

# Forming a Young Advisory Group for Natural England's Children's People and Nature Survey (C-PaNS)

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February 2024

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## Further information

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# Foreword

“Hello! We are members of the Young Advisory Group for Natural England. We wanted to join the Young Advisory Group to help young people like us develop a deeper understanding of nature and the outdoors. We believe that it is important to get opinions from young people as we should have a say in big decisions that are going to shape our future as we get older. Being young people ourselves, we feel it is so important to feel safe and have a nice atmosphere around when we are outdoors.

By doing the workshops together we have been able to connect with other young people and expand our knowledge on the environment. We think this is important as it spreads awareness to people and this is very relevant and important with the climate crisis and the loss of many species. We think that including young people is important so that Natural England hears children’s perspectives as well as adults’.”

Written by Young Advisors in the North-West and approved by other members of the Young Advisory Group in London.

# Executive summary

## Background

This report provides insights from the formation and implementation of Natural England's first Young Advisory Group (YAG) for The Children's People and Nature Survey (C-PaNS). The insights gained from children and young people (CYP) around survey design, analysis and dissemination are shared, as well as recommendations about how best to embed young people's voices in Natural England (NE) to help inform, interpret and influence future work.

C-PaNS is a social survey that collects information from CYP aged 8–15 on their feelings, beliefs and behaviours relating to the natural environment. The survey has been run annually since an initial pilot in 2021, and delivered in two waves to understand how children's behaviour differs between the school summer holidays and term time. Statistics from the survey are currently published as Official Statistics. Annual reports are published summarising findings of the surveys. The latest annual reports can be found at: [The People and Nature Survey - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/the-people-and-nature-survey).

In 2023, NE commissioned the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) with the University of East London (UEL) to form a group of young advisors (YAs). The aim of the project was to improve the relevance and accessibility of C-PaNS to young people, to provide an opportunity for CYP to engage meaningfully with C-PaNS and to scope the feasibility of convening a YAG to advise on C-PaNS in the longer-term.

In total, 24 CYP aged 8–15 years from North-West England and London representing a wide range of ethnicities and sociocultural backgrounds were recruited as YAs. Over the course of the three-month project, the YAs met in subgroups for a series of timetabled workshops, both in-person and online, in which they scrutinised and provided feedback on C-PaNS. Additional insights into CYP gaps in knowledge, environmental concerns and interests, and perceptions of outdoor spaces also emerged during discussions.

## Insights

The YAs provided a wide range of insights in four main areas:

**1. The survey and experiences of completing it.** The YAG found that most of the content of C-PaNS was accessible, age-appropriate and relevant to the YAs across their different age ranges and backgrounds. Almost all the YAs agreed that the use of icons in the questions made the

survey more interesting and accessible, and they welcomed the open-ended questions and the option for writing your own answers. YAs also suggested some immediate changes to C-PaNS, such as changing wording and forms of emphasis, and shortening some questions (summarised in Table 2).

Insights from the YAG highlight the importance of understanding how CYP interpret and respond to questions. For instance, through the YAG it was clear that CYP interpret questions literally, for example thinking that questions about their wellbeing was C-PaNS taking an interest in them as individuals. In addition, a discussion about honesty revealed that CYP's responses may reflect what they think they should do, rather than what they actually do. YAs also identified ambiguous wording in the survey. For example, YAs interpreted the terms 'environment' and 'nature' in different ways and suggested clarification was needed. In another question, asking CYP whether they think adults are doing enough for the environment, YAs felt CYP would find this difficult to answer because all adults are different, and the concept of adult itself was debatable.

**2. In-depth look at environmental behaviours questions.** When YAs examined the question on environmental behaviours, it became clear that despite being able to answer the question, most did not understand how some of the actions listed related to the environment and some were seen as beyond the reach of younger CYP, such as changing 'what our leaders are doing'. However, all YAs considered 'looking after the environment' to be important for present and future generations. They were concerned about rubbish, pollution, deforestation and decline in species, as well as climate change, and wanted to know more about how and why certain actions are good for the environment. YAs' knowledge gaps and interest in environmental issues and pro-environmental behaviours indicate an opportunity for education to address these gaps and stimulate CYP's interest in experiencing the outdoors and striving to protect nature.

**3. Interpretation of open-ended responses.** The YAs reviewed the thematic categories developed by NE from the open response data on what CYP most like about being outside and what stops them from spending more time outside. The YAs approved the themes and extended them through co-producing additional indicators. YAs highlighted the importance of opportunities for playing and interacting with others and of good weather for CYP enjoying spending time outside. The abundance of litter in local outdoor spaces was a key concern that influenced YA's decision to spend time outside. Many YAs also revealed that they had restricted access to outdoor spaces because of fears (their own or their parents'/carers') about personal safety and the need for adult supervision and/or safe routes to and within outdoor spaces. YAs commented on the importance of parents or significant adults as role-models (such as in disposing of rubbish) and in influencing whether CYP can access outdoor spaces.

**4. C-PaNS infographic and communications with young people.** YAs generally felt that the C-PaNS infographic was appropriate and appealing to CYP, particularly the colours and the

representation of diverse ethnicities. The YAs suggested several improvements for the infographic, for instance including more images showing CYP together rather than with adults, and images that show children doing other activities outside rather than just having fun, like collecting litter. Other comments included that the text in the infographic was too small and that, in places, more information was needed alongside reported statistics to make the meaning clearer. A general observation of YAs was that they were unsure how or why CYP would access the infographic unless it was associated with some activity or resource for learning or awareness-raising.

## Reflections and next steps

This project has highlighted the value and effectiveness of working directly with CYP through creating a YAG. The value for NE in establishing and testing an embryonic YAG is twofold:

**1. Unique insights and survey validity.** Firstly, for C-PaNS and the work of NE, it is an opportunity to refine and improve the survey for its target audience and ensure that the responses it elicits are valid and useful. The YAs demonstrated that they are uniquely positioned and very capable of engaging with C-PaNS and its development. Unique insights include those relating to CYP's experience of the survey, its questions, and communications, as well as key insights around their experiences of natural outdoor spaces, the challenges and benefits they perceive, and their wider concerns and interests relating to the natural environment. These insights can all feed in to improved survey validity, depth and dissemination.

**2. Enabling young people.** Secondly, the value for CYP of taking part as YAs is that it builds knowledge and understanding and enhances their critical thinking and communication skills. Membership of a YAG has the potential to enable and empower CYP to become environmental champions in their own households and communities. By the end of the project, all the YAs reported improved understanding of the environmental issues they had debated, increased confidence levels in speaking out on matters that concern them, and generally more interest in the natural world and outdoor spaces.

**Next steps:** Engaging YAs in C-PaNS on a more long-term basis must involve careful consideration of the following learning points:

- Access to diverse CYP needs to be facilitated with partner organisations and managed carefully.
- A clear purpose for the YAG and the precise roles and tasks of YAs should be agreed to ensure that engagement of CYP is meaningful and will be acted upon.

- Regular participation can be encouraged through good relationships and recognition of YAs' contributions, for example through awarding certificates and/or vouchers.
- Differentiation within the group according to age and location increases effectiveness if working with CYP across primary and secondary school age.
- Face-to-face workshops enable extensive free discussion but can be difficult to arrange with existing school and home commitments.
- Online workshops enable dispersed YAs to come together but can be less productive in generating insights beyond the immediate task at hand. Timelines and tasks need to be defined and mutually understood.

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## List of abbreviations

C-PaNS – The Children’s People and Nature Survey

CYP – Children and Young People

NE – Natural England

YA – Young Advisor

YAG – Young Advisory Group

# 1. Introduction

## Children, young people and nature

There is evidence showing that spending time outside in natural environments is beneficial for physical activity among CYP, as well as weight and aspects of mental health and well-being (Fyfe-Johnson et al., 2021; Van den Bogerd et al., 2020; Qi et al., 2021). The UK government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#) recognised this and included a policy commitment encouraging children to be close to nature, in and out of school.

## Including children and young people

Since the introduction of the Children Act (1989, 2004), and the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989), the rights agenda has gained wide acceptance in the UK, seeing an increase in CYP being involved in participatory research on issues that are important to them (Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2009; Sharpe, 2009, 2012). In line with this trend, a range of organisations dedicated to environmental issues have employed YAGs (e.g. the Zoological Society of London; the Natural History Museum; Groundwork Federation Charities; the London Wildlife Trust; Nene Park Trust; Heal; Nature Scot; and ReRoute) with the goal to better promote CYP's involvement in nature, green spaces, animal protection and environmental strategy, and to inform policy and decision-making. More information on the structure and process of other environment related YAGs set up by organisations in the UK can be found in Appendix 1.

## The Children's People and Nature Survey

Since 2020, Natural England (NE) has conducted The People and Nature Surveys online: one for people aged 16 and above (PaNS) ([The People and Nature Survey For England - PaNS001 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](#)), and The Children's People and Nature Survey (C-PaNS) ([The Children's People and Nature Survey for England: 2022 update - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)). C-PaNS is distributed twice a year to a nationally representative sample of approximately 4,000 children and young people (CYP) aged 8–15 years. C-PaNS aims to provide an England-wide picture of:

- How often, and in what ways, CYP engage with the natural environment.
- What CYP think about the natural environment in their local area.
- CYP's attitudes towards the natural environment and pro-environmental behaviours.

- Benefits of CYP's engagement with nature.

as well as:

- How this differs across groups (e.g. age, income, ethnicity), and at different spatial scales.
- How the answers to these questions change over the years, and at different times of the year.

Recently, NE has aimed to bring CYP's voices into the co-production and dissemination of C-PaNS. For example, in 2022 research with CYP led to the co-creation of an additional set of questions for C-PaNS focused on the quality of local outdoor natural spaces (Satchwell et al 2022 for details).

## Including CYPs voices in C-PaNS

This report summarises the findings from a 3-month project commissioned in 2023 to investigate the feasibility of creating a Young Advisory Group (YAG) to inform the design, delivery and communication of C-PaNS.

This project was devised to:

- Investigate the feasibility and value/impact of a YAG for C-PaNS.
- Create opportunities for CYP to contribute their voices to C-PaNS in a meaningful way.
- Provide initial insights on key aspects of C-PaNS from the viewpoints of CYP.
- Provide recommendations for future engagement with CYP as part of C-PaNS, and more widely within environmental research, policy and programmes.

This report presents the processes, insights gained and recommendations from the project.

## 2. Methods

### Ethical considerations

As with any project involving CYP, ethical consideration of all aspects is crucial before any engagement can begin. This included:

- CYP meaningful engagement: For CYP to contribute meaningfully, good relationships need to be in place, and the distribution of power needs to be carefully considered so that CYP are empowered yet safe.
- Anonymity: Throughout the report personal information has been removed where it could de-anonymise members of the YAG (for example, in quotes), but some participant characteristics have been shared to provide context for example, whether they were older or younger and to demonstrate the diversity of the group.
- Informed consent: Age-appropriate information sheets and consent forms were created for the YAs and their parents/carers. All YAs provided consent forms signed by parents/carers and gave their own assent at the start of each session. It was made clear that they were free to leave the project at any point, and that there was no obligation to take part in any task or activity if they preferred not to. Indeed, some of the older YAs were involved with extra sessions for GCSEs, volunteering opportunities and religious activities, so were unable to take part in all the workshop sessions.

The research team from the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) and the University of East London (UEL) is experienced in conducting participatory research with CYP, and members of the team from both universities have worked with YAGs in several previous projects. The researchers gained ethical approval from both universities' ethics panels (UCLan Application ID: BAHSS2 0425; University of East London: Application ID: ETH2223-0144) and NE's ethics committee.

### Recruitment

The project aimed to recruit a minimum of 20 CYP as YAs from London and the North-West of England, with the expectation that with drop-out from the project, at least 12 would remain. The researchers drew on previous contacts to recruit YAs. In the North-West, researchers worked with a primary school and a secondary school in two different towns. Both schools had previously worked with UCLan for the NE project (NECR 461). In London, families were contacted who had taken part in past studies or through the voluntary sector. Even though the UEL researchers

contacted around 20 schools with whom they had worked previously, these attempts were unsuccessful due to time and curriculum constraints and after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, third sector contacts were used instead.

In total, 24 CYP were recruited as YAs. YAs were aged 8-15 years old (the full age range of C-PaNS respondents), and just over half were female (Table 1). Two had a disability; one had cystic fibrosis and the other had a light allergy making it difficult to spend time outside in the summer. YAs represented wide religious and ethnic diversity, including Afghani (n=2), Algerian (n=1), Asian British (n=3), Bangladeshi (n=1), Black British (n=1), British Pakistani (n=7), Indian (n=1), Pakistani (n=2), Polish (n=1) and White British (n=5) CYP. YAs came from varying socio-economic circumstances and a range of household types and sizes. The YAG contained several siblings, including a set of twins. All but one YA lived in urban or hyper-urban (inner-city) areas and all but four YAs had a private garden, with one of these noting that they only had a small stone garden. Of the four children who said they did not have a garden, one had access to a public garden outside their block of apartments.

**Table 1. Young Advisors' age categories by location and gender**

Age group	London		North-West		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
<b>8-11 years</b>	4	3	4	1	<b>12</b>
<b>12-15 years</b>	3	4	1	4	<b>12</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>24</b>

It is important to note that the C-PaNS YAG cannot be considered as fully representative of all CYP in England. Nonetheless their perspectives are valid and useful as a first step in including CYP in improving the validity of C-PaNS. Although some in the North-West had participated in the previous NE project (NECR 461), largely YAs had no previous experience of involvement in nature-based activities, nor expertise in environmental issues or activism. This was purposeful to ensure the YAs were not seen as different from other CYP in their reflections and advice given.

The YAs were divided into two age groups based on primary (8–11 years) and secondary (12–15 years) school ages. Therefore, the full YAG consisted of four groups: London primary school age, London secondary school age, North-West primary school age and North-West secondary school age (Figure 1). This approach was employed to enable younger and older CYP's voices to be heard equally during YAG workshops, and it allowed for adaptation of the workshop materials as required. Furthermore, logistically, this approach meant researchers were able to work with YAs in different geographical locations and at times of the day/week most suitable to the YAs.

