, skills and aspiration.

The aim of this research was therefore to measure the baseline level of young people engaging in social action activities across Ipswich, also considering wider Suffolk. The research process will then be replicated at later stages to identify whether there have been any changes as a result of the youth social action interventions upon level of uptake, regular participation and engagement in various social action activities.

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1 Youth Social Action Survey

The survey itself was piloted with young people, to provide comment and suggestions for amendments and ensure that it reflected young people's literacy ability and preferred vocabulary. In order to increase accessibility, a video was embedded at the start of the survey to explain the concept of youth social action and provide examples of the various activities young people may be participating in (see: [UOS Youth Social Action Video](#)). The survey created was based on that of the national #iWill youth social action survey by Ipsos MORI<sup>5</sup>, to identify levels of participation in social action. For a breakdown of the survey questions and video content, see [Appendix 1](#).

Participants were asked about their participation in youth social action over the last 12 months. Regular participation in this report is defined as participation in youth social action at least once a month. The use of social media for survey dissemination as well as via local organisations working with young people ensured a more representative response, as opposed to focusing upon survey dissemination via schools alone. This also displaced an unnecessary burden on schools during teaching time and enables young people to complete the survey outside of school time should they wish to do so.

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<sup>5</sup> Ipsos MORI (2015) Youth Social Action Survey: <https://www.iwill.org.uk/tag/youth-social-action-survey/>

Young people who volunteer to participate in the online survey were entered into a prize draw to win online vouchers via random selection.

## 2.2 Quantitative Analysis

Data was initially cleaned, with any individual over the age of 25 removed, the age range subsequently reflecting the 9-25 years age range. All postcodes were converted to area of region of Ipswich and wider Suffolk according to an Office for National Statistics dataset. Those who were outside of Suffolk were removed from the analysis. Respondents were categorised by ward based on self-reported postcode. Postcode were also mapped to the English indices of deprivation provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as a measure of deprivation. Confidence regarding accuracy of measurements will be assumed based on a representative response rate of 11-19-year olds in the Ipswich area based upon population statistics derived from Nomis (2017)<sup>6</sup> data. There is an estimated total of 13,662 young people between the age of 11-19 in Ipswich, thus a representative sample would constitute a response of 194-374, with a 95% confidence level and 7-5% margin of error.

**Phase 1 (P1)** (November 2018 – January 2019): The original dataset contained 369 responses, which was reduced to 360 after age exclusions and subsequently 236 respondents when filtering the dataset to Ipswich only.

**Phase 2 (P2)** (November 2019 – January 2020): The original dataset contained 408 responses, this was reduced to 402 when applying age exclusions, and subsequently 323 when filtering the dataset to Ipswich only. Ward information was available for 301 respondents.

*Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)*<sup>7</sup>: The Index of Multiple Deprivation is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas (or neighbourhoods) in England. The IMD ranks every small area in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 32,844 (least deprived area) and categorises these into subsequent deciles.

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<sup>6</sup> Nomis (2017) <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

<sup>7</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/579151/English\\_Indices\\_of\\_Deprivation\\_2015\\_-\\_Frequently\\_Asked\\_Questions\\_Dec\\_2016.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/579151/English_Indices_of_Deprivation_2015_-_Frequently_Asked_Questions_Dec_2016.pdf)

## 2.3 Ethical considerations

Individuals who engaged in the survey volunteered to participate and were informed of the purpose of the survey prior to completion. All participants were provided with information about the survey being undertaken by the University of Suffolk, as well as how the findings would be circulated, and once happy to participate young people were prompted to click next to start the survey. Young people were also encouraged to seek help from a trusted adult if having difficulty in answering survey questions. The research team are highly experienced researchers, working with individuals across the lifespan, have enhanced DBS certificates and have all undergone appropriate safeguarding training.

The evaluation was subject to University of Suffolk's ethical scrutiny and approval, and it complied with the British Sociological Association<sup>8</sup> and the British Psychological Society's Guidelines<sup>9</sup>. Adherence to guidelines set out by the United Kingdom Research Integrity Office's Code of Practice for Research ensured that the research followed the principles of the Singapore Statement of Research Integrity<sup>10</sup>:

- Honesty in all aspects of research
- Accountability in the conduct of research
- Professional courtesy and fairness in working with others
- Good stewardship of research on behalf of others

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.britisoc.co.uk/ethics>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/BPS%20Code%20of%20Ethics%20and%20Conduct%20%28Updated%20July%202018%29.pdf>

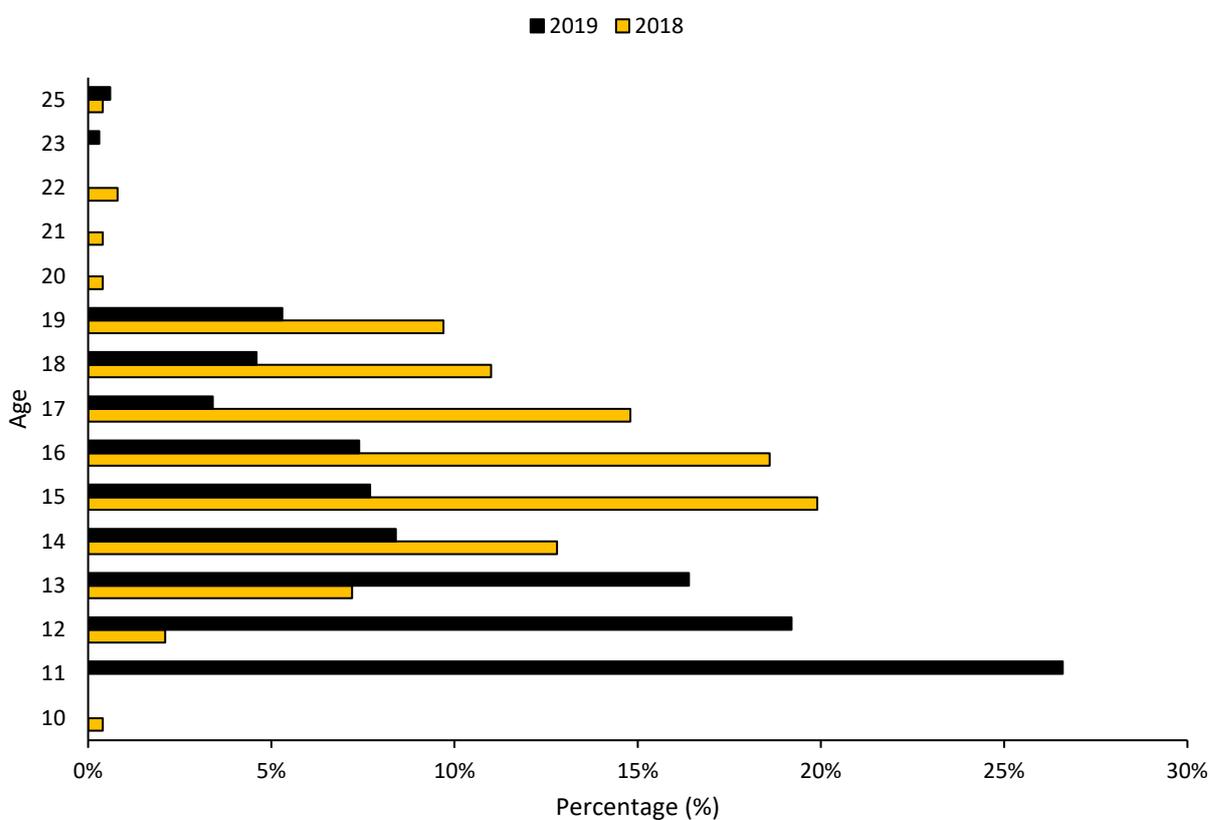
<sup>10</sup> [https://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-kousei/data/singapore\\_statement\\_EN.pdf](https://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-kousei/data/singapore_statement_EN.pdf)

