

Sevenoaks Town Council
Minutes of the Meeting of the Youth Services Working Group
Held on 12th March 2025 at the Town Council Offices

Meeting Commenced: 2.00 p.m.

Meeting Concluded: 2.48 p.m.

Present:

Cllr Chloe Gustard (Chair)	Present	Cllr Dr Marilyn Canet	Present
Cllr Catherine Daniell (Vice-Chair, Deputy-Leader)	Apologies	Cllr Gareth Willis	Apologies
Co-opted members			
Sevenoaks Youth Council: Harry King Madeleine Politzer	Apologies Apologies	Sevenoaks District Council: Maxine Quinton	Present
Kent County Council: Vacant	–	West Kent Communities: Richard Dowling	Apologies
Sevenoaks Area Youth Trust: Peter Robinson	Apologies	National Trust: Amy Sabine	Apologies

Substitute		For
Cllr Nigel Wightman (Leader)	Present	Cllr Catherine Daniell (Vice-Chair, Deputy-Leader)
Cllr Tony Clayton (Deputy Mayor)	Present	Cllr Gareth Willis

In attendance: Town Clerk, House in the Basement Youth Café Manager and Youth Committee Clerk.

343. Apologies for Absence: Received and accepted as noted above.

344. Requests for Dispensations: There were no requests for dispensations.

345. Declarations of Interest: There were no declarations of interest.

346. Minutes of Youth Services Committee held on 15th January 2025

It was agreed to receive and accept the minutes as a true record.

347. Minutes of Sevenoaks Youth Council meeting held on 15th January 2025

It was agreed to receive and accept the minutes as a true record

348. House in the Basement Youth Café (HitB)

348.1 Manager's Report

The Working Group heard from Daren Mountain that House in the Basement has been very well attended with the best figures since 2016. It was noted that there have been a lot of enquiries from young people looking to complete their bronze and silver volunteering for the Duke of Edinburgh with House in the Basement. Daren also mentioned that House in the Basement Staff has been carrying out training.

Daren reported that the Open Mic Nights have been going well with many young people attending these events. It was noted that many of the young

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people who attended these events have also since attended House in the Basement during their standard sessions.

It was noted that House in the Basement was creating a mural out of Lego for Britain in Bloom judging and was calling for donations of Lego flowers to help create the mural with some donations having already been received.

The Chair noted it is nice to know that House in the Basement is being so well used.

348.2 Finance Cost Centre Reports, January- February 2025

The Finance Cost Centre reports for the House in the Basement Youth Café for January- February 2025 were received and noted.

349. Grant Reports

It was noted that since the last meeting, the outstanding grants had been approved by the Community and Wellbeing Committee. It was noted that the remaining budget is £1,238.68.

RESOLVED: To CONSIDER the grant application request be awarded under the General Power of Competence (Localism Act 2011 Sections 1-8 refers) as follows:

Grant Ref No	Organisation Name & Charity Reg	Purpose of award	Grant Application	Grant approved
81	Eynsford Concert Band 277086	Cost of venue hire and ancillary costs to deliver one-day educational music workshop for young brass and woodwind players.	£500	£500
Total awarded				£500

350. Reports from Co-opted Partners

The following reports from Co-opted Partners were noted:

i) Sevenoaks District Council, Community Safety

Maxine Quinton reported that during the February half-term, there was an incident of anti-social behaviour at the multi-story car park, and the images taken via the CCTV cameras have been circulated to schools. It was noted that there had also been an issue at the train station with Kent police and British Transport Police being involved. The Working Group heard that there had been some damage to the Bat and Ball Station and the Community Safety team was currently investigating.

The Councillors noted that Sevenoaks District Council had provided free self-defence courses for Women and girls that started on Monday the 10th of March

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and were running for five weeks, Maxine reported it had previously had great success in Swanley.

ii) **West Kent Youth Services (WKYS)**

The Working Group received and noted the outreach report sent by Richard Dowling in his absence.

351. Current and Completed Matters

The Councillors received and noted the Current and Completed Matters report.

352. Youth Council Work Experience Website Page

The Councillors noted that the Work Experience page on the Youth Council Website is steadily growing with local businesses being added to the list.