To achieve a complete YAG identity and reach consensus across the different age groups and geographic locations, for most activities insights were shared between groups. Plans to bring the

groups together in physical and/or virtual meetings unfortunately did not come to fruition because of difficulties with coordinating timing and availability, lack of access to technology, and discomfort with an online platform (see Discussion).



**Figure 1. Structure of the Young Advisory Group and sub-YAG**

During the course of the project, national bank holidays, teachers’ and university industrial action and Ramadan made arranging times to meet with YAs challenging. Each of these sets of circumstances needed to be carefully and patiently navigated by working together with schools, parents and the YAs to ensure their ongoing engagement and participation.

## Workshops

The workshop format was our chosen engagement approach based on the team’s past research experiences of undertaking participatory projects with and by CYP (e.g. Satchwell et al 2020; Larkins & Satchwell 2023). Meeting in groups in which CYP are regarded as ‘experts’ on their own lives enables CYP to contribute to the agenda, to work creatively as individuals, in pairs or as a group, to discuss and listen to others’ views, and to reach consensus.

Workshops were conducted either online or in-person. In London, all workshops took place online. Two researchers facilitated each of the online workshops, and YAs accessed them via laptops and smartphones, at home or on the move in parents’ cars. The online sessions allowed us to recruit from various areas of London as it did not require travel; the YAs came from five different boroughs. The dates and times of online workshops were agreed with parents prior to the project

start (the same day and time for four weeks); therefore, YAs were able to attend consistently (barring illness or unexpected circumstances).

In North-West England, most of the workshops were held in-person, with two researchers travelling to each school to meet with the YAs at times designated suitable by their teachers. In-person meetings were particularly difficult to arrange with the older YAs, due to the timetabling schedule of the school and after-school commitments. The research team had to be flexible to accommodate this, and the final workshop was held online due to everyone's commitments. All workshops were audio-recorded using an audio-recorder during the in-person sessions and using the Microsoft Teams recording function during the online sessions.

The research team agreed on a series of workshops with objectives for each session that could be adapted according to age, location and whether conducted online or face-to-face. The order of the workshops could also be swapped for the different sub-groups as required. All activities were achieved with all four sub-YAGs, and all outcomes were recorded and analysed. YAs were also asked to complete some tasks between sessions. A detailed description of activities carried out in each workshop are presented in Appendix 2; broadly the purpose of each workshop was:

**Workshop 1** - To introduce YAs to the work of NE and specifically to C-PaNS; to explain the goals of the YAG; and to understand, through discussion and a pre-involvement survey (Appendix 3), YAs' motivation for joining the YAG and what they hoped to gain from it.

**Workshop 2** - For YAs to feed back on the accessibility and readability of the questionnaire (Appendix 4) in general and to discuss in more detail specific C-PaNS questions selected by NE.

**Workshop 3** - For YAs to review NE's interpretation (themes drawn out) of CYP's open-ended responses from two questions in previous survey waves and to consider the meaning behind responses.

**Workshop 4** - For YAs to review the thematic categories developed by other sub-YAGs in workshop 3 and to review the C-PaNS infographic. YAs were also asked to complete a post-involvement survey (Appendix 3), reflect on their experience as a YA and provide feedback on how to improve the YAG.

Following completion of the timetabled workshops, each YA was provided with a shopping voucher and certificate in recognition of their input and to mark an end to the project thus far. Participating schools were also given a joint UCLan, UEL and NE certificate of collaboration to serve as partial evidence for their Ofsted inspections, as well as a donation to a school sustainability project.

### 3. Workshop findings

This section synthesises the findings gathered through the YAG into five sections:

- 1) Initial insights on C-PaNS
- 2) Feedback on specific questions
- 3) Thematic grouping of open-responses
- 4) Evaluation of infographic
- 5) Motivations and reflection

#### Initial insights on C-PaNS

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##### Key Learning

- **YAs' first impressions of C-PaNS were generally positive; they appreciated the use of icons and open text boxes. They also recommended several immediate changes to make the questionnaire more meaningful, accessible, and easier to understand which have been summarised in Table 2.**
  - **The length of some questions was seen as off-putting. Suggestions included using icons or illustrations instead of words and reducing the number of answer options.**
  - **Some words and concepts were not understood by YAs - some younger YAs were not familiar with the term 'anxious' and the concept of 'connection with nature' was not understood by some YAs, both older and younger.**
  - **Ticking the 'prefer not to say' or 'don't know' boxes might indicate that CYP have not understood, or not read, the question.**
- 

YAs' observations and feedback on the survey as a whole identified several suggested simple changes that could be made to the survey (summarised in Table 2). Further insights are discussed in the sections below the table.

Table 2. YAG suggestions for immediate changes to C-PaNS

Original version	Suggested change	Reasons
How anxious were you feeling yesterday?	How worried were you feeling yesterday?	Several young YAs asked what 'anxious' meant. The word 'worried' was more meaningful to them.
Q5. These questions are about what you have done <u>at school</u> in the last week.	These questions are about what you have done <b>at school</b> in the last week.	YAs tended to miss underlining when reading these questions and this was linked to the feeling that the same questions were asked twice. YAs suggested that the use of different font colours would help CYP notice the difference between 'at school' and 'not at school'.
Q6. These questions are about what you have done when you were <u>not at school</u> in the last week.	These questions are about what you have done when you were <b>not at school</b> in the last week.	
Q5c. Thinking about the last week <u>at school</u> , how often have you spent time noticing nature? (e.g. looking, listening, experiencing it)	Thinking about the last week <b>at school, or on the way to school</b> , how often have you looked at, listened to, or engaged with nature?	Many YAs said the journey to school was an important time when they noticed nature and they did not know how to include this in their response without it being specified in the question.
Q6c. Now thinking about <u>when you were not at school</u> in the last week, how often have you spent time noticing nature? (e.g. looking, listening, experiencing it)	Now thinking about <b>when you were not at school</b> in the last week, how often have you looked at, listened to, or engaged with nature?	YAs thought it did not make sense to ask how often they notice something. The information in brackets helped them understand the intended meaning and so this is now incorporated into the main question.
Q10. Which of the following things do you do to look after the environment?	Reduce number of options and raise the status of (i.e. move up the list) the 'Something else' textbox for CYP to add their own comments.	YAs thought the number of options could be reduced to make the survey more manageable. Specifically, they suggested that options 'Try and change what our leaders are doing' and 'Raise awareness by posting/sharing information online' could be removed. It was suggested

Original version	Suggested change	Reasons
		that if these were relevant to CYP they could add them in the 'Something else' box.
<b>Q10. Which of the following things do you do to look after the environment? Walk, cycle or take public transport as much as I can.</b>	If possible, include 'scooter' and/or 'skateboard' as icons or in wording.	For YAs, scooters and skateboards were seen as forms of personal transport as well as 'activities'.
<b>Q16. and Q17. Which of these things do you think it is ok for people to do when they visit outdoor spaces like parks, the coast, rivers, streams, canals, lakes and the countryside?</b>	Reduce the number of options.	YAs thought it was difficult to answer these questions and this caused them some anxiety. Mostly they did not know which actions were okay and the questions were considered too long.
<b>Q16. Which of these things do you think it is ok for people to do... Take everything they brought away when they leave</b>	Change icon to recognisable rubbish such as crisp packets or plastic bottles	The icon for this was not clear.
<b>Q16. Which of these things do you think it is ok for people to do... Leave food waste like fruit peel or cores on the ground</b>	Change the colour or icon.	Icon shows a yellow banana skin, but yellow on white was difficult for some YAs to see.

To gauge perceptions of the survey in general, YAs were asked what the best and worst things were about C-PaNS. Overall, the YAs felt that the survey was easy to read and complete and it took them between 5 and 15 minutes to go through the survey. Reflecting on the demographic questions, they appreciated the option of 'prefer not to say', because "some people might be a bit scared to share their personal information".

Interestingly, YAs also appreciated the survey questions that asked about their feelings. It gave them a sense of being valued, and that NE was interested in them, and not just in their answers to the questions.

**“it [the survey] kept asking you questions, for example, how are you feeling. And I think that's actually quite good because it's not just straight away going to the nature questions. I think it's also a bit nice as it's like telling you, how are you feeling today. So, it's also like a person in a way.”**

This interpretation of these questions, which for NE are used to measure wellbeing, indicates that CYP interpret questions literally.

## **Formatting and presentation**

The YAs were asked to review several specific questions included in C-PaNS. Their feedback highlights both strengths and shortcomings relating to formatting and presentation. For example, for the question **Q10. Which of the following things do you do to look after the environment?**, some YAs praised the question presentation, such as the variety of options and the open space to write their own answers:

**“So, I think the question is good because it mentions normal things that people would normally do, but it also gives you a space to write what you might do if it's bigger, like talking to the government for example.”**

However, several YAs noted that it could be beneficial to have fewer options and to rely more on CYP to report their answers in open text boxes. YAs also raised concerns about including the ‘Prefer not to say’ option in this question, as it might prompt CYP to take the “easy route” and choose that answer, instead of thinking through all options:

**“There's also an option at the bottom where it said, I prefer not to answer, and I don't know. Maybe you should remove that because if everyone just clicked prefer not to say or they prefer not to answer them, you would not really gain any answers. So, I'm not really sure if that's a good idea.”**

YAs criticised the use of underlining for adding emphasis to distinguish between questions 5 and 6:

**Q5. These questions are about what you have done at school in the last week.**

**Q6. These questions are about what you have done when you were not at school in the last week.**

Some younger YAs thought that they were being asked the same question twice, and it was suggested that using coloured font or highlighting might be a better way of emphasising parts of the questions.

## Question wording

YAs felt that in places the question wording was ambiguous or didn't make sense. For instance, the question **Q5c. How often have you spent time noticing nature?** sparked some debate. One YA described the question as "very vague", and another suggested that "it didn't really make sense", adding "does it mean in free time/own time or time outside the school [building] when noticing nature?" because "we don't notice nature when we are inside school". This was contradicted by some of the other YAs, as geese and deer can sometimes be seen from the school building, on the playing field or in the woods next to the school. Nevertheless, how often they noticed nature seemed to be difficult for YAs to answer and they suggested changing the wording of this question (Table 2).

The question about connection to nature (**Q11. How connected do you feel to nature? Please choose the picture that best describes your relationship to nature**) was also highlighted as being confusing by several older and younger YAs. They found the concept of 'connected to nature' difficult to comprehend and at first glance struggled to understand the associated images. One YA commented "I didn't know how to answer this one", and another ticked the 'Don't know' box, as they were unsure what the question meant or how to answer it. Despite this confusion, after further discussion YAs agreed that the existing presentation of the diagram in combination with the wording was suitable for the question.

Some older YAs were also concerned that certain wording might not all be familiar to younger CYP. However, most of the younger YAs said that they understood almost all the text and did not require any explanation of words or expressions. One exception was the word 'anxious', which a couple of the younger YAs did not know the meaning of.

YAs discussed the Countryside Code questions on appropriate behaviours in outdoor spaces (**Q16/17. Which of these things do you think it is OK for people to do when they visit outdoor spaces ...?**). Most YAs had not heard of the Countryside Code, or if they had, they did not know it in detail and found the questions hard to answer. They discussed their different views on the options and expressed curiosity in wanting to know the right answers. For example, some thought you should not leave food waste, while others thought it might be all right to leave fruit peel because "it's biodegradable", and "people leave it for compost", or:

**"You could say it's good to leave food for animals, so I'm wondering what they expect you to put there. What is the right answer?"**

A key criticism was that these questions “were very long because of all the examples” and consequently YAs felt that overall the survey was “a little bit long-winded”.

Finally, in relation to the questions on quality of local outdoor spaces (**Q13. Thinking about the natural outdoor spaces near you, how much do you agree or disagree that ...**), which had been co-developed with CYP, there was consensus from all sub-YAGs that they liked the questions, finding them relevant and easy to understand and answer. No suggestions were made for changes to these questions.

## Use of images

Throughout the C-PaNS questionnaire, simple coloured images are shown alongside questions and answer options. Overall, the YAs liked the images because they added variety and colour, making the presentation of the survey more interesting:

**“The graphics. They were quite nice because I think it makes it a lot less boring instead of being just words.”**

YAs also felt that the images helped with the interpretation of the question and answer options:

**“The emojis next to the how you are feeling was helpful for understanding.”**

**“And I think the pictures were good, as if some people don’t understand what it means, it can show them what it meant, especially for younger kids.”**

But they pointed out that some images represented the answer option in a limited way. For example, in relation to **Q10. Which of the following things do you do to look after the environment?** the response option **Walk, cycle or take public transport as much as I can** is accompanied by an image of a person cycling:

**“I think it could do with a little bit more pictures because it's not only cycling that you can do. You could scoot as well...and skateboard.”**

In some instances, images were not seen as relating to the wording. For example, in **Q3. Have you spent time in any of these places in the last week?**, the image of a ticket associated with the response option **grassy areas you pay to go to** was not recognised by YAs. Similarly, some images associated with answer options for **Q16. Which of these things do you think it is OK for people to do when they visit outdoor spaces ...** were deemed unclear, including the images accompanying **Have a barbecue wherever they like** and **Take everything they brought away when they leave**. It was suggested that the image associated with the latter should be crisp packets and bottles.

One YA also struggled to see the image accompanying the answer option **Leave food waste like fruit peel or cores on the ground**. This image depicts a yellow banana skin against a white background which can be problematic for those with visual impairments.

YAs also had suggestions for those answer options that did not have icons next to them (i.e. Don't know, Prefer not to say):

**“I would put a question mark on top of a stick man for “I don't know”, so I have managed to bring together the stickman and the question mark, and for “prefer not to say” put a hand over a stick man's mouth.”**

## Feedback on specific questions

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### Key Learning

- YAs examined four C-PaNS questions in detail, providing feedback on the wording and their understanding of each question.
  - YAs felt that *Q9. How important is looking after the environment to you?* is an important and well-phrased question. However, amongst some YAs 'environment' and 'nature' were understood to mean different things, raising questions about agreed definitions of concepts.
  - Even though YAs were able to answer *Q10. Which of the following things do you do to look after the environment?* most did not understand why some of the actions listed were relevant to looking after the environment and some were seen as not relevant to or understandable by younger CYP. The YAG thought that the opportunity to find out about the gaps in CYP's understanding of environmental actions could lead to improved education about nature.
  - The issue of answering survey questions honestly was raised, and discussion indicated that CYP may answer what they think they should do, rather than what they actually do.
  - YAs felt ill-equipped to answer *Q12b. I think adults are doing enough to look after the environment* because, as they pointed out, all adults are different and the concept of an adult itself was debated. A definition in C-PaNS of what is meant by 'adult' in the context of this question might therefore be useful.
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To build a better understanding of how CYP are likely to interpret and respond to survey questions, YAs reviewed four specific C-PaNS questions in more detail. Their feedback and discussion are summarised in the following sections.