### 3.FINDINGS

#### 3.1 Participant demographics

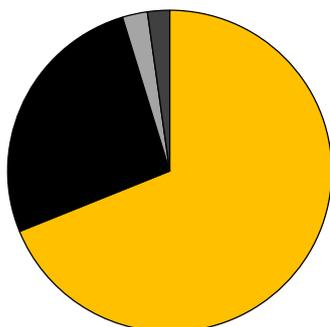
Young people who responded to the survey were from a wide range of age groups and areas within Ipswich and wider Suffolk. When considering Ipswich only, participant ages ranged from 10-25, with a mean age of 16 years in Phase 1 (P1) 2018 and 14 years in Phase 2 (2019).

**Figure 1:** Percentage of respondents by age



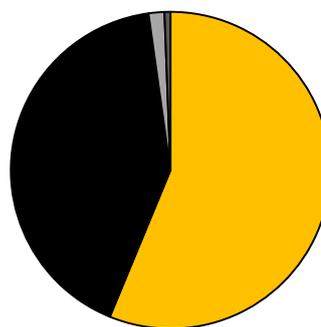
With regards to gender, most respondents who completed the survey in 2018 were female, which may suggest more needed to be done in successive surveys to target males, but also improve awareness of youth social action amongst males more

**Figure 2:** Percentage of respondents by gender - 2018



■ Female ■ Male ■ Prefer not to say ■ Other

**Figure 3:** Percentage of respondents by gender - 2019



■ Female ■ Male ■ Prefer not to say ■ Other

generally, this is reflected also in the national Youth Social Action survey (Pye & Michelmore, 2016)<sup>11</sup>. A larger proportion of males responded to the 2019 survey, at 42% (*Figure 3*). Those who suggested their gender reflected other were non-binary (including neutrois) and gender fluid.

The majority of survey respondents across both years were school or college students (Table 1). Those who indicated other were sixth form students or volunteers.

**Table 1:** The occupational roles of respondents in 2018 and 2019

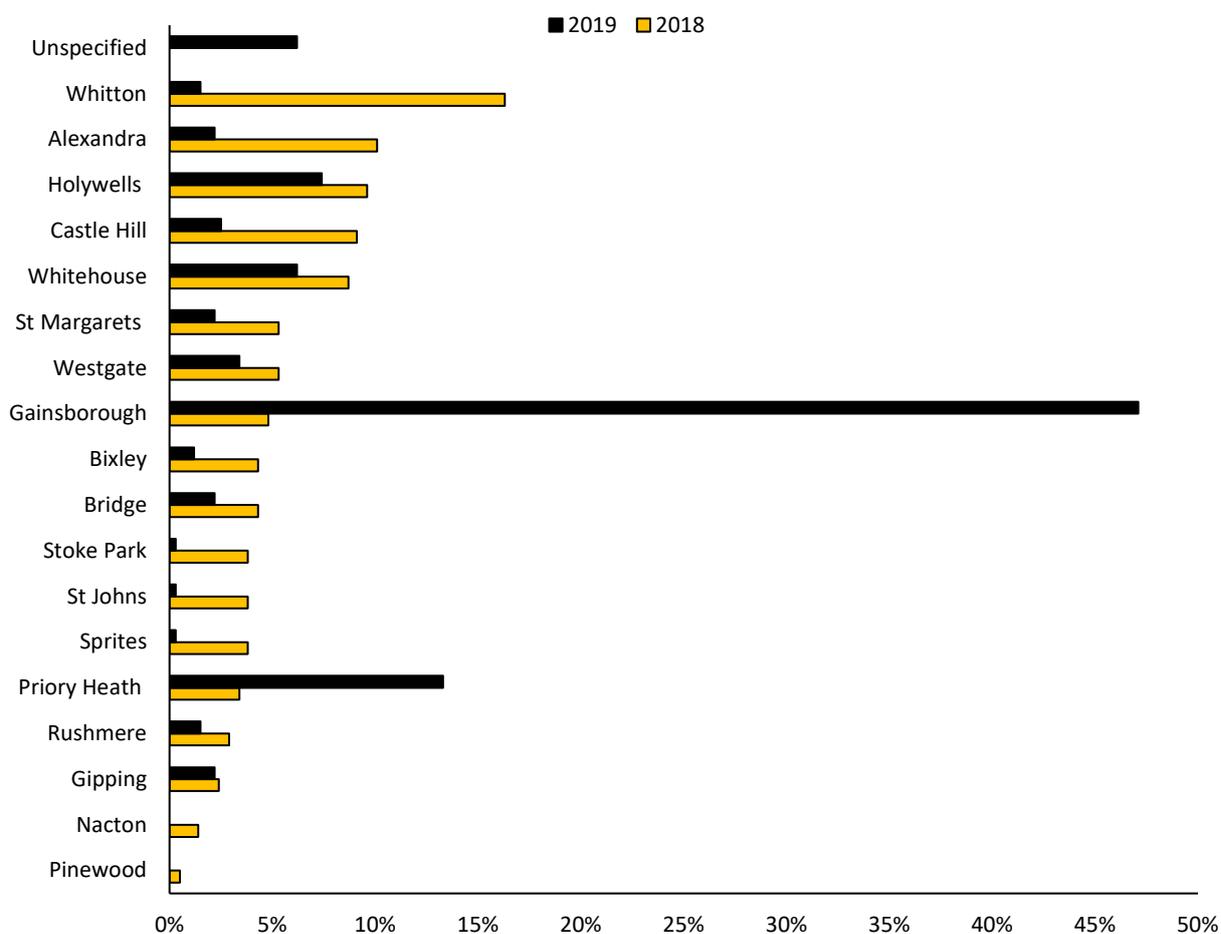
Respondent Occupation	No. of respondents: 2018 ( <i>n</i> = 236)	No. of respondents: 2019 ( <i>n</i> = 322)
School Student	122	260
College Student	61	25
University Student	20	14
Paid Employment	7	10
Apprentice	7	3
Unemployed	9	4
Other	10	6

### 3.2 Measuring participation in youth social action: Ipswich

The young people who responded to the survey were geographically spread across different wards within Ipswich (see *Figure 4*). In 2018, the majority of respondents were based in Whitton, with a broad spread across all wards. In comparison, the majority of 2019 respondents reside within Gainsborough or Priory Heath.

