

A woman in a purple YMCA t-shirt is talking to a group of young people on a basketball court at night. The t-shirt has the YMCA logo and the text "Here for young people Here for communities Here for you" and "ymca.org". The court is surrounded by a fence and has a basketball hoop in the background. The scene is lit up, and there are some graffiti on the fence.

# Youth Consultation 2024

Everyone should have a fair  
chance to discover who they are  
and what they can become

**YMCA**

Here for young people  
Here for communities  
Here for you

# Our Youth Services

Our youth services offer safe and welcoming environments, completely free of charge, catering to young people aged 11-21 who wish to explore new interests or socialise with friends. Supported by skilled youth workers and coaches, we provide mentorship, organise activities, provide safe spaces and foster an environment for young people to thrive and realise their capabilities. We are committed to meeting the needs of the young people within our communities, including our younger residents.

To engage young people effectively, our services are conducted in a range of settings, including youth centre hubs and various locations throughout our communities.

*Our YMCA youth centres are:*

**Youth Programmes - Ealing, Harrow & Hillingdon**  
(based at YMCA Hayes and YMCA South Ealing)

**Walthamstow Youth Services**  
(based at YMCA Walthamstow)

**RAF Northolt**

**Northolt High School**



## Introduction

The vision of YMCA is of an inclusive Christian movement, transforming communities so that all young people can belong, contribute and thrive. We offer young people safe spaces to explore who they are, make good decisions, increase their self-esteem, develop interpersonal skills and build emotional resilience — giving them the confidence and skills they need to live, learn, work and achieve.

At YMCA St Paul's Group we place great importance on actively seeking feedback from young people to improve our services. The valuable insights gathered from the consultation will inform how we, as a YMCA, customise our offerings to better serve the needs of young people in the communities we serve.

**Sharon Pickerill**, *Head of Family and Youth Work*

# Youth Consultation Survey Responses

We conducted a survey to gain deeper insights into the needs of young people across London. Central to our mission is listening to young people, ensuring our youth services align with their voices and the feedback they give us. The survey, published in January 2024, was a short, anonymous questionnaire featuring 16 questions. It was carried out online, drawing responses from a mix of YMCA service users and young people who were reached via social media or similar channels. In total, we received **240 responses** from young people.

On completion of the survey, respondents had the option to participate in a prize draw.

## ► Which borough do you live in?

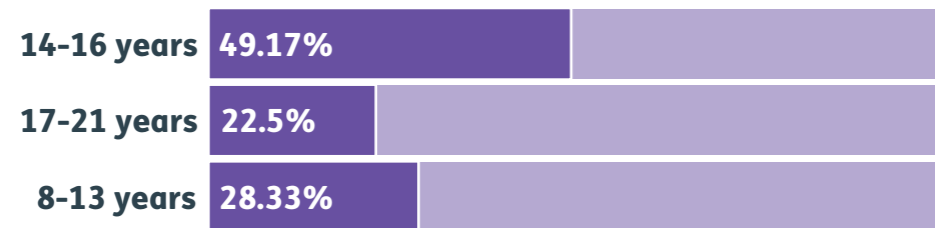
There were responses from a range of London boroughs including, Hillingdon, Ealing, Waltham Forest, Hayes, Harrow, Newham and Hounslow. The majority of the responses came from young people in boroughs where the YMCA St Paul's Group youth centres and projects are currently based.

Waltham Forest	43%	103
Ealing	24.6%	59
Hayes	21.3%	51
Hillingdon	5%	12
Other	2.5%	6
Harrow	2.1%	5
Newham	1%	2
Hounslow	0.4%	1
Kingston upon Thames	0.4%	1