### **Q9. How important is looking after the environment to you?**

The YAs felt that this was an important question to ask CYP, and that it was well-phrased and the answer options (scale) were appropriate:

**“I think it was a good question and I think the fact that there was a scale from one to five made it easier for people to answer the question.”**

They offered opinions on what **looking after the environment** meant, including “taking care of it”, “trying to protect it” and “not damaging it” and on why it matters:

**“I’d say looking after the environment is very important. As maybe we eat like vegetables and they’re from nature. If we don’t look after it...maybe they could become like, contaminated.”**

Discussions around what YAs thought the question was asking highlighted a range of perspectives. Some YAs interpreted the question to be about their behaviours and actions:

**“I think the question is asking us kind of like how well do you think I’m looking after the environment, such as like do you kind of like maybe, throw your litter on the floor or do you actually like throw it in the bin as such.”**

Their comments provide insight on how the YAs answered the question, for instance based on whether they do extra to look after the environment:

**“I said three [on the scale 1-5 provided]...I don’t disrespect in any way, but I don’t go out of my own way to take care of the environment.”**

Other YAs perceived the question to be asking how much they cared about future generations:

**“I think the question means whether you I actually want to care about it, or you don’t want to care about the future like next generation.”**

And some talked about their responsibility as the future generation:

**“I don’t really do anything to look after the environment, but it’s still kind of important. I think it’s important to see children’s attitudes because it’s like the next generation who is going to be looking after the planet and the environment.”**

YAs also discussed the meaning of the terms *nature* and *environment*. Nature was understood by a majority of YAs from a holistic perspective. They talked about its ability to renew and recreate itself, the diversity of nature and the interconnections between different ecosystems (including the solar system). Many YAs emphasised that nature was not man-made:

**“I believe that nature is the physical part of our world, like the animals, plants, trees and just the living features and physical features which make**

**up the natural environment rather than the man made, artificial buildings and technology that we make nowadays.'**

and described it as being beautiful:

**'Like the beautiful place around us, cos like trees, plants, grass and lovely fields, nice animals, tall trees.'**

They also discussed the benefits of nature, such as providing oxygen and fresh air:

**'I think about nature is that it plays a big role in everyone's life, even though sometimes you don't recognise it. Yeah. Like how the trees provide us with some oxygen.'**

And opportunities to do activities and experience things outside:

**'I think about hikes – going for a walk through the forest, looking at nature, looking at the trees, the animals, the plants, that sort of stuff.'**

None of YAs' comments about nature were negative, which may have been because of the context, which positioned the CYP as YAs to NE – an organisation which they perceived as promoting nature and its benefits. The term *environment* was understood by one group to mean their surroundings, which was hyper-urban neighbourhoods with limited green spaces, and they suggested that NE could consider changing question wording to make the focus on nature clearer:

**"Maybe because the word environment I guess it could be taken in different ways. Like people could think maybe like the environment around them or where they live, not nature. So, maybe if you change that to nature or the outside world..."**

#### **Q10. Which of the following things do you do to look after the environment?**

Overall, YAs spoke positively about **Q10. Which of the following things do you do to look after the environment?** They thought the question was comprehensive, easy to understand and important to ask CYP. Discussion around this question led to several important insights about honesty, the relevance of some response options and knowledge gaps around pro-environmental behaviours.

YAs recognised that by identifying the gaps in CYP's pro-environmental behaviour, the question could lead to targeted awareness raising:

**“I think it is important that you ask these questions because then they will be able to see what children do and what they don't do, and maybe help them to do things that they might not do.”**

**“Oh yeah, because I think it's good to find out exactly what they do because then you can kind of promote those things or maybe like encourage them to do the things that they are not doing more.”**

They felt that it not only asked about their pro-environmental behaviours, but also served as an encouragement or reminder of the things that could be done to protect the environment:

**“I think it's good because it helps remind you to do it, to do those things, pick up litter and recycle my waste, turn off the light.”**

One of the younger YAs said that he did not do any of the things listed, which made him feel bad and he asked whether he should answer the survey questions honestly, pointing out:

**“Sometimes, when I'm walking, I'm talking but if I'm on my own, I'll like stick my hand in a bush, step on things...Is that treating nature with respect...no.”**

This instigated a discussion about honesty and whether anyone who answered the survey would answer it truthfully or based on what they thought they ought to answer.

In terms of the appropriateness of the response options, there were concerns raised by some older YAs that, although they were able to understand all the answer options listed, some may not be relevant or understandable for younger age groups. For example, they thought that **Think about the environment when I buy things** may not be relevant to younger CYP:

**“I don't think that really applies to children because most kids don't, like, buy shopping or anything like that.”**

They also thought that **Try and change what our leaders are doing (e.g. sign petitions, demonstrate or write to them)** might be hard for younger age groups to understand:

**“Maybe like to sign petitions like maybe some younger children might not understand what this is like.”**

**“I think one of the questions - like asking something about leaders. I think that might have been hard for some young children and might have been harder for them to understand what the question was asking.”**

Indeed, one of the younger YAs voiced that this was “a frightening thing to do”.

**Raise awareness by posting/sharing information online** was also flagged by older YAs as potentially irrelevant for younger age groups, as they are less engaged with social media:

**“Because I think you would only get to use social media properly when you go to secondary school from like year eight, nine and ten.”**

Again, some younger YAs did not understand the meaning of this option and another thought that this was an “odd thing to ask” and mentioned that people might make fun of or bully them if they did this.

Finally, although YAs described doing the actions listed in the response options during workshop discussions, it became apparent that across the age groups, YAs had limited understanding of how the actions listed linked to the environment. For instance, YAs found it difficult to explain the reasoning for **Turn off lights** in terms of the environment rather than finance and they were unsure why they should **Think about the environment when I buy things**:

**“Why do I need to think about where I buy things? What am I meant to think about when I buy things.”**

In relation to the response option **Turn the tap off while I brush my teeth**, whilst YAs knew this was because it ‘wastes water’ they were unclear of why it mattered for the environment, with one YA saying:

**“I’m not actually sure...I do do it, but I just don’t know why. I know it’s good for the environment, but I just don’t know why.”**

Another YA offered their religion as a way of interpreting wasting water:

**“In our religion, so I’m a Muslim, I follow Islam and basically when we are doing our ablution, we have to turn off the tap so that we are not wasting the water, because wasting water is like a sin. So that’s probably why we turn the taps off.”**

YAs also found it difficult to understand the relationship between transport and the environment:

**“The public transport on that one means to me like bus, taxi... but they are like bad for the environment with fuels and emissions. When I think about public transport, I think oh bus... and that’s like bad for the environment – emissions, CO2...”**

There was a particularly in-depth discussion around the link between eating less meat and looking after the environment. YAs’ understanding of this was that animals should not be killed for meat because they are part of nature:

**“Because animals are like part of the environment, and it is basically just killing them.”**

**“If a farmer has say a pig, he’s like putting it forward and killing it. He’s given somebody permission to kill it.”**

However, another YA suggested **“it’s not too weird because there is something called breeding...”**. This led to a discussion about how it’s possible to create a constant supply of meat and another YA commented **“if we eat less meat there will be too many animals”**.

To extend the discussion, YAs were asked **“Do you know why anyone would be a vegetarian or vegan in order not to damage the environment?”** One of the younger YAs suggested **“I think that one of the reasons to do this would be to help the environment in one way or another”**, but he was not able to articulate anything more specific than this. Another suggested that **“not to be bad to all the people out there, but to be more fit by eating more vegetables”**.

When asked what they thought deforestation was, one YA immediately said, **“trees being cut down”**; and, when asked **“what effects might deforestation have?”**, an answer was **“it might have an effect on the animals”**. After further discussion, with prompts from the researchers, finally one of the YAs summarised the problem: **“So it’s basically saying eat less animals, so they don’t have to get more space [by cutting down trees]”**; and **“Basically, a sacrifice for you helps the world”**. The consensus in this group was that it would indeed be a sacrifice:

**“I wouldn’t be able to do it [become vegetarian] because McDonalds to me is like a treat and stuff.”**

**“I will not eat less meat even though it is animals because it is very good for you.”**

This in-depth discussion suggested that there are gaps in CYP’s understanding that have not been addressed in their general education or sources of knowledge about environmental issues and the wider dimensions of everyday life.

#### **Q12b. How much do you agree or disagree with the following: *I think adults are doing enough to look after the environment***

Question 12 asks how much respondents agree or disagree with four statements. YAs discussed two of the statements in detail, which are discussed in the following sections.

The YAs felt that **I think adults are doing enough to look after the environment** was hard to answer. They were not sure how much adults were really doing to look after the environment and

suggested that CYP may not be aware of high-level decisions being made, due to the lack of access to, or understanding of, news:

**“As children we’re less likely to look at the news. So, we don’t really know what’s happening. Like decisions are being made and what are they trying to do to help the environment?”**

They also found it difficult to generalise because they felt some adults do a lot to look after the environment, while others cause harm:

**“So, I was thinking in the middle [of the scale] as well, because for example, maybe you could say, David Attenborough is an adult...if we were talking about him, it would be strongly agree, but for example, different adults who may smoke or not be bothered who abandon and throw their rubbish on the floor, it would be a completely disagree.”**

There was also a discussion about what constitutes an adult. Most YAs were aware of what age one becomes legally adult but in relation to this question, they said they were thinking of people aged between 20 and 40. In contrast one YA understood adults as people in positions of power, rather than thinking of age groups:

**“For adults I actually didn’t think of like just like adults, I thought more of like the government and the prime minister, those kind of people”**

They thought that more understanding of what adults are doing would help them to answer this question. One solution would be to allow CYP to skip this question, if they do not understand:

**“Maybe if like if, if that question came up, maybe you could say if you understand the question, you can answer it. If you don’t move up to the next.”**

It was suggested by some YAs that it could be helpful to add an open answer text box to the question where CYP could explain their response.

### **Q12c. How much do you agree or disagree with the following: *I know what I can do to look after the environment***

The second statement in question 12 discussed by YAs was: **I know what I can do to look after the environment**. YAs felt information collected in this question could be used to review which age groups need further education or support to learn about how to look after the environment better. Discussions around this question led to YAs considering the more general question of what looking after the environment means to them.

Some YAs focused on everyday actions, such as those mentioned in the survey:

**“Looking after the environment to me is, it doesn’t mean doing the biggest thing, like protesting and stuff like that, we also mean doing little things because if everyone does it then it would protect the environment, So, at least two things, for example is maybe turning off the light and turning off the tap while brushing your teeth like it said in the survey.”**

However, a more in-depth discussion revealed a lack of understanding of the reasons for these actions (see section above). Some other YAs mentioned a sense of moral responsibility, thinking about wider implications for future generations and wider society:

**“Looking after the environment is key to your brighter future and small acts such as picking up litter could chip into helping the earth and keeping it the same for next generations.”**

**“I think looking after the environment is very important because it's like, where we are 24/7, what we live in. We need to respect it. It's important because it's not like our environment. Like everyone else is living in it too.”**

YAs noted that some CYP might not even be aware that they are causing harm to the environment, and that it is important to educate them:

**“Obviously older kids, they probably know even without school talking to them, but I think younger kids don't know and sometimes they could be the ones who are doing harm to the environment even if they don't know it.”**

As part of discussing what looking after the environment means, the YAs mentioned national parks and the importance of protecting natural places from humans:

**“Looking after the environment to me is like picking up rubbish and then also national parks and stuff like that. I classify that as looking after the environment. Because they protect the environment from humans.”**

The environment also included their immediate surroundings, for example their gardens, and their responsibilities to look after these places.

## Thematic grouping of open-responses

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### Key Learning

- **YAs' thematic grouping of responses to the open questions mostly aligned with NE's themes and they suggested some additional subthemes to be included.**
  - **Some YA additional subthemes were only subtly distinct from NE's existing themes, and some overlapped between thematic categories, highlighting the nuance and complexities behind reasons for/barriers to spending time outside.**
  - **It is noteworthy that many of the YAs felt intimidated by other people in public outdoor spaces and described the difficulty in accessing these spaces safely.**
  - **Weather was important for how YAs felt about going outside and what they might do there.**
  - **Through YAs answering the open-ended questions themselves and grouping responses, additional insights were gained about where YAs lived and their everyday experiences, including pressures of schooling, uses of social media, the importance of social friendships and playing outside, and the requirement for adult supervision.**
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The following sections present the YA-led thematic grouping of responses and a comparison with the thematic categories developed by NE researchers for the two open questions **Q14. What do you most like about spending time outside?** and **Q15. What things have stopped you from spending more time outside in the last week?**

### **Q14. What do you most like about spending time outside?**

YAs used responses from across the YAG to develop thematic categories for the question **What do you most like about spending time outside?** (Appendix 5). YAs mapped their thematic categories onto NE's categories, and whilst they felt some were sufficiently represented (Fresh air, Spacious, Exercise, Weather) others should be included as additional subthemes (Playing with others, Interacting with others, Seeing and hearing wildlife, Change of environment, Nature is free, Calming), some of which they felt belonged to more than one main thematic category. The NE thematic categories, and the additional YA-led themes, are listed in Table 3.