<sup>11</sup> Pye & Michelmore (2016) National Youth Social Action Survey: <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/2017-04/sri-youth-social-action-in-uk-2016.pdf>

**Figure 4:** Frequency of respondents associated wards within Ipswich, a 2018-2019 comparison



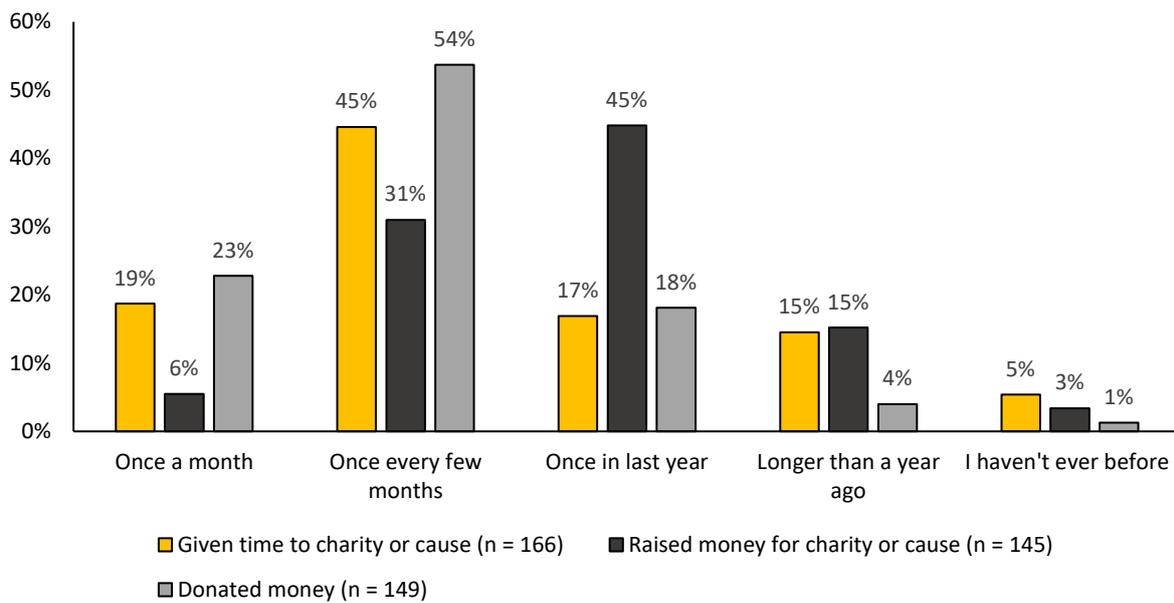
Young people were asked during the past year whether they had participated in certain social action activities. If they suggested that they had, they were subsequently asked how frequently they engaged in this activity. Each social action activity was accompanied by various examples to provide context for the young people completing the survey.

### 3.2.1. Charity, Fundraising and Donations

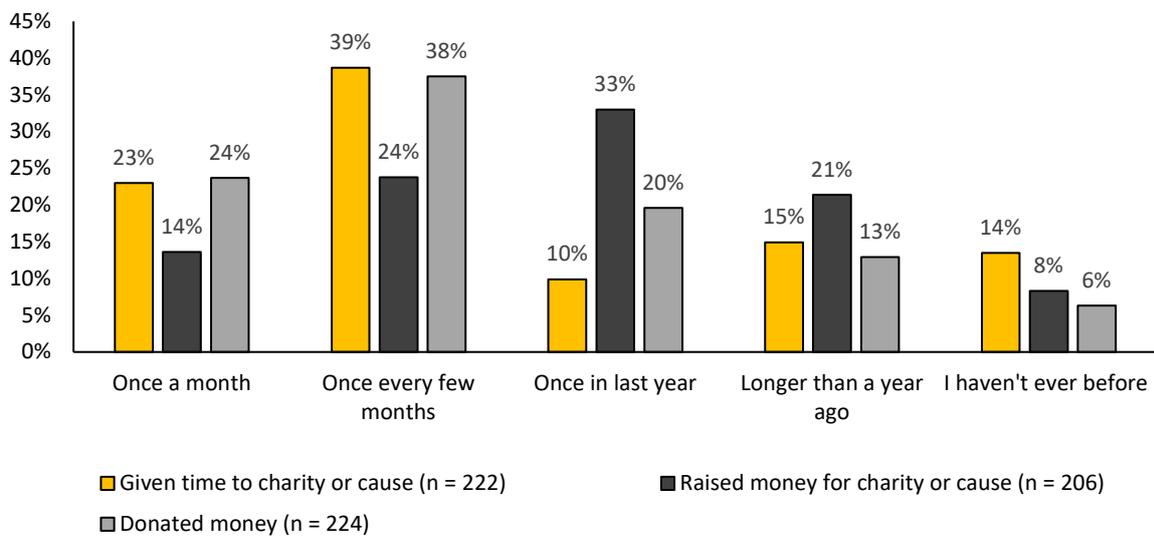
Initially, young people were asked whether they had given any time to a charity or cause, for example helping to organise charitable events or volunteering. They were also asked whether they had raised money for a charity or cause, or donated money to a charitable cause. Most young people who completed the survey suggested that they had given time to charity, with 62% in P1 (2018) and 50% in P2 (2019), similarly

60% of young people in P1 (2018) had raised money, as opposed to 49% of those in P2 (2019), just over a 10% decrease. A similar number of young people between the two time points suggested they had donated to charity, with 69% in P1 and 62% in P2. With regards to frequency of participation in the last 12 months, the majority of young people suggest they engage in charitable giving once every few months, or at least within the last year in both P1 and P2 (Figure 5 & 6).