353. Summer Music on the Bandstand- Children's Activities

The Councillors heard the Sevenoaks Town Council planned to make the Thursday summer bandstand events more family-orientated with the Sundays remaining for the traditional brass bands. They are looking at hiring a company to provide and host a free children's activity that would supplement the performance on the bandstand for over 6 weeks. It was noted that to fund the event we may need to look at Sponsorship.

RESOLVED: To proceed with additional facilities e.g. Bouncy Castle for 6 weeks at a cost of £1,718. Sponsorship is initially to be sought.

354. Youth Council Mental Health Survey Report

The Chair congratulated the Youth Council on all their hard work in obtaining responses from their friends and other students in their schools and on their hard work in compiling these responses into the report.

RESOLVED: The report be sent out to schools, Youth Organisations and Councillors to help raise awareness of young people's mental health.

355. Skateboard event for 2025

The Working Group heard that Sevenoaks Town Council plans to work with Kings Ramps to hold another Skateboard event again this year at Greatness Recreation Ground. It was noted that in the past these events have been extremely well attended. It was reported that the Youth Council had put £750 towards the funding of the event.

RESOLVED: To put the remaining Youth Outreach Budget of £738.68 towards the funding of the Skateboarding event for 2025.

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356. Press Release

The Councillors recommended the following to be issued as a press release:

- 1) To issue a press release on the Youth Council Mental Health Survey.
- 2) To issue a press release on the Youth Council Work Experience web page.

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting.

Signed
Chair

Dated



Sevenoaks Youth Council



MENTAL HEALTH SURVEY REPORT

Sevenoaks Youth Council Mental Health Survey Report

Introduction

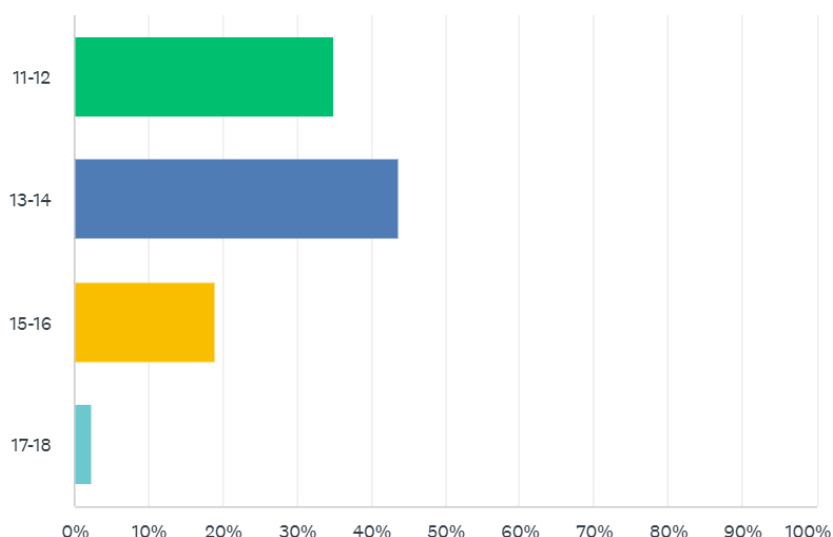
On September 9, 2024, the Sevenoaks Youth Council created and launched its Mental Health Survey targeting young people aged 11–18. This was distributed through local schools and youth organisations in the Sevenoaks town area, accompanied by posters signposting available support. The survey was designed to capture authentic, anonymous feedback about mental health from young people. It ran for two months, closing on November 13, 2024, having received 250 responses.

The largest age groups were 13–14 years (43.78%) and 11–12 years (34.94%), with smaller percentages for the older age brackets.

- **Response Count:** 250 responses (with minor variations across questions).
- **Age Distribution:**
 - 11–12 years: 34.94%
 - 13–14 years: 43.78%
 - 15–16 years: 18.88%
 - 17–18 years: 2.41%

Note: Some questions had slight variations in response numbers due to skipped items.