**Table 3. Main thematic categories and sub-themes of responses to open question Q14. *What do you most like about spending time outside?* including categories developed by NE researchers and additional sub-themes developed by the YAG (indicated with a +)**

<b>What do you most like about spending time outside?</b>		
<b>1. General</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unique</li> <li>• Nonsense</li> <li>• General</li> </ul>	<b>2. Activities: <i>They can ...</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• play football</li> <li>• do other sports</li> <li>• do outdoor activities</li> <li>• run, jump and exert energy</li> <li>• play (general)</li> <li>• be active, do exercise, keep fit</li> <li>• experience nature (includes gardening)</li> <li>• explore and experience new things</li> <li>• do things/not be bored</li> <li>• play with pets</li> </ul>	<b>3. Getting away: <i>They get away from...</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• electronics</li> <li>• the house/indoors</li> <li>• people</li> <li>+ change of environment</li> </ul>
<b>4. Socialising: <i>They spend time with...</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• friends</li> <li>• family</li> <li>+ playing with others</li> <li>+ interacting with others</li> </ul>	<b>5. Qualities: <i>It is...</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• peaceful or quiet</li> <li>• interesting</li> <li>• fun</li> <li>• spacious</li> <li>• pretty / beautiful</li> <li>+ nature is free</li> <li>+ seeing and hearing wildlife</li> </ul>	<b>6. Senses: <i>They experience ...</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sights</li> <li>• smells</li> <li>• sounds</li> <li>• fresh air</li> <li>• good weather/sun</li> </ul>
<b>7. Feelings: <i>They feel...</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• refreshed &amp; energised</li> <li>• happy</li> <li>• free</li> <li>• relaxed</li> <li>• healthy</li> <li>• connected to nature</li> <li>• clear head</li> <li>+ calming</li> </ul>	<b>8. Nature: <i>There is...</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nature (general)</li> <li>• wildlife</li> <li>• birds</li> <li>• plants</li> </ul>	<b>9. Types of spaces: <i>They can visit...</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• blue-spaces</li> <li>• gardens</li> <li>• park</li> <li>• woods</li> <li>• countryside</li> </ul>

The following two sections provide more detail on the YA-led themes on what CYP most like about spending time outside, including 1) themes that were already included in the existing categories and 2) those that YAs felt should be included as additional subthemes.

### Existing subthemes

**Fresh air** was a recurring theme across YAs' responses which aligned with the NE thematic category of *Fresh air* (under *Senses*). Given its frequency within C-PaNS it was interesting to unpick with the YAs what they mean when they say they like 'fresh air'.

YAs interpreted fresh air as air that is outside, as opposed to inside, free of pollution, and it had to be colder to be felt as fresh.

**“I think fresh air is kind of like just the air outside, but then sometimes, like the air can be polluted, so it's not always really fresh, but sometimes when you go outside and the air is kind of like, it calms you, as it's a bit peaceful and it's like on your face. It has to be colder because if it's warmer, it's not really fresh air.”**

**‘Maybe some people they leave their windows closed as it's getting colder. And, once they leave the windows closed, the air doesn't go out anywhere, so you keep the CO2 in the air and it makes it warmer, and once you go outside to the park and get fresh air...’**

Fresh air was also associated with trees and the production of oxygen, calmness and peacefulness:

**“They probably mean that at home, there's not a lot of trees around them. And maybe outside it's more tranquil.”**

Whilst for some YAs, it simply meant going outside or was linked to breathing:

**“Going outside and breathing.”**

**“At lunchtime and breaktime, go out and breathe.”**

YAs described fresh air as diminishing, for example commenting “It's not as fresh anymore” and that “Smoking and vaping isn't fresh air”.

**Spacious** environments were considered an important theme by YAs, and were already covered as a sub-theme of *Qualities*. YAs reflected on why this was important, commenting on the advantage of space when playing in nature. This in turn provides opportunities for new or different games and activities compared to indoor play:

**“If you're outside you get to like, nature is spacious compared to your home...I think in the home it's a different environment...and some people's houses, there's not enough room to play some games like football.”**

**“If you want to play different games, then you play outside, cause maybe you dislike indoor video games, but if you're outside then you can play different games like tennis for example or basketball.”**

The London-based YAs in particular suggested that ‘big spaces’ were important to them when visiting outdoor spaces, because space was felt to be restricted in hyper-urban environments, where privacy and close proximity to others have to be constantly negotiated and navigated.

**Exercise** was a theme identified by YAs and already included in the **Activities** category (**be active, do exercise, keep fit**).

YAs highlighted the positive health and physical impacts of exercising and being active, including sports and play that involves a physical activity element (e.g. hopscotch or skipping):

**“Exercising is just getting yourself active, so exercising means walking and like adding on, it’s also healthy for you. So, one example would be for example like even playing like your favourite sport outside, that would count as exercise.”**

Despite the overlaps between exercise and playing (even playing sports), the YAs felt that they can mean two different things and therefore, in line with the existing NE themes, should be separate categories:

**“When I said playing games with friends and exercise, I meant them as separate things... because there are multiple things you can do whilst exercising not just playing games. That’s why it’s two different points.”**

**Good weather** is an existing theme in the **Senses** category that was also identified by YAs. The younger YAs created an initial theme of ‘sunny weather’ because they considered sun a prerequisite to doing outdoor activities and linked this theme to all activity-related themes:

**“I think sunny, whatever is important because lots of these things you probably wouldn’t wanna go outside if it was raining or it was like really windy and cold. I think sunny weather is vital to all of the points.”**

However, the older YAs who reviewed this theme suggested that it should be labelled **Weather** more broadly, as sunny weather can also be uncomfortable on occasion:

**“I think what they mean by that is if the weather is like, good to them. Look, cause when it’s sunny, it normally has a cool breeze to it, and they could save all the cool breeze off the sun.”**

The existing **Good weather** theme was felt to sufficiently capture both the suggested **Sunny weather** and **Weather** categories.

## **Additional subthemes**

**Playing with others** was identified by YAs as an additional subtheme in the **Socialising** category to emphasise the importance of the social element of playing games outside:

**“I think a lot of people like to play with friends when they go outside as it's more fun to play with new people.”**

It was mentioned that outdoor and natural spaces can become meeting places, and therefore more associated with playing with others than the home environment:

**“Maybe inside you can't have as much fun, because kind of maybe your friends don't come to your house. But like maybe a park is like a meeting point for you.”**

Playing alone was only mentioned by a couple of the younger YAs who described this as something they only occasionally do:

**“I sometimes play games alone outside like...maybe you just, like, throw the ball to like a tree, and then once it bounces back, I try saving the ball.”**

**Interacting with others** was also identified as an additional subtheme under the **Socialising** category. YAs felt that **Interacting with others** was an important subtheme to capture socialising beyond existing social circles, including making new connections, talking to, or playing with, strangers. They mentioned that meeting new friends might mean that they can play new games with them, something that they would not have done with their existing social circle:

**“I think, like if you meet new people and you make new friends, maybe they'll have some new games which you can play.”**

It was also specified that **Interacting with others** included activities other than play, for example, talking, especially with older generations:

**“I think interacting with others is sort of different to play games with friends. Some older people and people who maybe aren't kids, I don't think they're all gonna really play games outside. I think they might like to interact with me. They like to talk sometimes, even to have like meetings maybe.”**

**Seeing and hearing wildlife** was identified by YAs as an additional subtheme in the **Qualities** category. For example, YAs in London discussed at length their sensory enjoyment in hearing and seeing wild animals whilst out in nature, particularly the sound of birds singing, and feeling a warm breeze on a hot summer's day. Although YAs thought that **Seeing and hearing wildlife** also related to **Nature** and **Senses**, they decided it was best placed in the **Qualities** category because

sensory elements elevate the experience of nature and because only natural environments can provide the full experience of seeing and hearing wildlife at the same time:

**“One of the things that was repeated multiple times [in YAs’ own responses] was bird singing, and I think it might have been repeated multiple times because the singing is not something you would hear every day because maybe if you can go online you have like pictures and have videos of it, but you can’t really see the birds and you don’t really get to have the full experience.”**

**Change of environment** was identified as an additional subtheme in the **Getting away** category. YAs felt that this was an important and distinct theme that reflects the variety offered by indoor and outdoor spaces cumulatively i.e. in creating opportunity for change:

**“This was a change of environment, so instead of being stuck at home all day like people would enjoy going outside.”**

**Nature is free** was identified as a thematic category by YAs to reflect nature being free of charge, as opposed to other activities that need to be paid for:

**“It’s like free. You don’t really have to pay for nature. Like if you go to the park, you don’t really have to pay and it’s free.”**

YAs added this as a sub-theme to the **Qualities** category, as they thought that being accessible and free of charge was an important quality of nature.

**Calming** was developed by YAs as an additional sub-theme in the **Feelings** category and distinct to the existing sub-theme of *Relaxing*. YAs linked nature being calming to other themes, for example they felt that good weather was essential to perceive nature as calming:

**“If it’s a sunny weather or like nice weather, it is calming and relaxing and peaceful. And if it’s a bad weather, it cannot be calming. Like if it’s raining, it can’t.”**

and that hearing wildlife or having a picnic had calming effects:

**“Uh, yes, because there’s lots of other things you can do. Like I think it said have a picnic and also how some people find the birds cheeping really peaceful for them.”**

**Q15. What things have stopped you from spending more time outside in the last week?**

Similar to the previous question, YAs used responses from across the YAG to develop thematic categories for the question **What things have stopped you from spending more time outside in the last week?** When YAs mapped their thematic categories against NE’s themes, they felt that some were sufficiently represented (Lack of time/motivation - tiredness; Adult supervision/permission; and, Electronic devices/internet - social media, games) but that others should be included as additional subthemes (Littering and lack of maintenance; Impractical climate; Unsafe communities and lack of walk-friendly zones). The NE main and sub-thematic categories, and the additional YA-led themes (indicated with a + sign) are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4. Main thematic categories and sub-themes of responses to open question Q15. *What things have stopped you spending more time outside in the last week?* including categories developed by NE researchers and additional sub-themes developed by the YAG (indicated with a +)**

<b>What things have stopped you from spending more time outside in the last week?</b>		
<b>1. Adult restrictions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family illness/injury</li> <li>• Curfews</li> <li>• No one to take me</li> <li>• Not allowed</li> <li>• Parents busy</li> </ul>	<b>2. Doing other things</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household responsibilities</li> <li>• On electronics</li> <li>• Prefer other activity/inside</li> <li>• Spending time with family</li> <li>• Spending time with friends</li> <li>• Too busy</li> <li>• Work (school or job)</li> </ul>	<b>3. Health and wellbeing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allergies</li> <li>• Coronavirus</li> <li>• Health risk</li> <li>• Illness/injury</li> </ul>
<b>4. Lack of company</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No one to go with</li> </ul>	<b>5. Motivation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't enjoy it</li> <li>• Own complacency</li> <li>• Too tired</li> <li>• Tired from school</li> <li>+ Lack of company</li> </ul>	<b>6. Negative emotions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxious</li> <li>• Other negative emotion</li> </ul>
<b>7. Outdoor environment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Animals</li> <li>• Antisocial people</li> <li>• Lateness/darkness</li> <li>• Too many people</li> <li>• Unsafe</li> <li>• Unsuitable outdoor space</li> <li>+ Unsafe communities and lack of walk-friendly zones</li> <li>+ Littering and lack of maintenance</li> </ul>	<b>8. The cost</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cost</li> </ul>	<b>9. Weather</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General weather</li> <li>• Cold/wet</li> <li>• Heat</li> <li>+ Impractical climate</li> </ul>
<b>10. Nothing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Already outside a lot</li> <li>• Don't know</li> </ul>	<b>11. Other</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unique</li> <li>• Nonsense</li> </ul>	

The following two sections provide more detail on the YA-led themes on what stops CYP spending time outside, including 1) themes that were already included in the existing categories and 2) those that YAs felt should be included as additional subthemes.

### **Existing subthemes**

**Lack of time/motivation – tiredness** was a theme identified by YAs that they felt was already sufficiently captured by the existing themes in the **Motivation** category. YAs described how schoolwork, mosque studies and family responsibilities often did not allow them to carve out time for being outside, or time ‘for themselves’ when they could decide on the activities they wished to do:

**“You come home from school, you do your homework and then it's like you have no time for yourself. So, I think we should all find time for ourselves, and find time to go outside.”**

Schoolwork and responsibilities were also reported by YAs as a reason why they felt tired, and lacked motivation to go outside, choosing instead to relax at home:

**“Yeah, about the lack of motivation, I wrote it myself and I was talking about how when we come back from school, it's a really exhausting day. Being at school, especially now since I just finished all of my mock exams and it's tiring and we wanna come home and just relax.”**

**Lack of company** was an existing NE category of its own, however YAs argued that it should be included as a subtheme of **Motivation**. They considered a lack of company to be a motivational barrier, approaching it from the perspective that having company is a motivator to go out:

**“You know, lack of company should be under motivation because maybe it's the people who are going with you that motivates you to take that extra step to go out.”**

**Adult supervision (permission)** was identified by YAs as a significant barrier to spending time outside. They linked the need for adult supervision to the lack of safe places to be outside or walk alone, highlighting that this meant that spending time outside often depended on the availability of a guardian:

**“...like us children, when we go outside, it's more of like when our parents' kind of want to go outside as well...Like young children, they wouldn't really go outside themselves and they would like a guardian with them and the availability of that guardian.”**

YAs felt that this was sufficiently covered by the subthemes within NE's **Adult restrictions** theme.