**Figure 5:** Frequency of engagement in charitable giving - 2018



**Figure 6:** Frequency of engagement in charitable giving - 2019



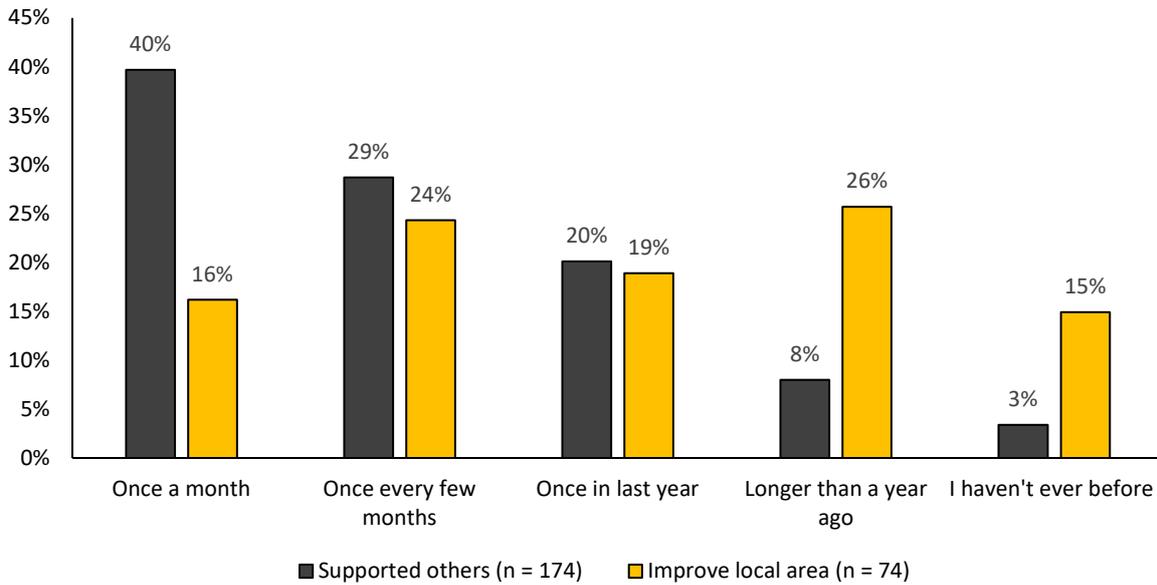
### 3.2.2. Supporting Others and the Community

Young people were also asked about whether they support others (excluding their family and friends), which could include helping a neighbour, helping to visit an elderly person, supporting others online or a mentoring or befriending someone. A large percentage of young people suggested that they had supported others in the past year, with a slight decrease from 2018 to 2019 (77% (2018), 65% (2019)). Around 40% of young people across both phases suggested that they supported someone at least once a month (*Figure 7 & 8*). When considering frequency of engagement in supporting their local community, by for example, helping to organise community events, helping to improve parks, litter picking or painting murals, considerably fewer young people engaged in such activities, at only 24% across both phases. Of those who suggested they did engage in social action to support their local community, 25% suggested this was once every few months, or more than a year ago. This finding suggests that more social action activities which increase young people's connection to their local community may be beneficial, particularly as current ongoing research using qualitative interview techniques with young people in Suffolk suggests that there is a disconnect between young people and their local community, namely due to perceived lack of provision<sup>12</sup>. Youth social action programmes could, for example, promote the involvement of young people in the design and implementation of youth-led activities or groups within their immediate communities.

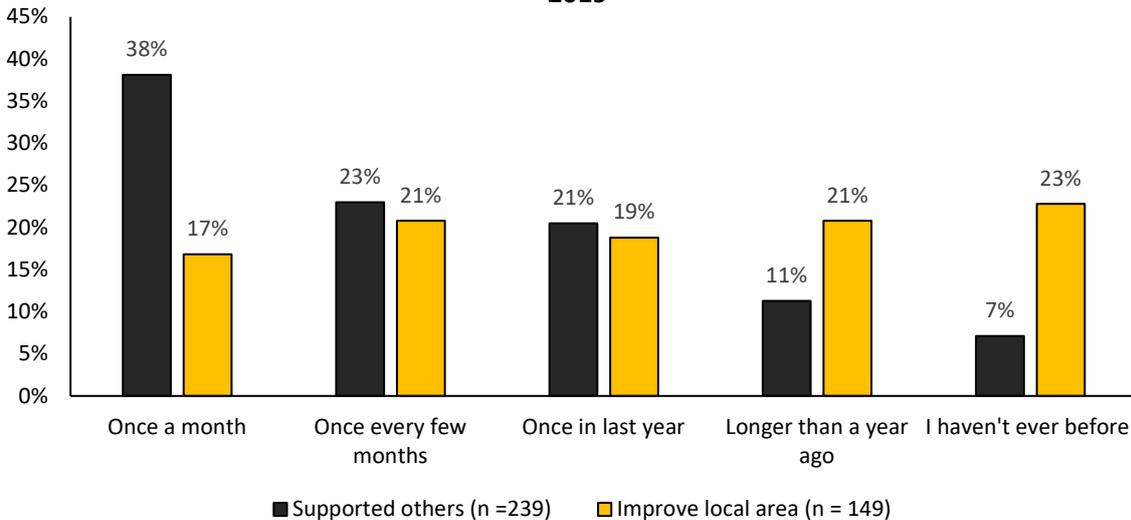
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<sup>12</sup> Tyrrell (2019) Investigating Young People's Perceptions of Provision and Opportunities in Suffolk. Ipswich: University of Suffolk. [https://www.uos.ac.uk/sites/www.uos.ac.uk/files/Youth-Intervention-Full-Report\\_0.pdf](https://www.uos.ac.uk/sites/www.uos.ac.uk/files/Youth-Intervention-Full-Report_0.pdf)

**Figure 7: Frequency of engagement in supporting others or their local area - 2018**



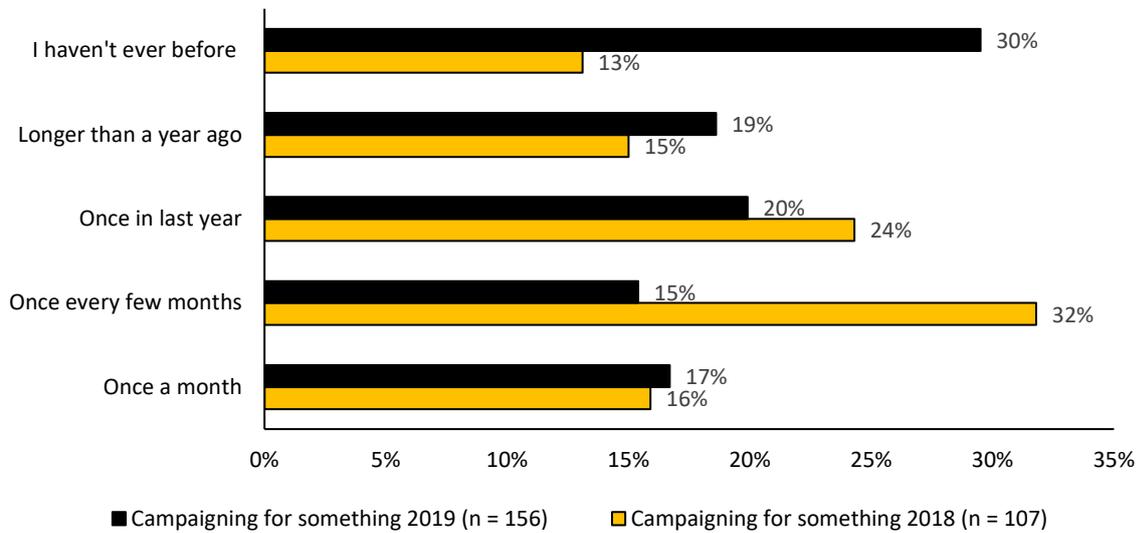
**Figure 8: Frequency of engagement in supporting others or their local area - 2019**



### 3.2.3. Campaigning

A total of 43% of young people who completed the survey in 2018 suggested that they had campaigned for something they believed in or represented other young people in the last year, in contrast to 32% in 2019. Young people were more likely to engage in this activity once every few months, or once a year.