(Question 1) Age:



Questions 2 and 5 have been left out of this survey due to a data issue. These questions asked young people to rate their feelings on a scale from 1 to 5. However, the collected data was recorded on a scale from 1 to 100, with extreme variations. Some responses were also entered manually, making the data unreliable. As a result, these questions were not included. The questions were:

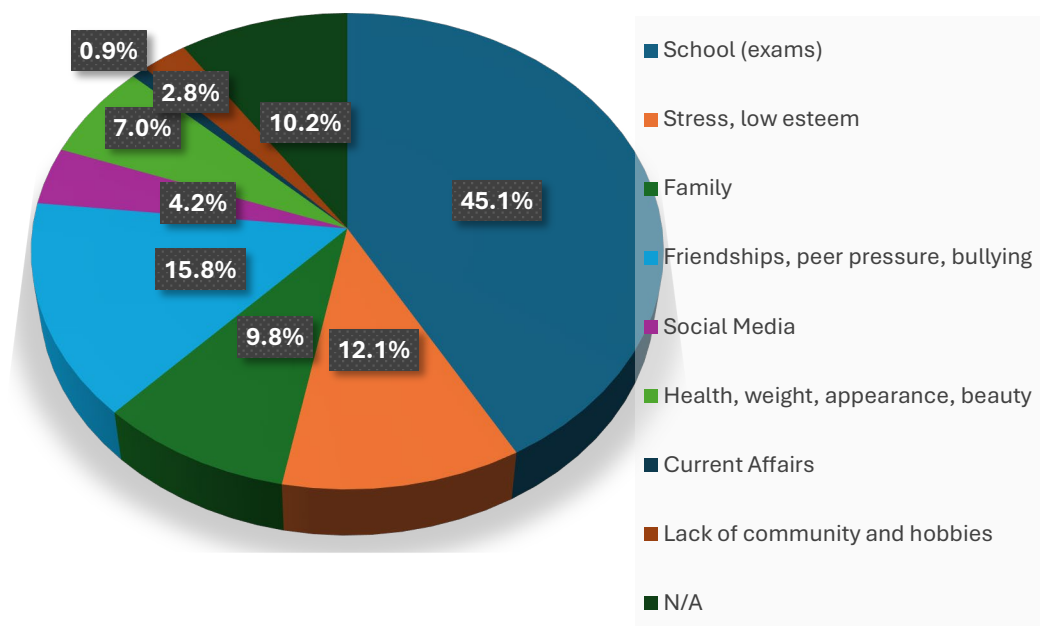
Sevenoaks Youth Council Mental Health Survey Report

- (Question 2) On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your mental wellbeing currently? (1 being very poor and 5 being excellent)
- (Question 5) On a scale of 1 to 5 how stressed are you generally? (1 being not stressed at all and 5 being extremely stressed)

(Question 3) What are some factors that negatively impact your mental health?

A total of 215 young people responded to what they felt negatively impacted their mental health, while 35 skipped the question. Analysis of open-ended responses revealed several key themes:

- **School-Related Stress:**
45.1% mentioned school as a primary stressor citing factors such as exams and overall academic workload, and homework.
- **Stress and Self-Image:**
12.1% highlighted issues related to stress, anxiety, and self-esteem (including concerns about how others perceive them, mindset issues, and self-criticism), with 7% of respondents outlining that their health, weight, weight, appearance, and beauty as affecting their mental health.
- **Uncertainty:**
10.2% of responses indicated that they did not know.
- **Additional Factors:**
Other responses pointed to bullying, friendships and Peer pressure (15.8%), Family (9.8%), and negative experiences with social media (4.2%).