**Electronic devices/internet (social media, games)** was identified by YAs as a reason for CYP not spending time outside and also covered by the existing theme **On electronics**. YAs described how spending time on electronic devices or the internet offered a distraction and a less energy-consuming way to relax in their limited free time. These activities were considered to provide much needed 'alone time', as well as an easy way to connect with others; therefore, there was no need to go outside and meet in person:

**“You don't want to go out because you want to spend time more on your phone or on whatever device, and see if you can, given limited time to like, relax to and then go back to revision. Then some people might just stay at home and just scroll through social media.”**

### **Additional subthemes**

**Littering and lack of maintenance** was identified by YAs as an additional subtheme of the *Outdoor environment* category. Litter was considered to be a frequent problem in YAs' local environments and one of the issues most reported as stopping them from going outside:

**“I really don't feel welcome (in the park) when there is a lot of rubbish there.”**

YAs highlighted that the litter problem was likely not only arising from residents' attitudes or carelessness (i.e. throwing trash on the ground), but also due to a lack of council maintenance, as there were not enough bins, and the ones present were overflowing:

**“Um, like I've said that the bins are overflowing and it's getting out of control. I think that's the Council's job to be like, like changing the bins and making sure that it doesn't affect the environment. So, I could, we would call that lack of maintenance.”**

Some YAs also described picking up other people's litter:

**“I remember last time when we were on a trip, I had a bag and so everyone put the rubbish in the bag and I just tied it up and when I went to the bathroom, I just chucked all the rubbish in there. I always carry a bag to get other people's rubbish when they throw it on the floor.”**

**Impractical climate** was created by YAs as an additional subtheme in the *Weather* category to capture how the unpredictability of English weather can be a barrier to CYP planning and

spending time outdoors. Initially, bad weather was identified as a barrier for spending time outside, but the older YAs noted that bad weather can be understood differently by different people:

**“It could mean anything. It could even mean good weather. It could even mean mad bad weather. So, I think it should be like good bad weather because sometimes when it’s sunny, sometimes you just get too hot and sometimes people feel the urge to stay inside.”**

YAs also mentioned the muddy or dirty environments created by heavy or persistent rain, which prevented some of them from going outside. Therefore, to better reflect the unreliability of British weather and different perspectives they decided to label this theme *Impractical climate*:

**“I think another thing we can call this is impractical climate, as London is a temperate deciduous forest and it’s in a part of the world where it changes like on the daily basis and there’s not really saying what the weather might be next.”**

***Unsafe communities and lack of walk-friendly zones*** was identified by YAs as a distinct subtheme that should be included within the **Outdoor environment** category, even though the concepts **Unsafe and Unsuitable outdoor spaces** describe similar constructs. This was because they felt that ‘unsafe’ or ‘unsuitable’ outdoor spaces implied, for example, broken equipment or poorly maintained areas. However, YAs living in urban and semi-rural areas talked about feeling unsafe when being outside in general, and also when approaching a green space from their homes. They gave examples of gangs on the pavements, or older young people in the park who felt threatening:

**“I think that some people might have trouble getting to the park because there might be like...gangs hanging around like on sidewalks and all. And if you live like in the city or something... Sometimes, like when I go on my way to school, there’s like a group of people just like standing around. Yeah. And they look sketchy.”**

Although these comments could be included in the existing subtheme of ‘**Antisocial people**’, the YAs wanted to accentuate their concerns about feeling personally under threat. They linked this concern to a lack of designated walkways for CYP to get to a local park or a trail to follow once there:

**“I think also with like having safe places is that there’s not really a place that’s designated for us to walk in and makes it easier for us to have like a trail or something that’s like made for us to walk in. So, we could call it walk friendly zones.”**

## Evaluation of infographic

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### Key Learning

- Overall, the YAs liked the infographic, especially the colours and representation of diversity. However they also made several suggestions for improvements.
  - YAs felt that the focus of C-PaNS on CYP was not well reflected in the illustrations that depicted adults. They suggested including more images that only show CYP.
  - YAs noted that the images only depict CYP having fun outside and they felt it would be good to also include images of CYP doing environmental activities such as litter-picking.
  - YAs felt that in some places more explanation of statistics was needed.
  - It was unclear to the YAs why the information reported in the infographic would be interesting or useful to CYP.
- 

In 2022, NE produced an infographic to accompany the release of the C-PaNS report (Appendix 6) with the aim to communicate the survey findings in an engaging and accessible way to a wider audience. The infographic is made up of several colourful illustrations and key headline statistics.

Overall, YAs liked the illustrations and colours used in the infographic and were able to understand the reporting of statistics (despite concerns of older YAs that younger age groups might not understand percentages). YAs made several positive comments about the illustrations. For example, YAs liked that Figure 2 shows people working as a team to protect the environment:

**“I think it's a good picture because it shows that they're protecting the environment, but also shows that there are working as a team together.”**



The Children’s People and Nature Survey for England provides information on how children and young people (8 to 15) experience and think about green and natural spaces.

**Figure 2. Illustration from introductory section of C-PaNS infographic released in 2022**

They appreciated that the illustrations (e.g. Figure 3) depicted a variety of activities:

“I think it’s a good picture because it shows that you could really do anything in nature because there’s one person with the dandelion, a Mum with the child and someone skateboarding, so I think it’s quite good to show that in nature you can really do anything that you want to.”

#### TIME SPENT OUTDOORS



**Figure 3. Illustration from section on *Time spent outdoors* in C-PaNS infographic 2022**

They also appreciated the diversity of people, which they interpreted as a message of equality and inclusivity:

“... there’s like younger people and then there’s older people and there’s more taller people, and there’s more shorter people. Then in the picture on the left, it’s got a disabled person. So, I think it’s sort of talking about like

**equality and that everyone could do the same thing no matter like, who they are.”**

**‘So, one good thing about it is that it shows that anyone can play together...’**

However, YAs also raised several criticisms of the infographic. They thought that the writing should be bigger and bolder, and they made suggestions for improving the illustrations. For example, YAs noted that most of the illustrations show CYP having fun and suggested that they should also include CYP doing activities to help the environment:

**“And in the pictures, I think it could have introduced maybe someone picking up litter because they only showed positive things like people playing around with each other, but they could have added someone doing something helpful to the environment.”**

A further criticism, which was mentioned several times, was that adults featured heavily in the illustrations. For instance, some YAs saw Figure 4 as showing children with their parents on a family hike.



**Figure 4. Section of illustration from C-PaNS infographic 2022**

YAs felt that the infographic would better reflect the focus of C-PaNS on CYP if more of the images only depicted CYP:

**'I don't think all of it goes all together though, because to me, in the first picture, I think he's a man I don't think he's a teenager or a kid and I think the one on the left who's watering plants in the second picture, he looks like an adult, so it wouldn't be about children and young people.'**

**"...one bad thing is I think it should be more children, more like not the whole family. Maybe if you have more older siblings then maybe they should be there instead of maybe your parents.'**

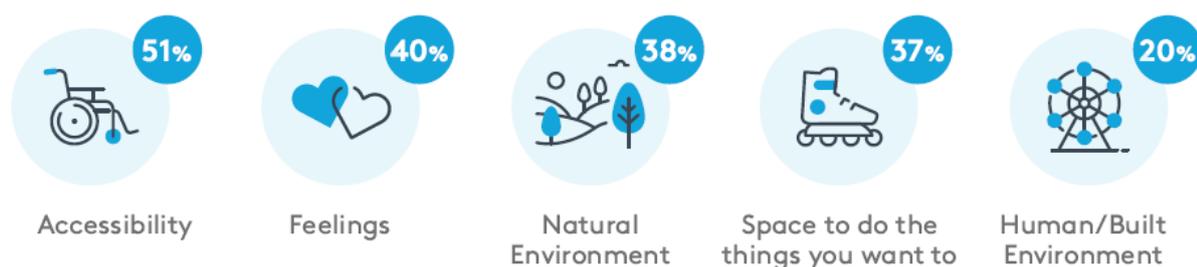
**'So maybe you can make it a bit more obvious that this is just talking about children and it's not talking about anyone else.'**

The section of the infographic on *Quality of local natural spaces* (Figure 5) was flagged as particularly problematic by YAs. First, they found the statistics difficult to understand because the labels used for the different aspects of quality did not contain enough detail or context and so did not make sense. For example, one icon shows *40% Feelings*, and YAs asked "What do they mean by feelings?", and the statistics *38% Natural Environment* and *20% Human/Built Environment* were also found difficult to interpret. Second, YAs pointed out disparity between the headline statement *Children generally feel positive about the quality of their local natural spaces*, and the reported percentages, which except one are below 50%, implying that children generally do not feel positive about the quality of their local natural spaces. This disparity is a result of the printed percentages (mistakenly) only including CYP who strongly agreed with each statement.

## QUALITY OF LOCAL NATURAL SPACES



Children generally feel positive about the quality of their local natural spaces.



**Figure 5. Illustration and statistics from section on *Quality of local natural spaces* from C-PaNS infographic 2022**

When discussing the statistics reported in the section on *Time spent outside* (Figure 6), YAs were asked whether they thought these percentages represented a similar trend to what they see in their social environments. YAs somewhat agreed but also drew attention to seasonal variations in outdoor activities, and pointed out that it might be important to communicate that:

**‘I think actually the percentage would change or it varies maybe between different seasons. I think obviously in summer, if you have a garden, most**

people would go out into their garden but obviously if it's wet and rainy, I don't think most people would go out into their garden.'

Some YAs also found the percentages of CYP who had reported spending time outside at school and not at school surprisingly low:

'I just thought a lot more people would spend time outside in school, because in school you have shorter breaks, shorter lunches, but at home, you can just go outside whenever you want. I would have thought that spending time in the garden or other green spaces would have been a higher per cent.'



Figure 6. Statistics from section on *Time spent outdoors* in C-PaNS infographic 2022

Finally, a more fundamental point made by YAs, was that they were unclear on why they would need to know or how they might use the information reported in the infographic. They suggested that the information could be included into activities or resources for CYP designed to raise awareness and highlight knowledge gaps to promote better education on nature and environmental issues.

## Key Learning

YAs joined the C-PaNS YAG for a variety of reasons including: social reasons, such as to meet others and learn social and communication skills; educational reasons, such as to learn more about the environment and nature, and how to look after it; because they wanted to support their peers by helping CYP to feel safe in natural spaces; and, to represent the voices of CYP in NE and environmental debates. Overall, YAs reflected positively on their experience and made a few suggestions of how to improve the YAG.

## Motivations and reflections

YAs' reasons for being involved in the YAG and their reflections on their experience were discussed in the initial and final workshops, respectively. YAs were also asked to complete a self-assessment survey (see Appendix 3) prior to and after being involved in the YAG.

When asked why they became involved with the C-PaNS YAG, the YAs gave a range of reasons, including social reasons and skills development:

**'I just thought that it would be interesting, like as in good to work with new people around my age to hear other people's views and come together to talk about nature and the world.'**

**'So that I could add on to my knowledge about nature and also you gain the achievement of helping Natural England.'**

For many, being part of a YAG was a new experience and they were interested in doing something that was generally seen as the domain of adults:

**"I'll let you know I've never done a type of work like this before, so it's all new for all of us or a lot of us."**

Even for those who had experience with YAGs or youth social action, they highlighted that this was the first occasion that they had the opportunity to engage in nature-related organised discussions. YAs expressed a clear interest in learning more about nature and the work of NE. For example, the quote below highlights the interest of one YA to understand more about the impact of everyday behaviour on the environment:

**'There is rubbish everywhere and nobody puts things in the bin. I never actually got told why it's bad. I never knew why we recycled, or why gas is bad in the air or what throwing a crisp packet on the ground does and I don't to this day. Like, no one has ever explained it and if kids can have that explained then they might realise, and may will recycle a bit more and maybe preserve England.'**

The YAs across all the sub-groups shared a desire to have a voice and potential influence in environmental debates:

**"I think I lean more towards the fact that children like us don't really get time to do it. Much of the buildings and like, the environment around us, and it's definitely good like, for us to have a say in it."**

**“When I get opportunities like this, I like doing them because it builds confidence and my speaking skills and it feels nice to help others and obviously because we are like children ourselves, the feedback from our point of view might benefit a lot. So, I think it’s good.”**

They also wanted to help other CYP to feel safe in the outdoors:

**“I think I wanted to be involved because I want to help young people feel safe in the environment.”**

At the end of the project, all YAs reflected positively on their experience of being in the YAG. When asked how we could improve the YAG, several suggestions were made by the different sub-YAGs. For instance, the younger YAs in London suggested that meeting face-to-face would enhance their concentration and avoid technical problems. The older YAs in the North-West suggested that it would be useful to travel to London to meet the other YAs. They thought that exchange visits would enable the YAs to see the different kinds of environments in which they live, to meet and make connections, and therefore to understand their different perspectives.

## 4. Project insights

The workshops produced a range of findings (summarised under 'Key Learning' sections) but also provided a wealth of insights through the process/delivery and through more in-depth discussion about the natural environment with YAs. The insights from this project are therefore summarised under three main headings:

1. **Insights for the survey:** YAs' insights on the survey itself, including presentation, accessibility, wording and dissemination.
2. **Insights for engaging YAGs:** the learning from the process of forming the YAG, and how NE can build on this learning in any future work with YAGs.
3. **Insights into CYP's thinking:** around CYP and the emergent insights into CYP's concerns, knowledge and interests relating to nature.

### Insights for the survey

**Design considerations.** Overall, YAs found C-PaNS accessible and appropriate for their respective age groups. Numerous suggestions were made on specific aspects of the layout, wording and images used in the survey, such as choice of icons, clarity of question meaning, and length of questions or number of response options. Some YAs thought that C-PaNS was slightly too long and that some questions had too many different parts. In general, YAs had few problems interpreting and responding to the survey questions, and most questions were perceived as being relevant to their lived experiences. However, YAs felt that the concepts and wording in some response options for the question on actions taken to look after the environment could be altered to better reflect CYP's age and knowledge. This feedback on the survey and its questions provides practical considerations for future waves of the survey, as well as informing design of any new questions.

**Considering CYP's experience and meaning placed on questions.** Through the YAG, it emerged that CYP might view the motivation behind the questions, as well as the background to C-PaNS questions in a different way to those designing the survey. A first example of this is the way in which YAs interpreted questions about their demographics and feelings (i.e. the section of the survey designed to assess mental health). They saw this as the survey showing interest in them as people. Second, when discussing why certain pro-environmental actions were included in the response options, YAs demonstrated some very different levels of understanding and distinct reasoning from what may have been intended by those that designed the survey. These insights around YAs' thought processes when answering questions can inform the way the survey is

designed and feed into considerations around whether the questions are capturing what they intended to capture, and whether further advance information or feedback at the end may be beneficial for respondents.

**Validating analysis of open-ended responses through YAs' insights.** Through answering and thematically grouping responses to the open questions, the YAG validated and extended NE's thematic categories on what CYP most like about spending time outside, and what stops CYP spending more time outside. Through this process the YAG reflected on what they thought about enjoyment and barriers to getting outdoors, allowing them to validate or question the themes we had developed. Beyond this, they were able to discuss some of the themes they agreed with in more detail to allow us to better understand what meaning is behind some of this short statement, such as what CYP mean when they say they like 'fresh air' or 'space'. These insights provide suggestions for additional themes as well as re-consideration of the wording and scope of existing themes.