### ► How old are you?

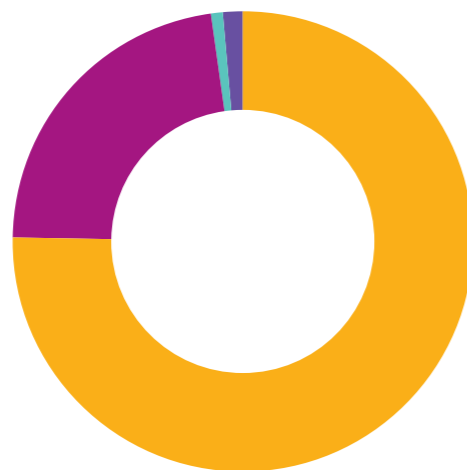
The age range of respondents reflects our target age range for youth work, with the youngest being 8 years old, and the oldest 21 (with SEND). The age range 14-16 years was the largest group, with 49% of respondents within this band. 28% were aged 8-13 years and 23% were 17-21 years.



### ► How would you describe your gender?

The respondents were majority male (75.4%). This is also reflected in the gender distribution of our service users.

- Male **75.42%** (181)
- Female **22.50%** (54)
- Prefer not to say **1.25%** (3)
- Non-Binary **0.83%** (2)



### Our Purpose

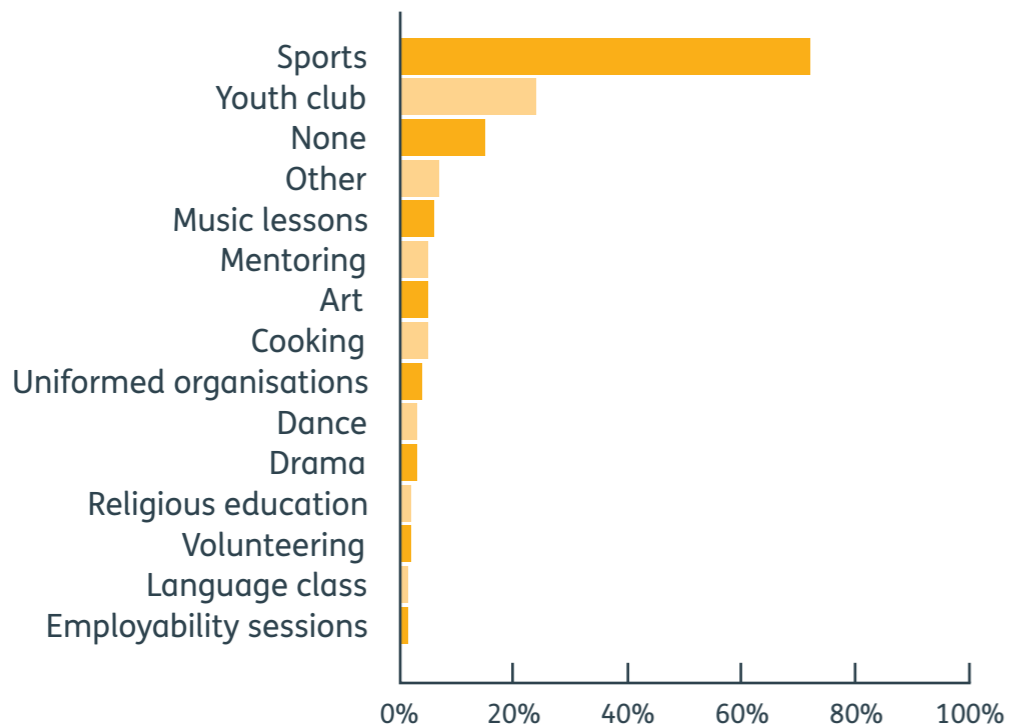
YMCA believes in fairness and opportunity. There are essential building blocks for a full and rewarding life: a safe home; acceptance; guidance; friendship; physical and mental health; academic support; employment skills; and access to real opportunities.

Many young people have never known these things; other people have lost one or more as they grew up, but we all need them. All of us.