**Figure 9:** Frequency of young people campaigning for something they believe in, 2018 - 2019 comparison



It is worth noting that young people who responded to the 2019 survey suggested that they were more unsure as to whether they had engaged in a social action activity or not. Considering that the respondents are of a younger age than those in P1, it may be worthwhile considering education around youth social action for young age groups and considering age as an influencing factor for future interventions.

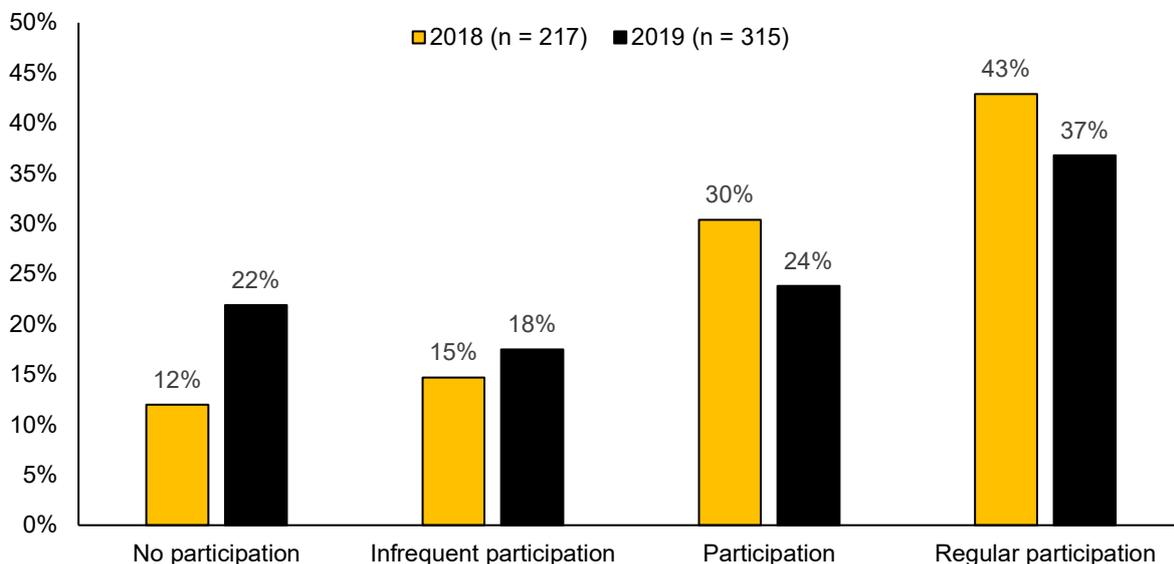
### 3.2.4 Regular participation in Youth Social Action

Overall, in Ipswich over 80% of young people who responded to the survey had engaged in at least one form of social action outlined in the survey over the past year. However, the difference between the number of young people engaging in at least one form of social action over the two phases was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). In P1 (2018), this percentage was at 90%, while at P2 (2019), this rate had decreased by 9%, with 81% of young people engaging in at least one form of social action. Regular participation was defined by the researchers as engaging in any social action activity outlined in the survey at least once every month (excluding donating to charity, as this is not necessarily considered as meaningful social action). Regular participation was defined in this way, as participation was defined within the national #iWill campaign as

engaging in social action activities at least once every few months<sup>13</sup>. The above frequencies suggest that young people in Ipswich are participating in social action activities, this is likely to be once every few months, as opposed to more regularly. Nevertheless, supporting others was reported by young people as something which they engaged with on a regular monthly basis.

Overall, a total of 37-43% of young people in Ipswich who responded to the survey engaged in regular social action, while 24-30% engaged in social action activities once every few months, and 15% participated at least once a year. Only 12% suggested that they had never participated in any social action activities in 2018 (*Figure 10*), compared to 22% in 2019. Despite the association between phase of survey completion (2018 vs. 2019) being statistically significant, with more individuals in P1 engaging in at least one form of social action, the difference in regular participation was found to be non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, there was no association between phase of survey completion and frequency of engagement in regular social action.

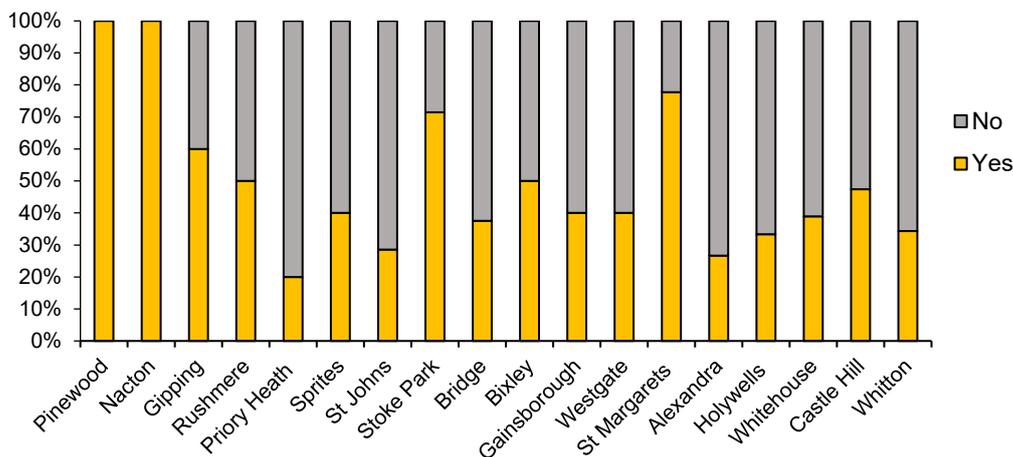
**Figure 10:** Frequency of participation in YSA across Ipswich respondents, 2018 - 2019 comparison