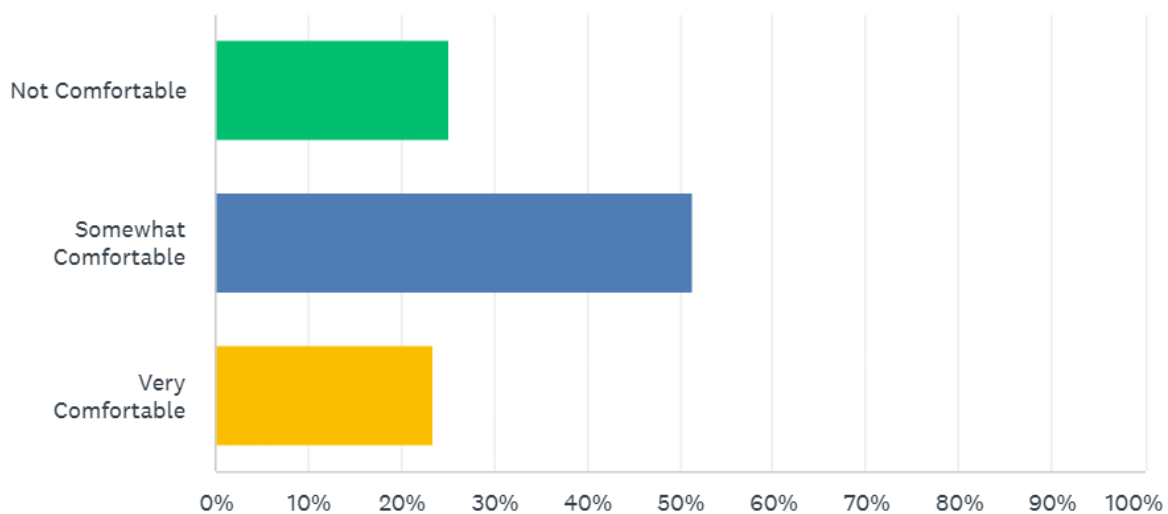
Sevenoaks Youth Council Mental Health Survey Report

(Question 4) How comfortable are you talking about youth Mental Health?

247 respondents (with three skipping) shared how comfortable they feel talking about their mental health:

- **Very Comfortable:** 23.48% (58 respondents)
- **Somewhat Comfortable:** 51.42% (127 respondents)
- **Not Comfortable:** 25.10% (62 respondents)

While more than 70% of young people reported feeling at least somewhat comfortable discussing mental health, nearly one in four remain reluctant to do so.

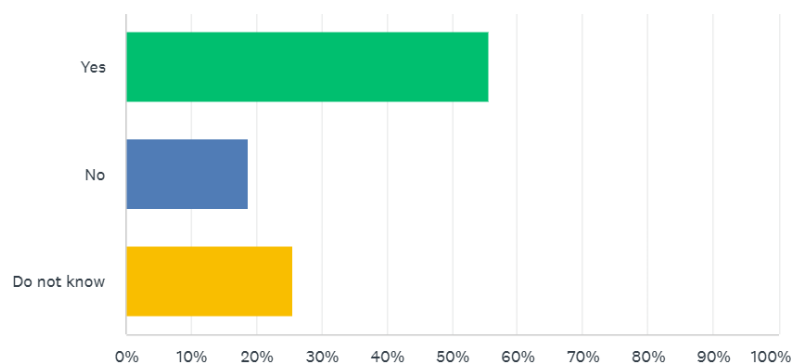


(Question 6) Do you feel you have a good school-life balance?

When asked about their school-life balance (with 246 responses):

- **Yes (Good Balance):** 61.90% (143 respondents)
- **No:** 6.93% (16 respondents)
- **Do Not Know:** 27.27% (63 respondents)

Although a majority believe they maintain a healthy balance, nearly one-third of respondents are either uncertain or feel that their balance could be improved.



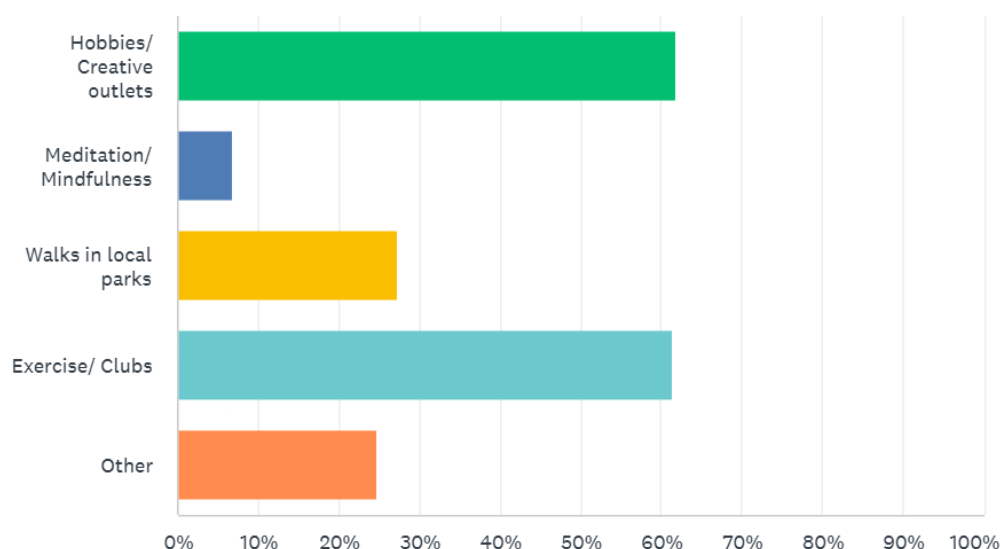
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(Question 7) Do you practice any of the following to cope with stress/ promote well-being?