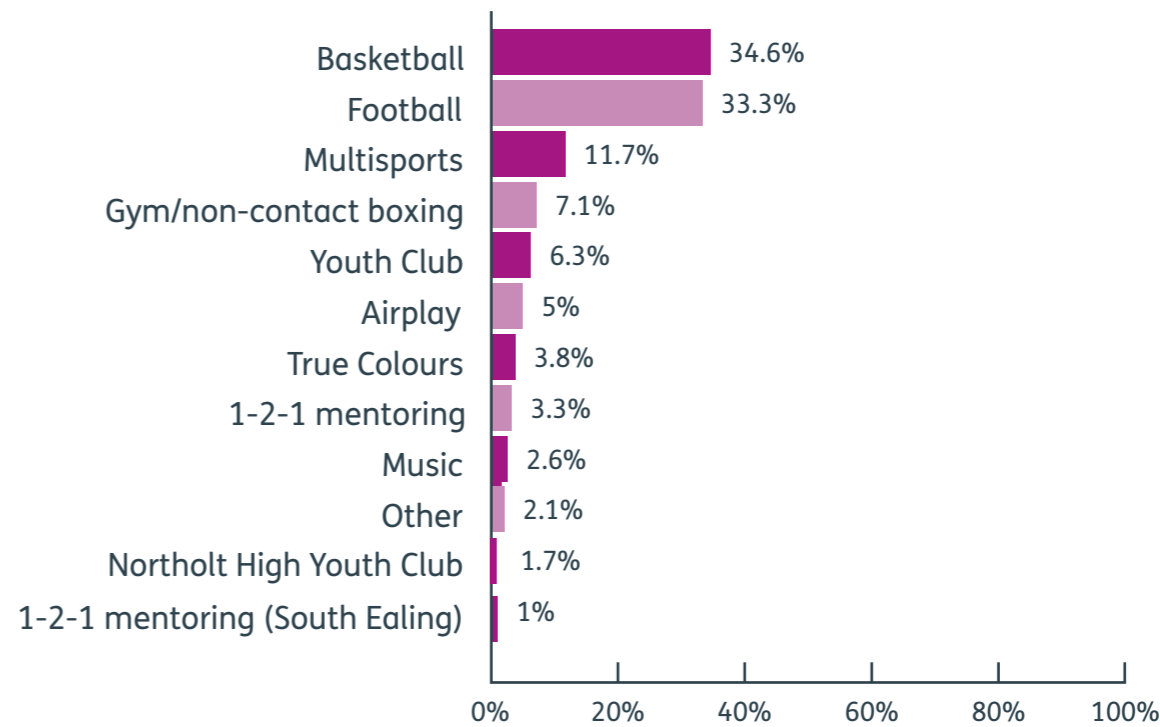
► **Do you attend any of the following outside school/college in your local area?**  
(not YMCA sessions)

The large majority of young people responding to the survey said that they make use of youth services in the community. The most popular activities were sports, with 174 young people (73%) selecting this option. The next most popular activity was Youth Clubs, with 59 respondents (25%) giving this response. Other activities mentioned included mentoring sessions, dance, drama, art, cooking, music lessons, volunteering and religious education.



► **Do you attend any YMCA sessions?**

82% of the young people responding to the survey said that they attend one or more YMCA-run activities. The two most popular YMCA sessions were football (80) and basketball (83). Multisports and non-contact boxing were also popular with 28 and 17 respondents respectively. The various youth clubs across different locations totalled 31 attendees from our survey respondents.



## Young people, community, and the individual

We always seek to connect people of any age to their community, because we all need somewhere to belong.

A community will not do well if its young people are not doing well, and young people will not do well if their community is not doing well. Everyone is needed.



### ► What do you think are the main challenges facing you and your friends in your community?

By far the largest challenge was reported to be “Boredom - having nothing to do”. This was selected by all age groups as the number one challenge for them and their friends. After this, the responses varied slightly according to age, although all mentioned a lack of safe spaces and mental health.

The **top 5 challenges** for each age group were as follows:

14-21 year olds find the lack of safe spaces a particular challenge



#### Age 8-13

1. Boredom
2. Bullying
3. Mental health
4. Feeling unsafe
5. Lack of safe spaces

#### Age 14-16

1. Boredom
2. Lack of safe spaces
3. Loneliness
4. Mental health
5. Feeling unsafe

#### Age 17-21

1. Boredom
2. Lack of safe spaces
3. Mental health
4. Gangs
5. Loneliness

“Serious youth violence is a problem. Things like knife crime, assault, robbery, racial attacks and bullying. **We need more services like YMCA**, more funded youth services.”