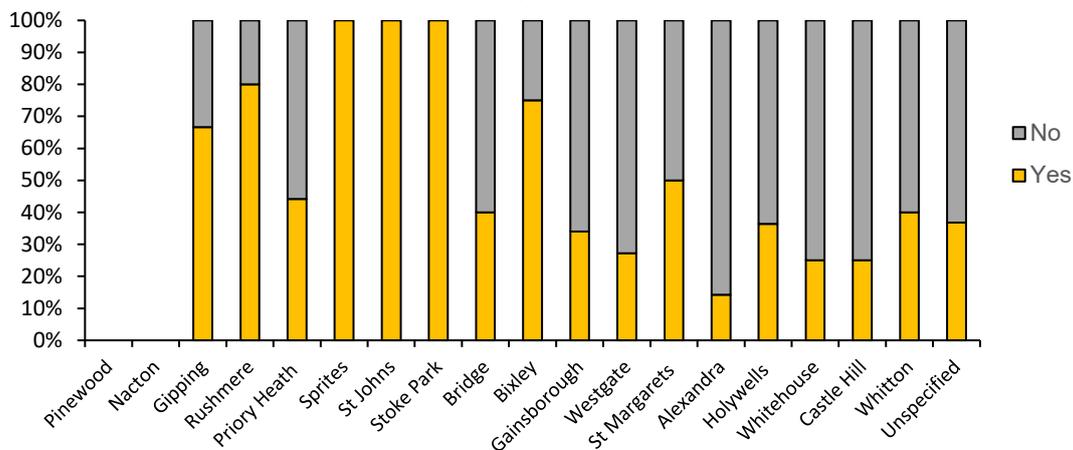
<sup>13</sup> Ipsos Mori (2015) Youth Social Action in the UK [https://www.iwill.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/download-manager-files/J15-051110-01\\_Youth\\_Social\\_Action\\_wave\\_2\\_report\\_v9\\_FINAL\\_150116-2.pdf](https://www.iwill.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/download-manager-files/J15-051110-01_Youth_Social_Action_wave_2_report_v9_FINAL_150116-2.pdf)

Regular participation in youth social action was then broken down by ward (*Figure 11 & 12*), by cross referencing LSOA codes with wards using the Office for National Statistics look-up tool<sup>14</sup>. The graph reflects the number of young people engaging in activities monthly per area. Of those who responded, the areas (reflecting those in the Office for National Statistics parishes / communities, wards and local authority districts, 2011) in which fewer young people are engaging in regular social action appear to be Priory Heath, Alexandra, Whitton, Holywells and Whitehouse for the 2018 respondents (*Figure 11*). For respondents in the 2019 survey, those least likely to engage in regular social action appear across the Alexandra, Whitehouse, Castle Hill and Gainsborough wards (*Figure 12*).

**Figure 11:** Number of young people engaging in regular social action activities per ward: 2018



**Figure 12:** Number of young people engaging in regular social action activities per ward: 2019

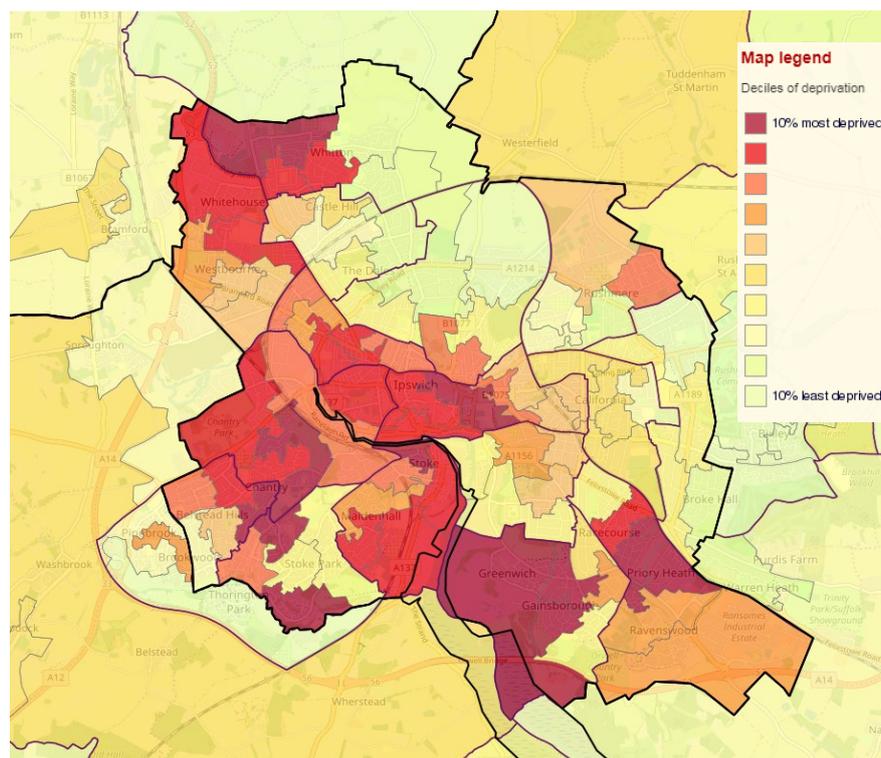


<sup>14</sup> Office for National Statistics LSOA (2011) to Ward (2017) look-up tool: [http://geoportal1-ons.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/500d4283cbe54e3fa7f358399ba3783e\\_0/data?orderBy=LSOA11NM&page=1480](http://geoportal1-ons.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/500d4283cbe54e3fa7f358399ba3783e_0/data?orderBy=LSOA11NM&page=1480)

Respondents were also assigned an Index of Multiple Deprivation rank and decile. As evident in Table 1, 42% of respondents are within what are considered the 30% most deprived LSOAs (or neighbourhoods) in Ipswich and are therefore likely to be within the areas highlighted in red in *Figure 10* (adapted from the Indices of Deprivation 2015 explorer<sup>15</sup>).

**Table 2:** Percentage of respondents and their associated Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Decile.

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Decile (where 1 is most deprived 10% of LSOAs)	% of respondents: 2018 (n = 201)	% of respondents: 2019 (n = 303)
1	11%	14.2%
2	21%	14.2%
3	10%	43.2%
4	6%	2.0%
5	12%	6.9%
6	4%	7.9%
7	19%	7.6%
8	4%	1.3%
9	11%	2.6%
10	2%	0%



**Figure 13:** Indices of Deprivation 2015 explorer<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Department for communities and local government (2015). Indices of deprivation explorer: <http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/idmap.html>

<sup>16</sup> Department for communities and local government (2015). Indices of deprivation explorer: <http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/idmap.html>

A chi-square statistical test was used to investigate the association between ward and participation in regular youth social action. Deprivation deciles were combined (e.g. decile 1 and 2 combined, so this group accounted for young people in the 20% most deprived LSOAs) to create 5 categories. The test revealed that there was a statistically significant association between deprivation decile and participation in regular social action (Table 3) with young people living within LSOA areas of high deprivation participation in less social action. This pattern appears to be more evident amongst young people responding to the P2 (2019) survey (Table 3). There appears also to be a slight increase in young people in Deciles 1-2 engaging in regular social action. Nonetheless, the percentages do suggest that in most cases, over 50% of respondents from all neighbourhoods are not engaging in any form of Youth Social Activity on a regular basis.