Young people were asked about the strategies they use to cope with stress and promote well-being. Of the 231 respondents who answered this question (with 19 skipping), the recorded responses were as follows:

- **Hobbies/Creative Outlets:**
143 respondents (61.90%) reported relying on creative activities to cope with stress.
- **Meditation/Mindfulness:**
16 respondents (6.93%) indicated they practice meditation or mindfulness techniques.
- **Walks in Local Parks:**
63 respondents (27.27%) selected going on walks in local parks and green spaces.
- **Exercise/Clubs:**
142 respondents (61.47%) highlighted using exercise and or clubs to help cope with stress and general well-being.
- **Other:**

It should be noted that in the survey while there is an “other” option there was no prompt for young people who selected this to fill in how they coped with stress and well-being, 57 respondents (24.68%) selected this option.



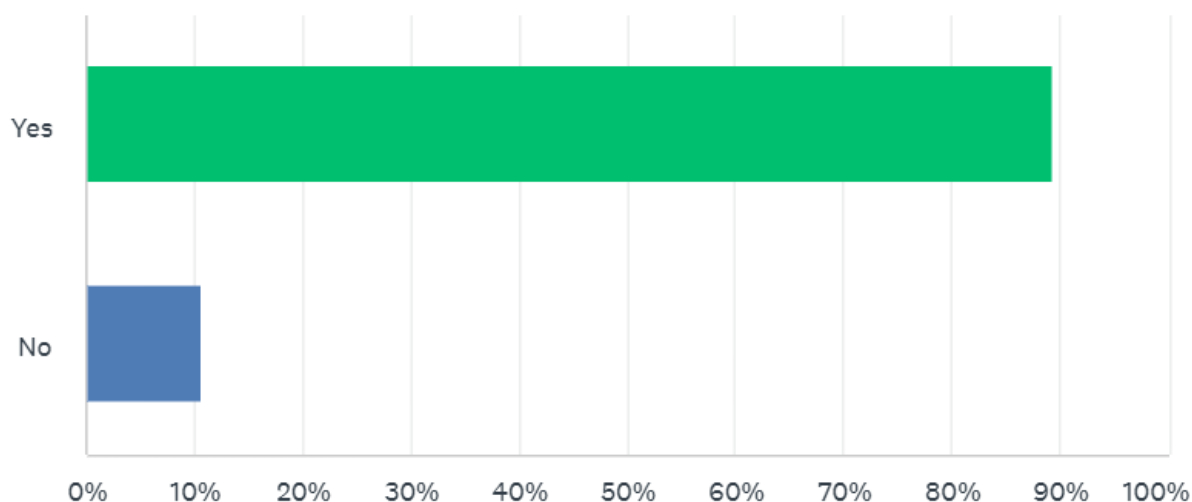
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(Question 8) Do you know where to go for help?

In this question, which seeks to gauge the level of awareness of where they can go to seek help, 246 of the respondents answered (with four skipping). This question was put to the young people as a yes or no question and yielded the following results:

- **Yes:** 89.43% (220 respondents) confirmed they are aware of support services.
- **No:** 10.57% (26 respondents) indicated they do not know where to seek help.

The high level of awareness is encouraging; however, the 10.57% who are uncertain demonstrate the need for enhanced signposting and communication about available mental health resources.



(Question 9) What could your school do to support student's mental well-being?