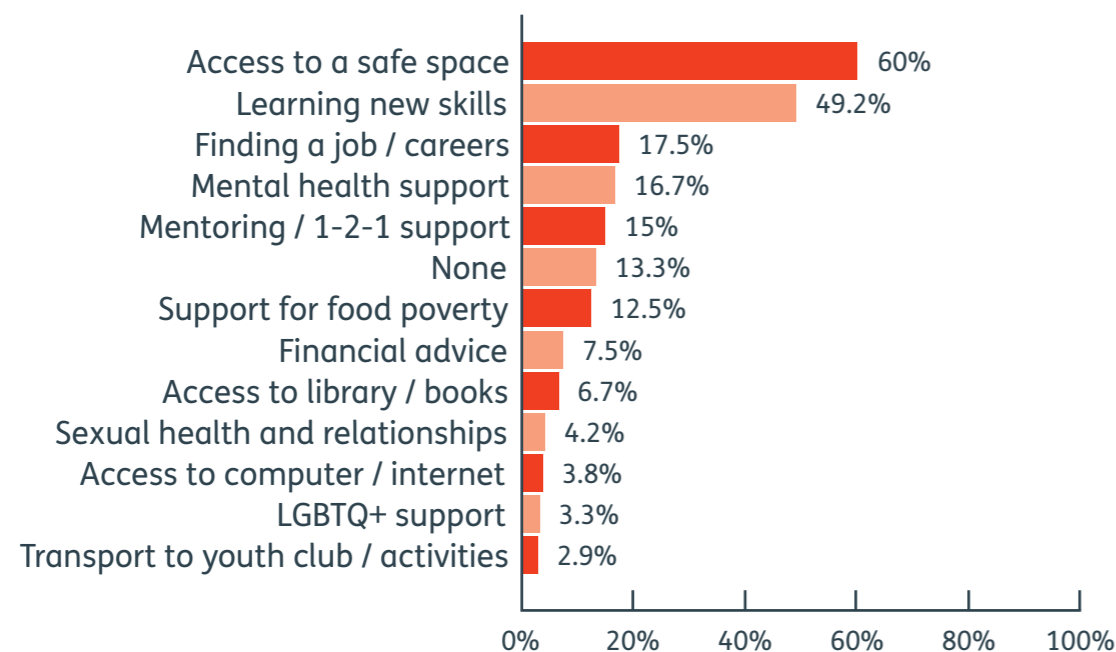
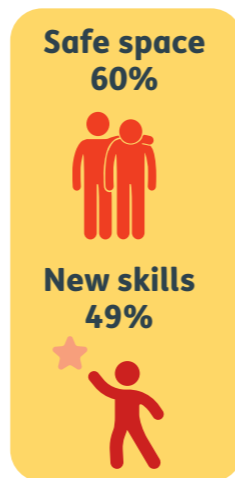
Young person, YMCA Hayes Youth Group

► **What support or help do you need?**

The largest single area the young people in our survey wanted more support was access to a safe space, with 144 people selecting this response. Learning new skills also scored highly, with 118 young people telling us that they would like more support offered in this area.

Other areas of support required differed across the age groups, with the older respondents (17-21) wanting support with food poverty and help with finding a job/career, whereas the younger age groups (14-16 and under 8-13) were focussed on support with mental health, mentoring and library access for learning.

Other options where more support would be welcomed were financial advice, sexual health and more LGBTQ+ support.



► **Do you think that there is enough support for young people in your local community?**

Across the total respondents, this response was split evenly to 50% believing young people had enough support, and 50% believing they didn't. When breaking down the responses according to age group, we see a different picture. The youngest age group are largely positive about the support that young people receive (72% positive). As we go up to the 14-16-year-olds, this drops to 47% positive, and continues to sink further in the 17-21-year-old age band with just 30% answering positively.