**Reflecting on CYP as a possible audience for C-PaNS data.** Overall, YAs considered the C-PaNS infographics to be appropriate and appealing, particularly the use of colour and the representation of diverse ethnicities. They also provided constructive feedback on the accessibility of C-PaNS infographics to people of their age. However, a more fundamental issue was raised by YAs, that it was unclear to them why or how the information presented in the infographic would be useful for CYP. It was suggested by YAs that using the findings to develop education and awareness raising resources could help better engage CYP with C-PaNS. This final insight may warrant further discussion of the target audiences of C-PaNS outputs, and how data insights can be used to benefit CYP specifically.

## Insights for engaging YAGs

### Recruitment

**The important role of 'gatekeepers'.** Without previous experience and contacts, it would have been very difficult to conduct this research, and impossible within the time allocated. Gaining access to schools is challenging, and for this project researchers at UEL ended up recruiting YAs through third sector contacts. By recruiting through schools and third sector organisations, we were less reliant on parental involvement meaning YAs did not necessarily come from backgrounds in which knowledge of or spending time in nature was prevalent. For example, several YAs mentioned not having guardians to accompany them to outdoor spaces. The importance of creating and maintaining relationships with organisations, as well as with participants, should be kept in mind in any future attempts to create a YAG. Organisations or

schools can then continue to provide access to potential participants as existing members 'age out' or leave for other reasons.

**The unpredictability of recruitment.** Recruitment of small groups of young people can be unpredictable due to the large impact that small changes in number or background can have. For example, we 'over-recruited', in that we expected approximately 10 to be a good number for a YAG and expected around half of participants to drop out. However, almost all participants remained with the project, although inevitably some could not make all the meetings. In addition, whilst it would have been ideal to include CYP from a mixture of rural, semi-rural and urban backgrounds, the YAs that were accepted into the YAG were predominantly from urban areas.

## **Delivery**

The workshops in London were conducted online while YAs were at home, whereas workshops in North-West England were carried out face-to-face at school. This provided the team with opportunities to compare different modes of delivery, which each presented benefits and challenges. We discuss these in turn below.

**Online pros and cons.** Online meetings enabled members from different locations to come together and gave YAs the flexibility to dip in and out of calls in response to competing demands on their time and to join meetings whilst being transported by parents. We found that most YAs' digital literacy increased over the time of the project: most were proficient at muting themselves and talked by writing in the chat when they encountered microphone problems.

However, online meetings depended on access to technology, agreement from families to participate from home and digital literacy. Some families did not own a PC or laptop and consequently some YAs used mobile phones to join the workshops. However, the presentation of information on handheld devices did not work so well and YAs had difficulty in viewing the shared screen, typing in the chat, or using emoticons as feedback. To counteract this problem, we often read out what was presented on the screen. Further, some parents had limited digital literacy, so consequently were unable to fill in online consent forms which slowed the consent process and they struggled to support YAs with technical difficulties.

Discussion between YAs in online meetings was not as dynamic as it could have been in an in-person environment, as they had to mute themselves while another person was talking. The online method also limited the use of creative methods, and we were restricted to using online text-based tools. Additionally, the older YAs kept their cameras off, and we had no visual feedback from them while trying to gauge their views. The younger YAs were happy to be on camera, which made it easier to facilitate their sessions.

**Face-to face pros and cons.** Comparatively, face-to-face meetings were effective in enabling YAs to engage in free discussion, both on and off topic, and to ask ad hoc questions and for clarifications. With YAs that we met face-to-face, we were able to distribute paper copies of consent forms and information sheets to them and their parents. We also provided paper copies of the survey and infographics during workshops which enabled YAs to annotate the materials and jointly examine and discuss them. Younger YAs also enjoyed drawing during the sessions, supplementing their written and spoken thoughts. Examples of the writing and images can be seen in Appendix 7. However, face-to-face meetings are generally more time-consuming, involving researchers' and/or participants' travel, room-booking, and negotiation with staff.

The combination of both online and face-to-face delivery of workshops was successful in this project, and particularly suitable as we wanted to work with CYP across the country, living in varying locations and circumstances.

**Setting ground rules for participation.** For both online and face-to-face meetings, ground rules were agreed to help ensure that everyone was listened to, that people did not talk over one another, and that no-one was subjected to dismissive or derisory comments. We found that all the YAG members followed the ground rules and were respectful of one another during the sessions.

**Reflections for future YAGs.** In any future work, the specific requirements of the YAG members should be accounted for when deciding the timing and mode of delivery. We would recommend using face-to-face where possible, with the option of online meetings once YAs have met one another and the facilitators in person. Individual issues with access to the internet or technology will need to be resolved from the start. If in-person meeting is impossible we suggest keeping the groups small (5-6 YAs) and at regular fixed times with the same facilitators to encourage attendance and trust.

**Beneficial use of age specific groups.** The approach of holding separate workshops for different age groups (8–11 years and 12–15 years) worked well. YAs seemed to become relaxed with one another quite quickly, even those who were meeting online and were unfamiliar with one another. The approach also allowed us to work towards the same aims but in different age-appropriate ways. For example, the older YAs were given some homework to do, whereas younger YAs preferred to work through items with us in the YAG sessions. Working in sub-groups was also more manageable in that findings from one group could be summarised before sharing with another group.

We had initially intended to bring together the sub-YAGs together to form a single YAG identity. Given the geographic spread of the sub-groups, plans were made to do this online. However, in practice this did not happen because of timings and the unfamiliarity of using online platforms. In any future work, it would be helpful to build in more concrete plans for bringing the different sub-groups together at specific times, and to introduce all groups to an online forum at the outset.

## Insights into CYP's thinking

Through the YAG workshops and discussions, insights emerged on CYP's environmental concerns and interests, the barriers to spending time outside, and education gaps. These insights are useful for building a better understanding of CYP's perspectives and experiences of the natural environment.

**A general awareness of the benefits of nature and concern for it.** YAs overall expressed positive views of nature and seemed aware of the health benefits provided by nature, including the importance of trees for oxygen. They also expressed an appreciation of the sensory experience of nature and a desire for the 'calming' effects that nature can have.

A key concern of YAs discussed in all YAG subgroups was the abundance of litter and a lack of maintenance. They were often angry and upset by this, and associated it with adult behaviour, including their parents, neighbours and other adults who behaved irresponsibly. YAs also criticised the council for not emptying bins or providing enough 'cleaners' for the streets and outdoor spaces. Some YAs also showed a keen interest in wildlife and trees and were particularly concerned about loss of species and deforestation.

**Different experiences due to life stage.** Through discussions, several experiences of the natural environment arose that showed clear links to the life stage that children are in and that reinforce the need to consider and understand their unique perspective on and experience of natural environments.

Due to their life stage, a number of factors arose that showed how CYP are limited in their ability to engage with natural environments. Many YAs felt unsafe in outdoor spaces and especially, but not exclusively, those who live in hyper-urban communities mentioned feeling threatened by other people in parks or other public spaces. They would like to have access to safe spaces and routes to outdoor activities. This experience may not be unique to CYP but may be magnified by their age. YAs were also hindered by needing parents/guardians to accompany them or to give them permission to spend time outside. Dependence on older people to take them to outdoor places often meant that YAs' experiences of nature were limited.

**Different experiences based on geography.** In the North-West, school played a large part in offsetting these disadvantages, providing playgrounds and playing fields, and sometimes trips to places that CYP would otherwise not visit. YAs in North-West settings occasionally had science and other lessons outside. School was also cited as modelling appropriate behaviour around recycling and disposing of rubbish. In contrast, in London, most YAs suggested that their daily interaction with the natural world occurred outside of term-time, or when travelling to and from school. They provided very few examples of being taught about, or having opportunities to connect

with, nature at school. YAs also talked about the difficulties of accessing nature because of other demands on their time, particularly schoolwork.

**Different levels of understanding of environmental issues and action.** It became apparent that YAs' knowledge was fairly sparse in relation to environmental issues, even though some expressed an interest in it and they thought that learning and understanding were important. For example, one YA commented in relation to recycling: *'Like, no one has ever explained it and if kids can have that explained then they might realise'*. Over the course of the project, YAs became increasingly willing to admit that they did not understand things within the survey, and they began to ask questions about issues which puzzled them. These included, for example, how eating less meat could be good for the environment, why it is important to save water, how energy use is associated with climate change, and whether you should leave food waste in outdoor spaces. Notably, these education gaps suggest that CYP may not have the knowledge about nature and environmental behaviours assumed by C-PaNS and therefore may complete questions without necessarily fully understanding them.

When asked what was the most important thing they had learned through the YAG, at least two YAs stated their new understanding that deforestation is linked to industrial meat production. Despite their interest, the majority of YAs admitted that they did not actively seek out information about the environment or nature. It seems then that there are gaps in CYP's knowledge and that more education relevant to nature is likely to pique their interest in experiencing the outdoors and striving to protect nature.

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

CYP's research insights and ideas are often overlooked because of misconceptions about CYP's capacity and competency to participate. However, this project has shown that ***there are important insights that CYP can provide precisely because they are young***. The YAG offered a perspective that can help enhance C-PaNS and other areas of NE's work by making it more relevant, accessible and meaningful for all CYP. This perspective could not have been elicited without engaging directly with CYP and many insights emerged that extended beyond the project objectives because the YAs were engaged, interested and keen to offer their views. Suggestions made by the YAG fed into the 2023 C-PaNS questionnaire, supported the development of outputs to improve the ways that NE work with and for CYP, and identified key knowledge gaps and areas of interest/concern amongst CYP.

Given the success of this project, the value it demonstrated of having a YAG and that it is ethically and morally right to include CYP in the development of C-PaNS, there is a strong argument for setting up a YAG as standard practice to ensure the validity, accessibility and therefore usefulness of the data in the long term. However, there are some important considerations needed to do this well and effectively.

Firstly, it is essential that a long-term YAG does not become an exercise for the sake of participation. Much research involves CYP in somewhat tokenistic ways, and to avoid this, it is important that CYP's input is meaningful, sought carefully and taken seriously. This project was successful because the YAG had a well-defined purpose, engagement with YAs was focused on a series of discrete activities and the timeline for the project was bounded. The scope and objectives of a long-term YAG would therefore need to be well considered and recognise the limitations to CYP's input being able to shape C-PaNS. For example, to monitor changes over time the core content of C-PaNS needs to remain the same and would not therefore be subject to changes from input from a YAG.

Secondly, the logistics of establishing and maintaining a YAG in the longer-term would need to be well considered. Economically, a YAG would require capital investment. A YAG would need to be delivered through partners with the necessary skills and experience to engage with CYP safely and effectively. Building relationships with schools and other organisations to access CYP requires substantial time and trust. There are also important considerations surrounding turn-over in a long-term YAG as CYP will inevitably 'age out' and opt-out, with implications for the dynamics, identity and knowledge in the group which would need to be accounted for in how the YAG is managed.

To implement a YAG on a more permanent basis, we recommend the following considerations:

## **Forming a YAG:**

- The importance of making and maintaining relationships with organisations, teachers and parents before, during and after any projects with CYP should not be underestimated.
- Ethical scrutiny is paramount when forming a YAG.
- Sub-YAGs for different age groups (8–11 years and 12–15 years) is recommended to account for different levels of understanding.
- Depending on the aims of any specific project, the method of recruiting and maintaining a YAG might vary. For example, if NE requires specialist YAs to act as ambassadors or to represent CYP's perspectives at meetings and events, NE might invite formal applications for a two-year role as a YA (as has been done by the Zoological Society of London). This would be an initiative of a different order from the YAG described in this report.

## **Running a YAG:**

- Expectations on both sides need to be clear, e.g. times of meetings, length of project, level of engagement required, nature of specific tasks, and understanding about remuneration.
- A designated approachable contact with experience of working with CYP is important for each YA to communicate with, and an experienced facilitator should conduct the workshops. YAs should feel enabled and empowered to openly voice opinions and discuss together without adult judgement or (over-)influence.
- While adults probably need to facilitate the conversations, the YAs should feel able to steer the direction of the research to some extent and feel sure that their opinions will be not only heard but acted on.
- We would recommend using face-to-face meetings where possible, with the option of online meetings once YAs have met one another and the facilitators in person.
- To enable participation of a range of children, the specific needs of group members should be considered when determining timing and format.
- The size of the group for an ongoing YAG might be reduced to 6–8 committed CYP. Depending on the tasks required of the YAG, each member might have the same role, or a designated (but negotiable) role, and regular opportunities to meet one another should be facilitated.

In conclusion, establishing a long-term YAG for C-PaNS would be best practice if done well. Meaningfully engaging with CYP is morally right and instrumentally beneficial for both NE and YAs, but there are important logistical considerations to delivering a YAG effectively, safely and sustainably.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Background on Young Advisory Groups

Organisations in UK have set up YAGs in a range of different ways, with the majority targeting CYP aged between 13 and 30 years who are deeply involved in the issues, e.g. young bird watchers (British Trust for Ornithology), climate activists (Climate Action) and young volunteer workers (Groundwork UK). The Zoological Society of London invites applications for the role of Young Advisor (YA), with a selection process including an interview. A majority commission YAGs to scrutinise services, organisational strategy and policy, and to improve communication and community engagement (see British Trust for Ornithology, 2023; Groundwork, 2023; Imperial College, 2023; London Wildlife Trust, 2023; NHM, 2023; ZSL, 2023, Heal, 2023). The YAGs have helped the organisations to build insights into the number of CYP who enjoy spending time in nature, how many CYP consider nature to be important to them, and how many CYP want to take action to protect the environment. Furthermore, YAGs have also reportedly contributed to building new insights into the barriers for CYP engaging and contributing to the protection of nature (e.g. time constraints, accessibility, transport and awareness of natural spaces).