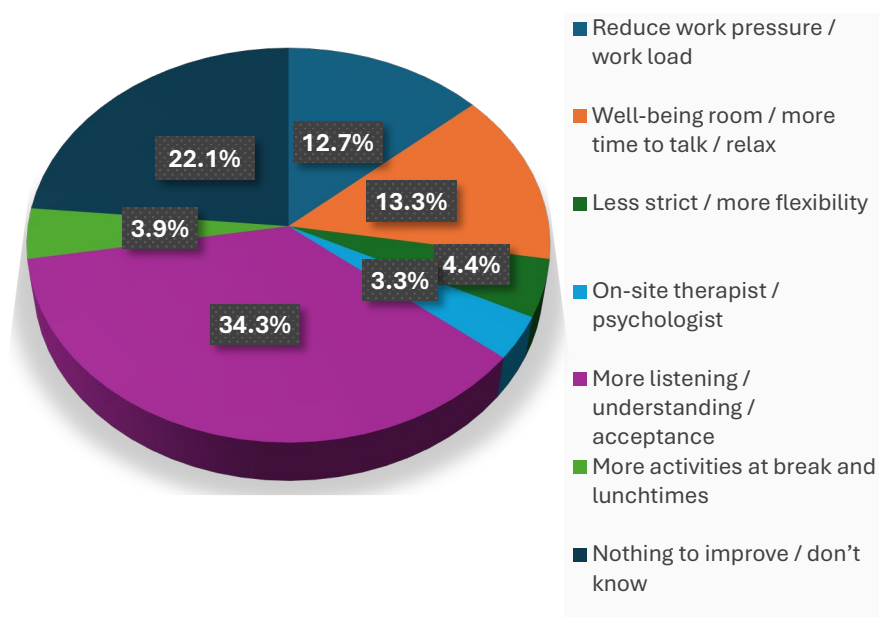
Key Findings:

181 of the 250 respondents provided insights into how their school could better support student mental health with 69 skipping this question. The responses reveal several recurring themes:

- **Dedicated Well-Being Spaces:**
13.3% of respondents proposed the establishment of designated “well-being spaces” within schools. These areas would offer students a quiet environment to relax, engage in mindfulness, or simply take a break from the daily pressures of school life.
- **Mental Health Awareness:**
34.3% of respondents requested that more understanding towards mental health was needed in schools with more listening and acceptance was needed. 3.3% of the respondents highlighted that more mental health support staff were needed for students to talk to. 12.7% of respondents suggested that a reduction in workload and pressure could help improve their mental well-being.

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It is important to note that 22.1% of the respondents reported that they are content with the current level of support offered by the schools or that they did not know how the school could improve.



(Question 10) What could be done in your community to raise awareness about mental health?

Key Findings:

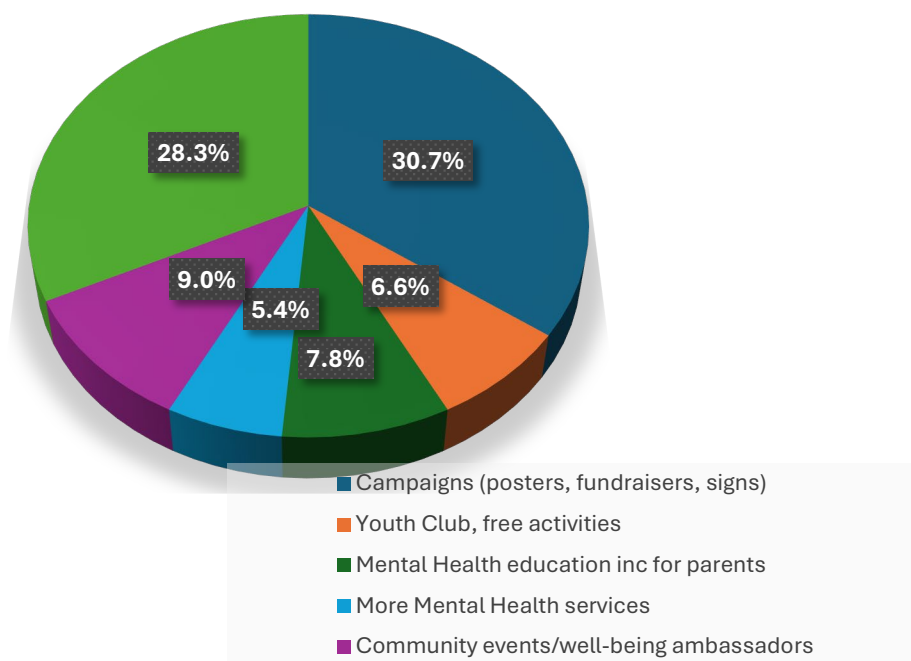
Responses to Section 10 with 166 contributions focused on what could be done in the community to enhance mental health awareness, it should be noted 84 skipped this question. The key recommendations include:

- Organised Events and Campaigns:**
 30.7% of respondents advocated for community-wide events, such as mental health awareness days and public campaigns. 6.6% requested more youth clubs, free activities and facilities within the town as well as more awareness of those facilities that already exist. One of the common requests under this heading was for a specific mental health awareness event.
- Enhanced Mental Health Education:**
 7.8% of respondents mentioned they would like to see more regular, structured sessions such as assemblies or workshops featuring mental health professionals. 5.4% of respondents highlighted that having someone they could go and talk to about how they were feeling outside of school could help.

28.3% of those who answered this question stated that they were unsure or did not know what could be done to raise awareness for mental health.

The responses indicate that young people see great value in proactive community initiatives that not only educate but also actively involve them in the dialogue around mental health.ⁱ

Sevenoaks Youth Council Mental Health Survey Report



Conclusion

The survey findings reveal that academic pressures, self-image concerns, and experiences of bullying are among the primary factors negatively impacting young people's mental health.

The majority of respondents reported having a good school-life balance and they are relying on positive coping strategies that were key to good mental well-being at school, most notably through creative outlets. However, a significant proportion of respondents feel uncomfortable discussing mental health and/or remain uncertain about where to seek the help required.

The diverse suggestions provided, particularly regarding reduced academic pressure and enhanced support mechanisms display that there are several ways to change school structures to benefit student's mental health as well as a number of additional supports that could be integrated within the local community.

Recommendations from Sevenoaks Youth Council:

- Encourage schools to create an internal young people's mentorship programme
- Promote via posters and digital information for students about where to get help if concerned about exam pressure
- Also via posters and digitally provide links to independent services for helping with mental health concerns
- More information talks at schools around *It is ok not to be ok* and *where to access help*
- Consider making available space for young people to meet up and share revision notes and techniques and/ or create groups e.g. informal language meet-ups.

Sevenoaks Youth Council Mental Health Survey Report

Acknowledgements

We extend our gratitude to all Youth Council members for their contribution and help in promoting the survey within their schools. Special thanks to Youth Councillor Riddley McDermott for his efforts in correlating data for questions 3, 9, and 10.

Simba Li- Chair	Lizzie Hunt
Rosie Blackmore- Vice-Chair	Cristian Hunter-Garcia
Harry King- Treasurer	Sharma Ishwar
Bianca Agarwal	Riddley McDermott
Aryanna Mahdavi Ardestani	Ayaan Motwani
Catherine Barden De Leon	John Ng
Rosie Blackmore	Madeleine Politzer
Dexter Buhmann	Elif Sabanci
Catherine Campbell-Pitt	Drago Schwalber-Janaway
Charlotte Doe	Jospeh Soanes
Elena-Teodora Dragoi	James Tang
Ayush Gautam	Ines Wang
Maya Goodrich	Aditya Vara
Bea Hayward	

ⁱ The data for questions 3, 9, and 10 were correlated by Youth Councillor Riddley McDermott, whose valuable contributions are gratefully acknowledged in this report.

Sevenoaks Youth Council

Sevenoaks Town Youth Councillors are elected to represent the views, issues and opinions of young people across Sevenoaks, to make a difference and change things for the better in Sevenoaks.

Youth Council meetings are held approximately every 6 weeks in the Town Council Chamber.

Since its conception in 2009 the Youth Council has become increasingly involved in initiating and developing events for young people.

All young people are welcome to attend and join the Youth Council.

For more information about Sevenoaks Youth Council please QR code below Or check out our Instagram: @sevenoaks_youthcouncilofficial