**Table 3:** The percentage of young people engaging in regular youth social action by IMD deciles ( $n = 484$ )

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Decile (where 1 is most deprived 10% of LSOAs)	Regular YSA (% of respondents within IMD decile) ( $n = 484$ )	
	No	Yes
Decile 1-2 (10-20% most deprived)	67%	32%
Decile 3-4	65%	35%
Decile 5-6	63%	37%
Decile 7-8	51%	49%
Decile 9-10	44%	56%

**Table 4:** The percentage of young people engaging in regular youth social action by IMD deciles per year.

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Decile (where 1 is most deprived 10% of LSOAs)	Regular YSA (% of respondents within IMD decile)			
	2018		2019	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
Decile 1-2 (10-20% most deprived)	71%	30%	63%	37%
Decile 3-4	52%	48%	67%	33%
Decile 5-6	60%	40%	69%	31%
Decile 7-8	47%	53%	56%	44%
Decile 9-10	52%	48%	22%	78%

### 3.3 Perception of Youth Social Action

Young people were then asked questions about their perceptions of availability of youth social action opportunities, whether they would be interested in taking part, and provided with space for further comment upon what activities they would find beneficial, as well as any additional comments.

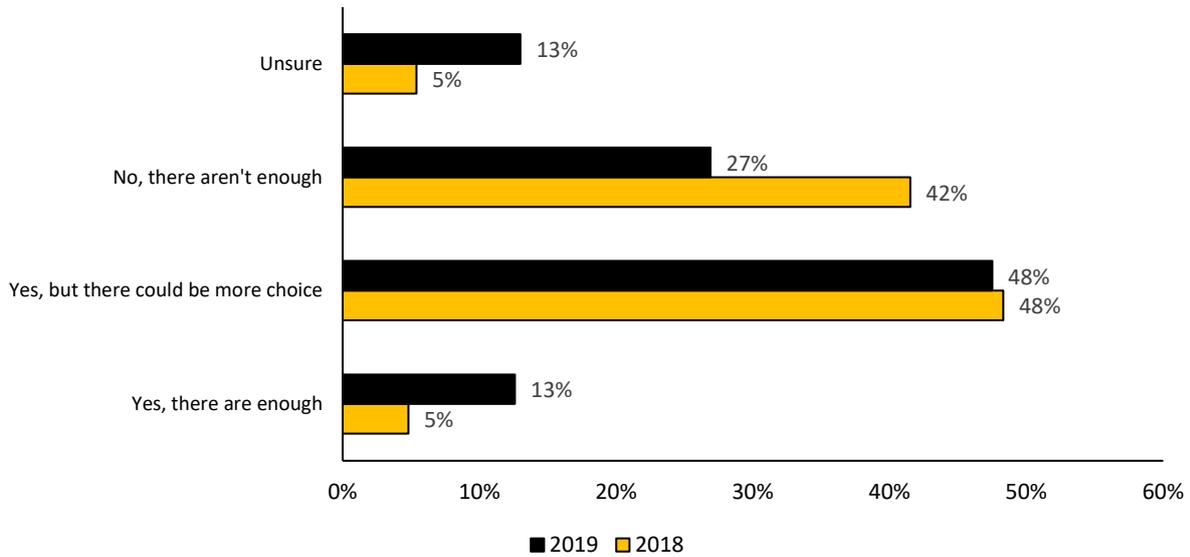
Figure 14 below suggests that most young people think that there are youth social action initiatives available but there isn't enough choice (48%). There appears to be a slight reduction in the number of young people who think there aren't enough social action opportunities from 42% in 2018 to 27% in 2019 (*Figure 14*).

When asked whether they would be interested in engaging in such activities, just over 50% of respondents in Ipswich suggested they would be interested (*Figure 15*). On the other hand, 34-37% suggested they were unsure about their interest in engaging in future social action opportunities. This highlights the importance of organisations delivering youth social action activities in promoting the positive impact and implications involvement in social action can have upon young people's wellbeing, development of employability skills and quality of life<sup>17</sup>, but also increasing awareness of social action via education, active promotion and aligning with national campaigns.

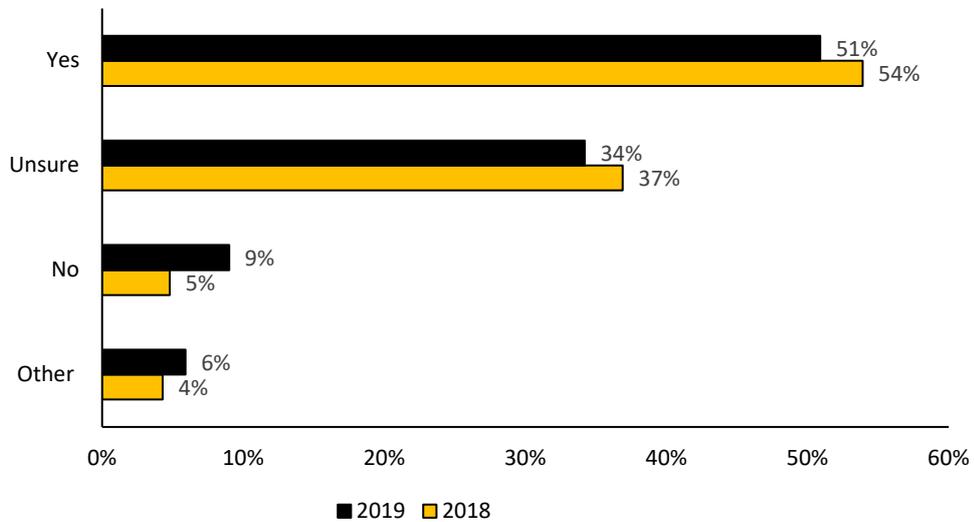
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<sup>17</sup> #iWill campaign (2019). Youth Social Action: <https://www.iwill.org.uk/download-category/youth-social-action/>

**Figure 14:** Young peoples perceptions of social action activity availability in their community



**Figure 15:** If there were more social action opportunities, would you be interested in taking part?



Young people were also provided with space to comment upon what social action activities they would like to see for young people within Ipswich. A lot of individuals suggested as opposed to social action activities per se, that they would like additional youth groups and clubs to socialise with others in a safe environment:

*'A youth group centre type place or more youth groups. More places where teenagers can meet up in a safe environment and spend some time playing/chatting together especially in winter instead of roaming the streets, smoking etc. Like a lot of teens do nowadays.'*

*'Community club for LGBTQ+ and ally group to support young people who might fit into these groups'*

*'Fun days, Community centres for young people. Centres for young people to talk confidentially.'*

*'Youth events to get young people together and form a community among young people in Ipswich'*

*'Groups to meet up and meet new people and share advice and have access to help if necessary.'*

This is not dissimilar to current ongoing research around young people's perceptions of provision across Suffolk and raises the question of whether youth social action activities can be utilised in a way which provides young people the opportunity to design and develop their own groups with active support from organisations working frequently alongside young people and their immediate support networks. Alternatively, such comments may also suggest that some young people may still be unsure as to what directly constitutes youth social action, and although surveys such as this raise awareness, more may still need to be done in increasing the visibility and understanding of youth social action via promotional activities<sup>18</sup>.