Scottish Natural Heritage's YAG, named ReRoute, inputted into dissemination strategies, including design of information and use of appropriate social media platforms (Scottish Natural Heritage Partnership Report – NatureScot, 2019–2020). The ReRoute YAG devised a survey around biodiversity in Scotland aimed at CYP. They found that 74% of CYP enjoy spending time in nature, 76% consider nature to be important to them and 50% want to take action to help protect the environment. They also found that 63% of the CYP surveyed did not conceptually understand the term 'biodiversity'. ReRoute adjusted the survey to ensure that the language used was appropriately accessible for CYP (ReRoute, 2018). These examples demonstrate the value of including the voices of CYP in promoting environmental organisations' aims and improving the wider involvement of CYP.

## Appendix 2: Workshop plans

### Workshop 1

The purpose of Workshop 1 was to introduce the group to the work of NE as it relates to C-PaNS and the goals of the YAG. The workshop activities included the following:

- The research team explained the project to YAs including the main objectives and researchers answered any questions asked by the YAs.
- Ground rules were established for conducting the workshops in ways that allowed YAs to speak and be heard, and for all their views to be respected.
- YAs completed the pre-involvement YA self-assessment survey (see Appendix 2)
- YAs were asked about their motivation for joining the group, and what they wanted to gain from the experience. They recorded their responses either on paper or were audio recorded.
- YAs were asked to consider what is meant by nature and the environment
- YAs were given a copy of the C-PaNS questionnaire (Appendix 3) to review (in the session or at home). The YAs were encouraged to write memos on the survey about their initial reactions to the questions, indicating to what extent they thought they were accessible for the YAs, which would be discussed in the next workshop.

### Workshop 2

The purpose of Workshop 2 was to gather initial insights on the accessibility and readability of C-PaNS. The workshop activities included the following:

- YAs were asked to discuss their understanding and overall opinion of the C-PaNS questionnaire, which they had reviewed either in Workshop 1 or at home.
- YAs were asked to discuss in detail, the meaning, content, presentation, and wording of four specific C-PaNS questions:
  - Q9. How important is looking after the environment to you?
  - Q10. Which of the following things do you do to look after the environment?
  - Q12b. How much do you agree or disagree with the following: I think adults are doing enough to look after the environment?

- Q12c. How much do you agree or disagree with the following: I would like to do more to look after the environment?
- YAs were asked what looking after the environment meant for them, to build a better understanding of CYPs interpretation of the C-PaNS questions
- As a preparation for Workshop 3, YAs were asked as homework to answer the two open-ended questions:
  - Q14: Why do you like to be outside? In other words, why is it fun to be outside?
  - Q15: What stops you from going outside? In other words, what are the problems?

### **Workshop 3**

The main purpose in Workshop 3 was for YAs to develop thematic categories for the open-response questions (Q14 and Q15) in C-PaNS. The workshop activities included the following:

- Responses from all YAs to the two open-response questions were collated. The total number of responses was greater than the number of YAs because YAs gave multiple responses, with some written on the survey when they first completed them and others were added during workshop 3 or as homework.
- Within their sub-YAG, YAs jointly grouped the collated responses into thematic categories, discussing the meanings of different responses and the categories that they devised. Specifically, the younger YAs interpreted and thematically grouped responses to Q14 and older YAs thematically grouped responses to Q15.

### **Workshop 4**

The purpose of Workshop 4 was to continue to explore the open-response, to gather YAs' feedback on the C-PaNS infographic and to wrap up the project. The workshop plans included the following activities:

- Building on Workshop 3, YAs reviewed and suggested changes to the thematic categories created by other sub-YAGs. Specifically, older YAs reviewed the categories developed by younger YAs for Q14 and younger YAs reviewed older YAs categories for Q15.
- YAs were asked to compare and contrast their own thematic categories with those developed by NE researchers and to highlight those they agreed with or wished to change or add to.

- YAs viewed the infographic either on an A3 printed sheet or via a computer screen and were asked to discuss their general opinion and interpretation of the infographics, including its content and presentation, and to suggest any changes.
- YAs were asked to provide their reflections on the YAG experience, including what they felt worked well and what should be changed, and to indicate if they were interested in continuing the work.
- YAs were asked to complete the post-involvement Self-Assessment questionnaire following the session.

## Appendix 3: Self-assessment questionnaire

### Self-assessment: About me and being part of the project

Hello!

Thank you for agreeing to be part of the Young Advisory Group for NE.

Here are a few questions to tell us a little more about you. We would like you to answer the questions before we get started.

You **do not** have to answer any of the questions if you do not want to. You can still be part of the Advisory Group if you decide not to answer the questions.

We will ask you some of the questions again at the end of our work together.

#### About you

1. What is your name:
2. Where do you live: North-West England/ South England (Greater London)
3. Do you live in:
  - a. A town
  - b. A city
  - c. A village
  - d. The countryside
4. Do you have a garden?
5. How old are you?
6. Which of the following describes how you think of yourself?
  - Male
  - Female
  - Non-binary
  - Prefer to self-describe. Add here how you would like to be described \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prefer not to say
7. I would describe my ethnic origin as (Please tick all that apply below)
  - White British
  - White Irish
  - White Traveller of Irish Heritage White Gypsy/Roma
  - White Other
  - Black African
  - Black Somali
  - Black Caribbean

- Black/Black British/ Black Welsh/ Other Black Background
- Asian Bangladeshi
- Asian Pakistani
- Asian Indian
- Asian/Asian British/ Asian Welsh/ Other Asian Background
- Latin-American
- White & Black Caribbean
- White & Black African
- White & Black Asian
- Any Other Mixed Background
- Vietnamese
- Chinese
- Any Other Group
- Prefer not to say

8. Do you have any disabilities?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

If you have a disability can you tell us about this here: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Skills and knowledge**

9. Please tell us how much you agree with each of the following statements, by putting a tick in the relevant box.

### **Communication skills**

How confident are you about talking to other young people and adults?

Not at all confident	A little bit confident	Fairly confident	Confident	Very confident

How well do you think you can explain your ideas to other people?

Not at all well	A bit	Fairly well	Well	Very well

### **Working as part of a group**

How confident are you about working with others as part of a team?

Not at all confident	A little bit confident	Fairly confident	Confident	Very confident

How well do you think you listen to other people's ideas?

Not at all well	A bit	Fairly well	Well	Very well

### Critical thinking and problem solving

How interested are you in understanding why things happen?

Not at all interested	A bit interested	Fairly interested	Interested	Very interested

How confident are you about solving problems?

Not at all confident	A little bit confident	Fairly confident	Confident	Very confident

### Knowledge about nature

How much do you think you know about nature and the natural world?

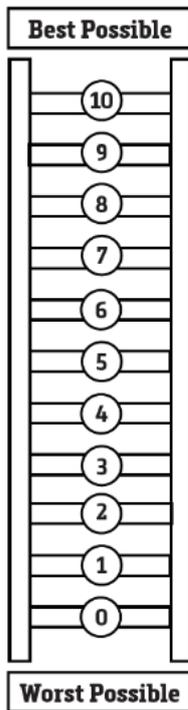
Not much at all	A little bit	Quite a lot	A lot	Loads

### Nature Connectedness

10. Please tell us how much you agree with each of the following statements, by putting a tick in the relevant box.

	Completely Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Completely Agree
1. I always find beauty in nature							
2. I always treat nature with respect							
3. Being in nature makes me very happy							
4. Spending time in nature is very important to me							
5. I find being in nature really amazing							
6. I feel part of nature							

11. What is the most important thing you would like to get from taking part in the young advisory group? Write it down here \_\_\_\_\_
12. The ladder below shows what you think about yourself. The best you could be is at the top of the ladder, and the worst you could be is at the bottom. Where do you feel you are on this ladder right now?



## Appendix 4: Adapted version of C-PaNS questionnaire used with YAG

The Children's People and Nature Survey for England Questionnaire

**2022- Waves 3 and 4**



## QUESTIONS ASKED OF CHILDREN

These questions are being asked for Natural England, an organisation which looks after nature and wildlife in England and this will take around 5 minutes to complete. Your answers will help us understand how children and teenagers spend time outdoors.

Your answers will be kept private. Kantar's privacy policy can be found here <https://uk.kantar.com/surveys>.

You do not have to take part if you do not want to, and you can stop the survey at any time by closing the window browser.

### How old are you?

Please type your age \_\_\_\_\_

Don't know

Prefer not to say

**You mentioned you are** [AGE GIVEN AT PREVIOUS QUESTION TO INSERT HERE DYNAMICALLY] years old. Can you please confirm that this is correct?

Yes, I confirm



No, I would like to change my age

### How happy were you feeling yesterday?

Please answer on a scale where 0 is not at all happy and 10 is completely happy

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Prefer not to say
Not at all										Completely	



### How anxious were you feeling yesterday?

Please answer on a scale where 0 is not at all anxious and 10 is completely anxious

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Prefer not to say
Not at all										Completely	

### How often do you feel lonely?

Often/ always	Some of the time	Occasionally	Hardly ever	Never	Prefer not to say	Don't know

### Q3. Have you spent time in any of these places in the last week?

You can include visits of any length of time (including short trips to the park, dog walking etc). Please do not include any trips made abroad.

*Please choose one or more options*

	Park / playing field / playground	
	Grassy areas in the streets near me (e.g. by the roadside, a green or pathway)	
	Garden (mine or someone else's)	
	Grassy areas you pay to go to (e.g. gardens of a big house, the zoo, or city farm)	
	Beach or seaside	
	Woods / forest	
	Fields / farmland / countryside	
	Rivers / lakes / canals	
	Hills/ mountains/ moorland	



	No visits in the last week	
	Don't know	
	Prefer not to say	
	Somewhere else outside ( <b>Please write in the textbox below</b> )	

**Q4. Which of these places can you walk to easily from your home (either by yourself or with someone else)?**

*Please choose one or more options*

	Park / playing field / playground	
	Grassy areas in the streets near me (e.g. by the roadside, a green or pathway)	
	Garden (mine or someone else's)	
	Grassy areas you pay to go to (e.g. gardens of a big house, the zoo, or city farm)	
	Beach or seaside	
	Woods / forest	
	Fields / farmland / countryside	
	Rivers / lakes / canals	
	Hills/ mountains/ moorland	

	None of the above	
	Don't know	
	Prefer not to say	
	Somewhere else outside <b>(Please write in the textbox below)</b>	

**Q13. Thinking about the natural outdoor spaces near you. How much do you agree or disagree that...**

*0 is you "disagree a lot" and 10 is you "agree a lot".*

 <b>A) There are lots of places for animals and birds to make their homes</b>													
0 Disagree a lot	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Agree a lot	Prefer not to say	Don't know	
 <b>B) There are good spaces for playing</b>													
0 Disagree a lot	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Agree a lot	Prefer not to say	Don't know	
 <b>C) They are clean and well looked after</b>													
0 Disagree a lot	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Agree a lot	Prefer not to say	Don't know	
 <b>D) I feel welcome there</b>													
0 Disagree a lot	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Agree a lot	Prefer not to say	Don't know	
 <b>E) They are easy to get to by walking</b>													



0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Prefer not to say	Don't know
Disagree a lot										Agree a lot		

**Q5. These questions are about what you have done at school in the last week.**

*Please select one answer only*

	<b>A) Thinking about the last week at school, how often have you spent time outside?</b>					
Every day	Most days	Once or twice	Never	Don't know	Prefer not to say	

	<b>B) Thinking about the last week <u>at school</u>, how often have you had activities or lessons outside that were not PE?</b>					
<b>Do not count:</b>						
- PE lessons						
- Breaks and lunch times						
- Before and after school						
Every day	Most days	Once or twice	Never	Don't know	Prefer not to say	

	<b>C) Thinking about the last week <u>at school</u>, how often have you spent time noticing nature? (e.g. looking, listening, experiencing it)</b>					
Every day	Most days	Once or twice	Never	Don't know	Prefer not to say	

**Q6. These questions are about what you have done when you were not at school in the past week.**

If it is the school holidays, this would be most of the time, but if it is term-time, then think about before and after school and at the weekend.

	<b>A) Now thinking about <u>when you were not at school</u> in the last week, how often have you spent any time in your own garden (if you have one)? This includes any garden that you share with your neighbours.</b>					
--	---	--	--	--	--	--

Every day	Most days	Once or twice	Never	I don't have a garden	Don't know	Prefer not to say

 **B) Now thinking about when you were not at school in the last week, how often have you spent time outside in places that are not your garden?**

Every day	Most days	Once or twice	Never	Don't know	Prefer not to say

 **C) Now thinking about when you were not at school in the last week, how often have you spent time noticing nature? (e.g. looking, listening, experiencing it)**

Every day	Most days	Once or twice	Never	Don't know	Prefer not to say

**Q14. What do you most like about spending time outside?**

*Please complete the sentence below or tick another response*

	<b>Please complete the sentence:</b>
	I like spending time outside because....
	I don't like spending time outside
	Don't know
	Prefer not to say

**Q15. What things have stopped you from spending more time outside in the last week?**

*Complete the sentences below that are relevant to you. You don't have to complete them all.*

	<b>Please complete the sentence</b>
	I didn't want to spend more time outside because...
	I wasn't able to spend more time outside because...
	Another reason why I didn't spend more time outside was...
	Nothing stops me from spending more time outside
	Don't know

	Prefer not to say
--	-------------------

**We would like to know what you think about the environment and looking after it.**

**Q9. How important is looking after the environment to you?**

*Please answer below where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important*

	1 Not at all important	2	3	4	5 Very important	Don't know	Prefer not to say

**Q10. Which of the following things do you do to look after the environment?**

*There are lots of options but they may not all apply to you or all make sense. Only pick the ones you understand and do yourself to look after the environment.*

	Eat less meat (including vegetarian or vegan)	
	Turn lights off	
	Turn the tap off while I brush my teeth	
	Think about the environment when I buy things	
	Recycle my waste	
	Do things in the garden to help the wildlife (e.g. feed birds, grow plants that insects like, make homes for wildlife)	
	Pick up litter	
	Walk, cycle or take public transport as much as I can	
	Read about (online or in books) or watch programmes about the environment	
	Talk to friends and family about looking after the environment	
	Volunteer my time (e.g. litter pick, planting, raising awareness)	
	Try and change what our leaders are doing (e.g. sign petitions, demonstrate, or write to them)	
	Raise awareness by posting/sharing information online	

✘	None of the above	
	Don't know	
	Prefer not to say	
?	Something else ...(Please write in the textbox below)	