Answers to this question also varied according to the Borough the respondents lived in. Most young people in Walthamstow and Ealing felt that young people do not receive enough support. In Harrow, Hayes and Hillingdon this answer was more positive, in that most respondents felt that young people did receive adequate support.



**Young people who believed they have enough support**



“Inflation and the cost of living is affecting everyone. People’s salary is still the same but the costs of food, clothes and social activities are expensive. **People that are already living in poverty are struggling now more than ever!** We need to learn money management, save money, make sure that food is not wasted and clothes are looked after. We need to find new social activities that are free or cheap to enjoy going out with friends and family”.

Young person, YMCA Walthamstow Youth Project

“There has been a lot of knife crime in the news and in the Borough. **I feel afraid to speak to the police** because something might happen to me. It would be good to have workshops and **awareness on knife crime** – how to protect ourselves and who to contact for help.”

Young person, YMCA Walthamstow Youth Project

► **What services or activities do you want the YMCA to offer young people?**

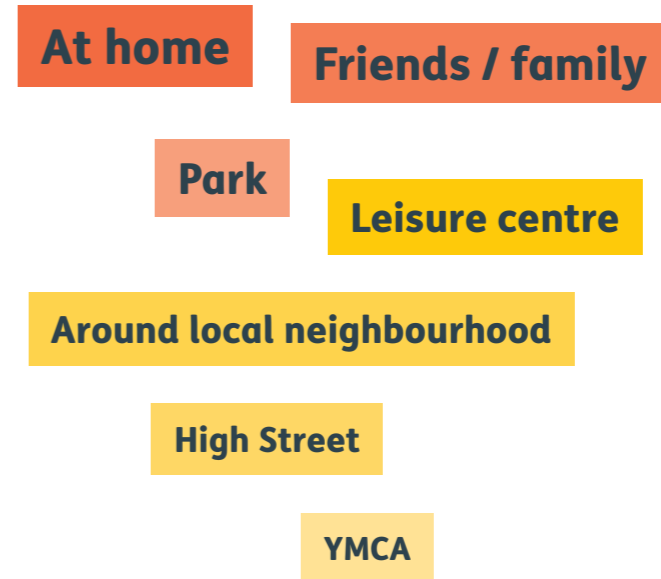
Sports were the most popular suggestion, followed by school holiday activities and youth clubs. Other suggestions were gaming, creative, food poverty support, knife crime support, music, photography, media skills



► **Where do you spend your free time?**

The overwhelming majority of young people responding to our survey say that they spend their free time either at home or at the homes of friends and family. This was consistent across the age groups. The YMCA was also mentioned by several respondents as another place to spend their free time.

At home	79.2%	190
Friends / family	48.3%	116
Park	38.8%	93
Leisure centre	20%	48
Around your local neighbourhood / estate	18.3%	44
Town / High street	15%	36
Other	3.6%	9



“I feel very secure within myself and my friends. I feel safe and able to do what I always wanted to do because I know I will not be judged. **I feel a sense of belonging**, like I deserve to be there no matter what my background is.”