Many suggested a place to get advice would be beneficial, as well as specific groups for LGBTQI+ and mental health awareness raising campaigns. Others suggested any activity which has a direct benefit upon their wellbeing would be useful, as well as the wellbeing of others, such as help for the homeless, help for the elderly and also younger children, who may find other young people more relatable to their current lived

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<sup>18</sup> Inspire Suffolk, 4YP and Suffolk Sport (2017) <https://www.4yp.org.uk/assets/Surveys/YSA-Survey/2017-05-16-YSA-Survey-Report-FINAL.pdf>

realities. Organised events were also mentioned frequently, including protests for climate change, sports, music or arts events, with consideration of young people's financial situation playing a large part in engagement in such activities.

*'Anything that makes people happier (e.g. the satisfaction and mental benefit of a cleaner environment; events that allow people of similar minds to interact; etc.)'*

*'To take part in a younger version of coffee morning for people to socialise with peers who feel isolated'*

*'More activities to get involved in (more available sports, social clubs, extracurricular that isn't expensive'*

In terms of supporting the local community, creative activities such as mural painting was also mentioned by respondents, in addition to litter picking, with a focus on reducing the number of plastics, as a means of improving natural environments and parks. Overall, comments provided indicate that young people have ideas and topics which they feel passionate about, which with the right assistance and support could flourish into activities to facilitate the development of impactful social action.

*'Events for the youth to help prevent the trap of gangs, drugs and knives. Also an event to raise awareness of mental health would be beneficial.'*

*'An online mental health mentoring scheme where young people help each other through increasingly stressful everyday life'*

*'Specific groups being set up to combat problems, advertising these groups in schools would be good. These would give young people the opportunity to do good things for Ipswich and meet other like-minded people along the way.'*

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the report presents the findings of a scoping survey at two time points to investigate the level of young people's participation in social action across Ipswich. The results suggest that most young people engage in some form of social action, the most frequent being supporting others in a voluntary capacity and the least frequent being supporting and developing their local community. This finding reflects qualitative findings from ongoing research investigating young people's perceptions of provision and suggests that there may be a disconnect between young people and their immediate communities. Social action activities could therefore benefit from identifying what young people believe would be beneficial within their community, campaigning for change or leading on projects to improve provision.

Young people were less likely to engage in any form of social action on a regular monthly basis, with most participating every few months or yearly. Findings suggest that there is a statistically significant association between participation in regular social action and deprivation, with young people at the lower deciles (in the 10-20% most deprived communities) participating much less in regular social action. The findings also suggest that there has been a significant decrease in the number of young people engaging in at least one form of social action in a year between the two time points. However, the number of young people engaging in regular social action has not changed significantly from P1 to P2. Most young people believe there is either not enough choice of social action activities, or that there are not enough initiatives at all. Over half of the young people suggested they would be interested in participating in social action in the future, while some remain unsure.

Comments left by young people reflect a need for local provision, in the form of youth groups, with safe supportive environments, to obtain advice and interact with others, as well as tackle issues of importance to them, echoing findings of other ongoing research. Uncertainty about willingness to participate in future social action and also the comments around what young people would like within their communities, may suggest that more needs to be done to promote the benefits of youth social action

specifically upon young people's development (well-being, employment, citizenship), as well as raising awareness of what it constitutes in a meaningful way.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Identifying areas of need and possibilities for upscaling initiatives:

According to these results, those within the 10-20% most deprived communities are less likely to engage in social action, initiatives should therefore consider prioritising these areas, without forgetting that other areas within Ipswich and wider Suffolk would also benefit from such provision as evident by a predominant similarity in response. Programmes within these areas could be used as a pilot, to identify the sustainability and the possibility of expanding access to provision. Young people within areas such as Alexandra, Whitton and Whitehouse were identified as being less likely to engage in regular social action based on survey responses at both time points.

### 2. The focus of youth social action:

Social action programmes and initiatives should reflect what is important to young people, their ideas, and be led by them using participatory approaches. Survey comments suggest that young people are passionate about various topics, such as climate change, mental health and LGBTQI+ communities, and seek additional youth provision with safe and supportive environments. As fewer young people were likely to engage in social action to support their community or improve their local area, this could be an area of focus for initiatives, encouraging fundraising for local initiatives which also tie in to national campaigns and young activist influencers interests (e.g. Greta Thunberg and climate change). Not only this, as a lot of young people mentioned peer and community groups in their comments, providing the scaffold for young people to begin to discover how they can influence, change and develop their community would be beneficial. By investing in understanding young people's connection to their community and using participatory approaches to their involvement in programme design, it may be possible to embed locally based sustainable youth social action initiatives.

### **3. Increasing awareness of youth social action:**

Additional promotion may be required to increase awareness around what constitutes social action in a meaningful way, and promoting current provision, so that young people have the opportunity to engage should they wish to, being fully informed of what is available to them, and how they are able to steer the direction of social action initiatives. Increasing awareness of the benefits of engaging in social action, such as developing employability skills, working with others and enhancing life satisfaction could also further improve engagement amongst the young people who were unsure as to whether they would like to participate in social action in the future. Not only this, but a few young people commented upon the need for a centralised system which collates all possible opportunities and increasing promotion of activities.

*'More awareness for what there is like through a site collectivising all the information'*

*'I feel like it needs to be advertised more so that we actually know about it'*

### **4. Further research and evaluation**

While the survey identifies the numerical values for the number of young people engaging in social action, it does not necessarily reflect exactly what young people believe constitutes social action and the types of activities they are engaging with in more detail. For example, what constitutes supporting others for young people, and the personal impact engaging in social action has on their perceptions, wellbeing and quality of life. Future work to determine the impact of youth social action programmes would benefit by having a qualitative element to the evaluation to gain a more in-depth understanding of young people's views upon such interventions and subsequent impact, as well as reasons and barriers to participation.

In addition, it is recommended that the next phase of the survey takes place during late 2020, to enable a greater time period to have elapsed for a longitudinal comparison. Furthermore, it was noted that the ages and geographic areas of respondents differed slightly during P2, meaning a comparison may be less reliable. Utilising a stratified sampling method and ensuring that a more distributed and

representative demographic is achieved in the final survey launch will provide a more suitable comparison.

## APPENDICES

**Appendix 1:** Click here to access the full version of the [Youth Social Action Survey](#)

**Appendix 2:** Youth Social Action Survey Video