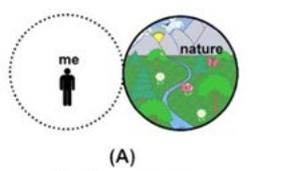
**Q12. How much do you agree or disagree with the following:**

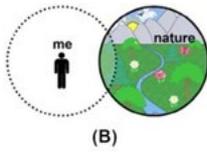
*Please select one answer only for each questions*

	I would like to do more to look after the environment	I think adults are doing enough to look after the environment	I know what I can do to look after the environment	Being in nature makes me very happy
Completely agree				
Strongly agree				
Agree				
Neither agree nor disagree				
Disagree				
Strongly disagree				
Completely disagree				
Don't know				
Prefer not to say				

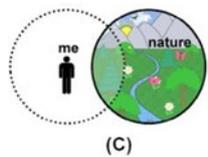
**Q11. How connected do you feel to Nature? Please choose the picture that best describes your relationship to nature.**

*Please select one answer only*

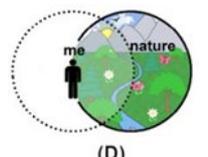




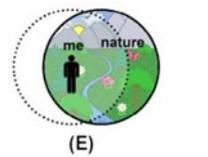
(B)



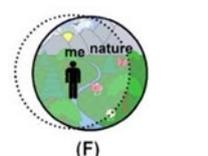
(C)



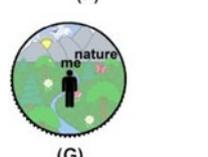
(D)



(E)



(F)



(G)

Don't know  
Prefer not to say

**Q16. Which of these things do you think it is ok for people to do when they visit outdoor spaces like parks, the coast, rivers, streams, canals, lakes and the countryside?**

*Please choose one or more options*

	Say hello to other people they meet while they're there	
	Pick flowers	
	Take any plants, stones or rocks away from where they found them	
	Take birds, animals or eggs away without permission	
	Climb on walls, fences or ruined buildings	

	Climb on or play with farm machinery	
	Make a fire	
	Have a barbecue wherever they like	
	Leave food waste like fruit peel or cores on the ground	
	If a bin is full, leave litter next to it	
	Take everything they brought away when they leave	
	None of these things	
	Don't know	

**Q17. Which of these things do you think it is ok for people to do when they visit outdoor spaces like parks, the coast, rivers, streams, canals, lakes and the countryside?**

*Please choose one or more options*

	Get close to farm animals or horses	
	Get close to wild animals or birds	
	Give anything to farm animals or wild animals to eat	
	Always shut gates if they are open	
	Not follow a path, even if the sign says you should	
	Allow their dogs to go wherever they like	
	Let their dogs get close to birds or animals	
	Put their dog's poo in any bin	
	Leave their dog's poo where it is if it's out of the way	
	None of these things	
	Don't know	

**Q18. There is something called the Countryside Code, which tells us how we should behave when we visit outdoor spaces. Have you heard about this before?**

	YES	
	NO	
	NOT SURE	

**Q19. Where have you heard about the Countryside Code?**

*Please choose one or more options*

	From my friends	
	From my family	
	At school	
	At a Girlguiding or Scouts group (e.g. Brownies, Guides, Cubs or Scouts)	

	At Cadets (e.g. Army Cadet Force, Air Training Corps, Sea Cadets)	
	Through taking part in a Duke of Edinburgh Award programme	
	At another group or club I'm part of ( <b>please specify</b> )	
	On TV	
	In a newspaper or magazine	
	On social media	
	On a website	
	On signs or posters	
	From somewhere else ( <b>please specify</b> )	
	Don't know	

**This is the end of the survey.**

**Thank you very much for completing it.**

**If you wish to find out more about Natural England please visit [this website](#). To find out more about the Countryside Code, [click here](#).**

## Appendix 5: Open-ended questions responses from YAs

### Q14: What do you most like about spending time outside?

Responses from YAs in London:

- I like to be outside to play with my friends and have some fresh air daily
- I like to be outside because it's a nice fresh of air and is a different environment to at home.
- I like to be outside as it is a pleasure to have nature for free and the birds singing melodiously to create a serene atmosphere
- Because of Nature and playing in the park and playing with friends
- Because of Nature and because playing in the park with your friends.
- Because there are many fun activities like cycling running and many more. Also, if the weather is nice e.g. sunny because it feels good.
- I like to be outside because I get to interact with others and also being able to do exercise. Outside you can also play games that maybe you haven't played before.
- I like going outside because it helps me to interact with others and let me do exercise
- It is fun to be outside as you can enjoy the birds chirping in a melodious tune for free and nature is blissfully serene.
- I like to be outside because I find it calming and relaxing. it is also fun to play games on a nice day and have picnics.
- I like to be outside as most of the time I see my friends and they really light up my mood.
- I enjoy being outside because for me it is a change of atmosphere and allows me to feel the fresh and cooler breeze of being outdoors rather than being indoors and the stuffy air. Generally, it boosts my mood and makes me feel more productive.
- Responses from YAs in the North-West:
- I can play football

- I can get fresh air
- The air is nice and fresh
- I can play with my brother, sister or mum and I can get some fresh air
- I can play out and get fresh air
- I spend time outside to play football, basketball, netball, not just sports but to be with nature and to be in the air
- There is things to do like playing football, getting exercise and you can get fresh air
- The outdoor space
- The free playing
- Running around space
- It was peaceful
- I can hang out with friends
- I like fresh air and it's beautiful
- It gives me a fresh breeze of air
- It makes me feel free as I can think to myself with no one around me to disturb me (when I go on walks)
- I like it because it keeps me healthy

**Q15: What stops you from going outside?**

Responses from YAs in London:

- Litter
- The rain and if it's too windy
- Littering
- During winter I go outside a lot less, as it gets darker a lot quicker. Another thing is weather, as it is often cold or rainy.

- One thing that stops me from going outside is that sometimes where I am there might not be any safe places to play.
- Littering
- Homework
- The weather; time; transport and availability
- The weather or when I am busy doing something inside.
- However, what stops me is due to weather as it gets rainy sometimes and that can impact any activities I have planned.
- One thing that stops me from going outside is the lack of motivation I have, especially because of schoolwork and exam season. It feels as if it's a chore and feels like a burden but when I do get out, I really enjoy myself and admire nature.

Responses from YAs in the North-West:

- My garden is a bit muddy
- I wasn't allowed
- It was too cold
- I don't like most sports
- I was spending time with my mum
- I don't have a reason
- Because of the weather
- Because of the dirt
- I was busy
- Because of my mock exams. I have to focus on getting good grades.

# Appendix 6: Infographic



## The Children's People and Nature Survey for England

2022



The Children's People and Nature Survey for England provides information on how children and young people (8 to 15) experience and think about green and natural spaces.

Responses were collected from children and young people during the school holidays and during term-time. Here we present some key findings from the 2022 survey.

### TIME SPENT OUTDOORS



Most children and young people said they had spent time outside every day.

Places most often visited by children and young people in the last week.

Most children spend time outdoors at school.



### ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN AND ACTION



Most children (83%) agreed that looking after the environment is important to them and would like to look after it more. The most common activities include...

### QUALITY OF LOCAL NATURAL SPACES



Children generally feel positive about the quality of their local natural spaces.



### NATURE CONNECTION AND ENJOYMENT



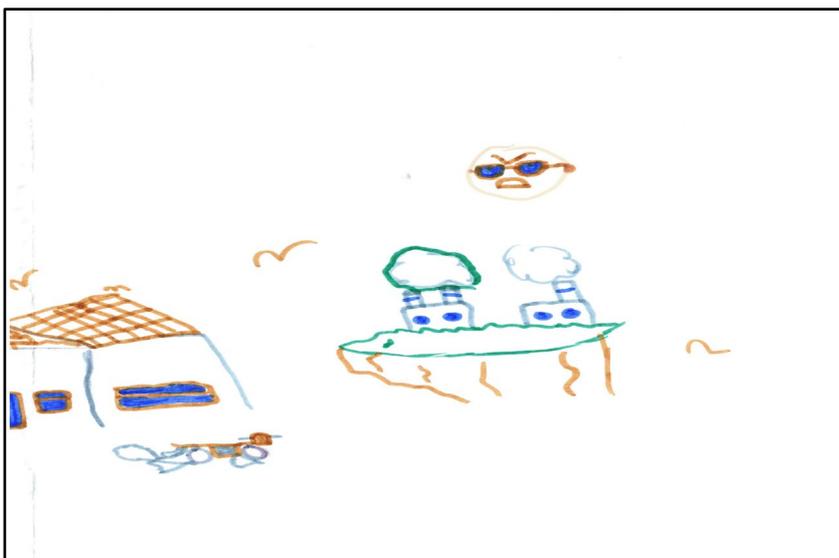
Being in nature makes most children very happy and nearly half feel highly connected to nature.

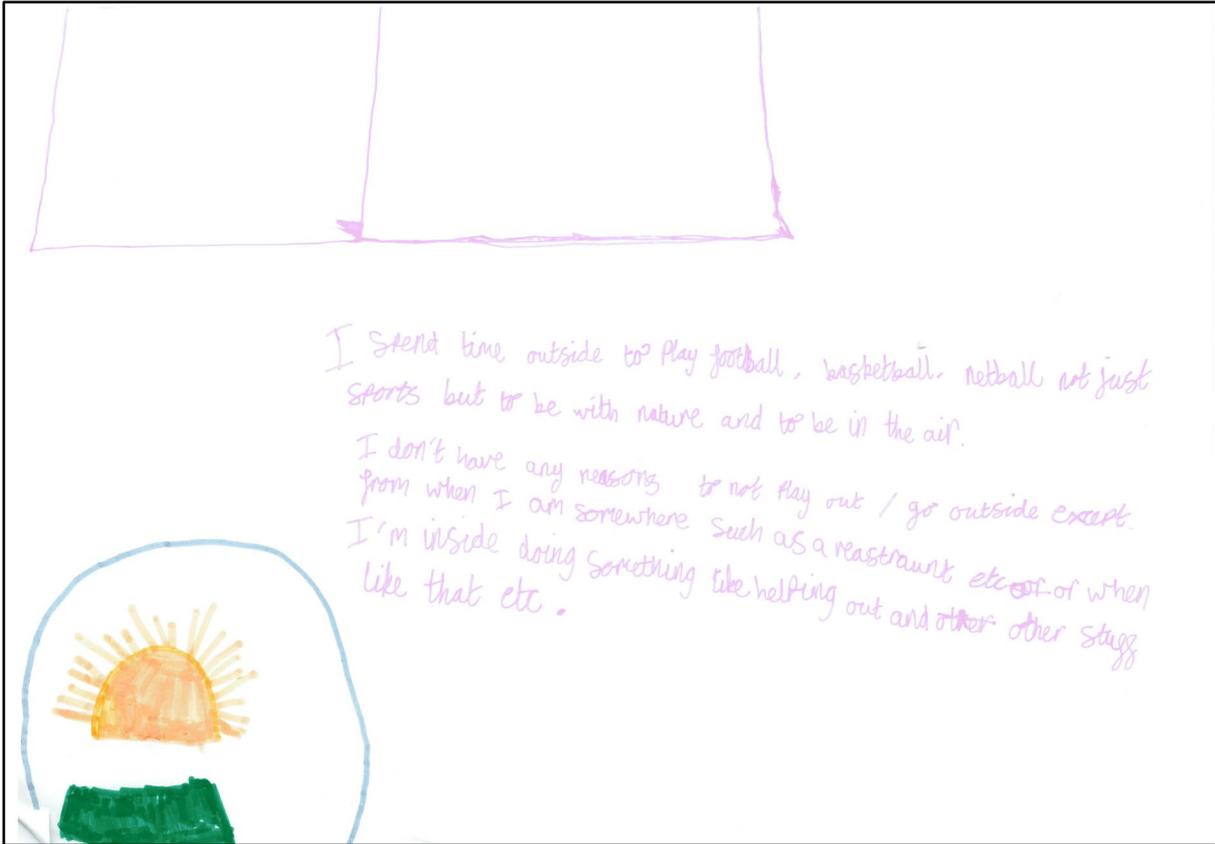


For further information about using these statistics please refer to the Children's People and Nature Survey 2022 report.

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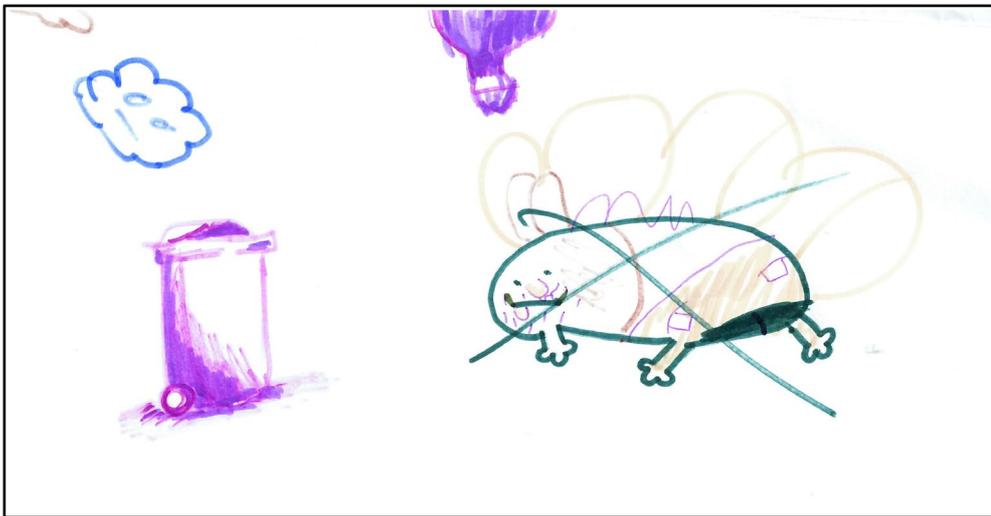
Appendix 7: Examples of YAs drawings from face-to-face workshops





I spend time outside to play football, basketball, netball not just sports but to be with nature and to be in the air.

I don't have any reasons to not play out / go outside except from when I am somewhere such as a restaurant etc or when I'm inside doing something like helping out and other other things like that etc.



Natural England is here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

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