Youth Group, Northolt High School





► **How safe do you feel:**

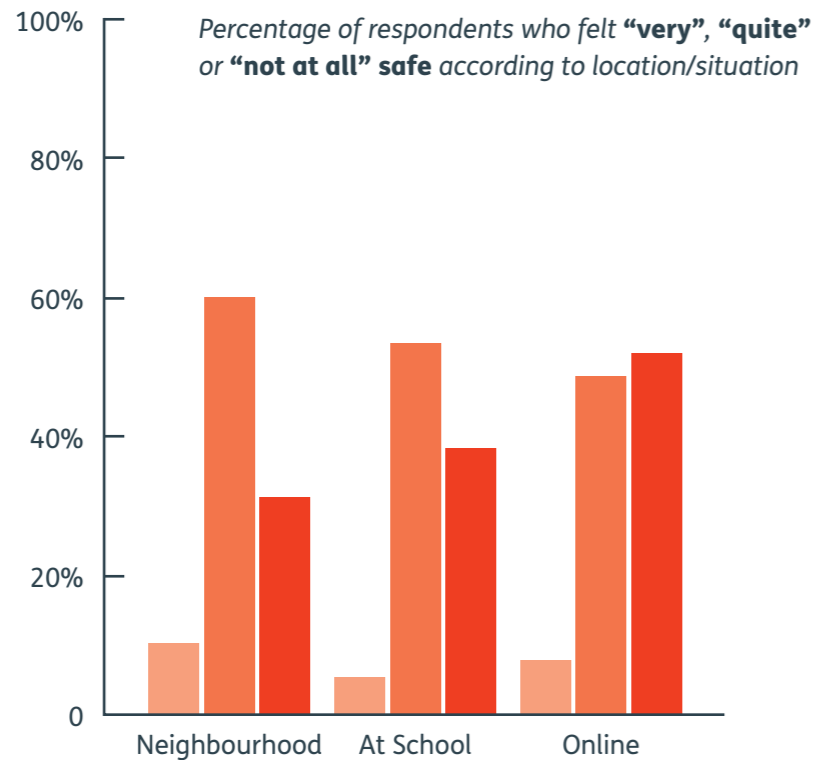
Neighbourhood, school, college, online

The responses to the question were largely positive. Most of our survey respondents felt “quite” or “very” safe in all three areas. Those responding that they felt “not at all” safe were less than 15% of the responses and differed according to age. Our youngest age group felt most safe in their neighbourhood and slightly less safe at school and online. Our oldest age bands – 14-16 and 17-21 – all felt the least safe in their neighbourhood and most safe at school or college.

Less than 15% across all age groups felt “not at all” safe

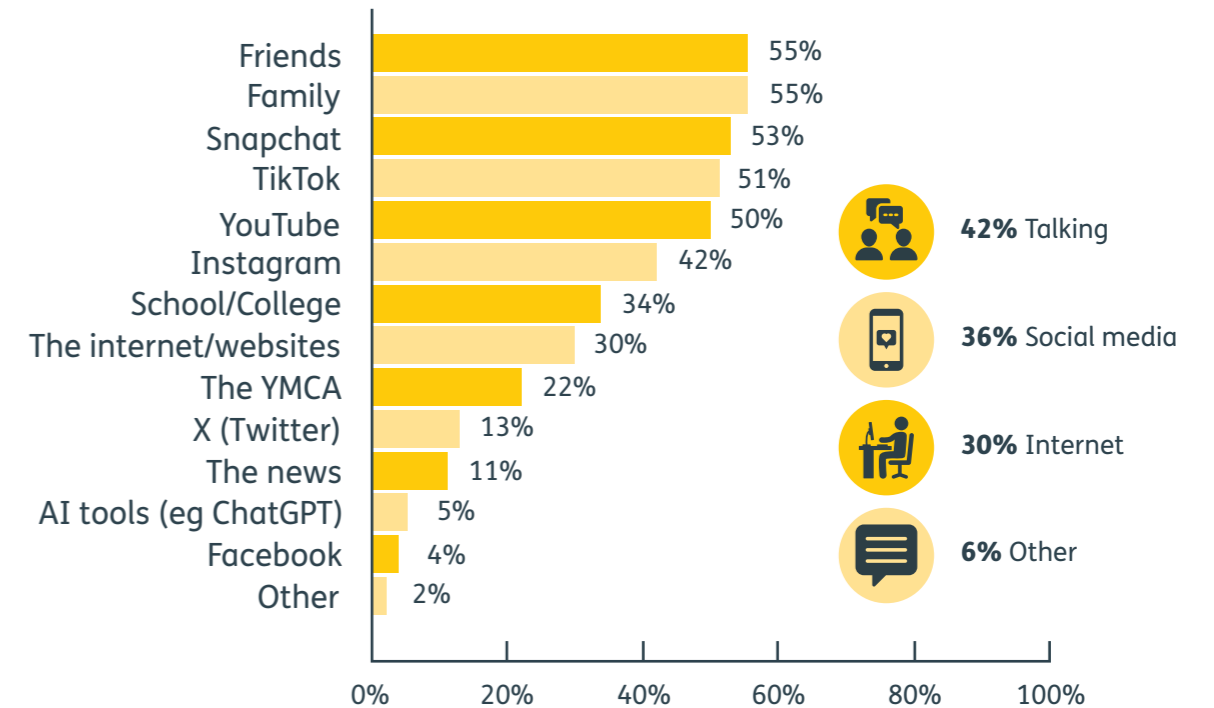


- Not at all
- Quite
- Very



► **Which of the following do you access for information, support or advice?**

The Young People predominantly turn to friends and family for support and advice. These were the answers given by 134 (55%) of our survey respondents. Next in popularity were social media channels, with Snapchat leading, followed by TikTok, YouTube and Instagram. Adding to the face-to-face support cited, young people named school or college as a source of support, as well as the YMCA.



# Supporting Young People

Highlights of our activities

## ► Basketball

The Waltham Forest HAF Programme holiday basketball camps, run by the Youth Team at YMCA Walthamstow, offer young people aged 11-16 years in receipt of free school meals the chance to engage in physical activity, learn new skills, and make new friends. Through basketball, teamwork, healthy food to fuel workshops and wellbeing practices, participants can grow both athletically and personally.

## ► True Colours

True Colours is an arts and wellbeing programme, with youth-led discussions, to help female identifying and LGBTQ+ teens aged 10-16 feel supported with their mental health. Taking place at YMCA Walthamstow, this programme gives young people a much-needed safe space to express themselves through movement, art and creative writing, where they can feel authentically themselves.

## ► Non-Contact Boxing Sessions

The non-contact boxing classes held at South Ealing and Hayes offer a fantastic opportunity to take part in an enjoyable session involving cardio workouts and conditioning training, led by trained boxing tutors. The sessions work towards preparing the young people participating for three certificates (Preliminary, Standard and Bronze). This is a perfect session for young people trying to get their fitness back up or finding a new healthy outlet.



## ► RAF Northolt - Airplay

YMCA St Paul's Group was successful in winning a 4-year contract to deliver Airplay at RAF Northolt. This important youth programme supports children and young people living in the RAF is designed to help meet the social, recreational and developmental needs of children and young people of the serving RAF family, as well as providing respite and support to their parents.

## ► Northolt High School Youth Space

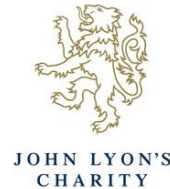
This project is a partnership between Northolt High, YMCA St Paul's Group and Education & Skills Development Group (ESDEG) which aims to benefit vulnerable, disadvantaged and 'at risk' children/young people aged 11-16 in Northolt. Championed by youth voice, the project aims to tackle, mitigate, and prevent poor social and education outcomes and raise aspirations. This partnership will also look at how to create a pathway from immediate support, to innovate and develop longer term services to prevent further crises, especially looking at young people's mental health.

## ► Continuing to support young people: Shaping the future

Based on the feedback received from the young people who participated in our Youth Consultation, we will continue to develop and shape our services to respond to the needs identified. We remain dedicated to heeding the voices of the youth we aim to assist, actively responding to their feedback. We want to continue to ensure that the YMCA is a place where young people have a fair chance to discover who they are and what they can become through support provided by our youth

**We would like to thank all the young people  
who took part in our Youth Consultation 2024**

We would also like to thank the following organisations  
who have funded our youth work



MAYOR OF LONDON



YMCA Youth Services  
[ymcastpaulsgroup.org/youth-services](https://ymcastpaulsgroup.org/youth-services)

@ymca\_youthlondon

YMCA Youth London



**Here for young people**  
**Here for communities**  
**Here for you**

YMCA enables people to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our Christian values, we create supportive, inclusive and energising communities, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

FAMILY & YOUTH WORK

HEALTH & WELLBEING

HOUSING

TRAINING & EDUCATION

SUPPORT & ADVICE