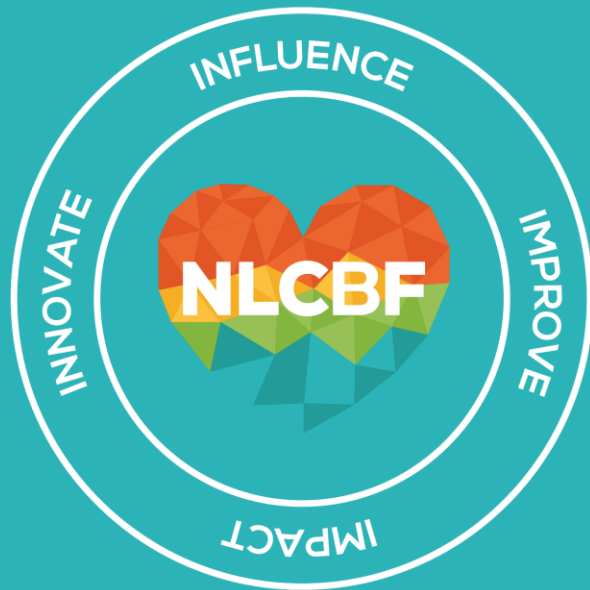
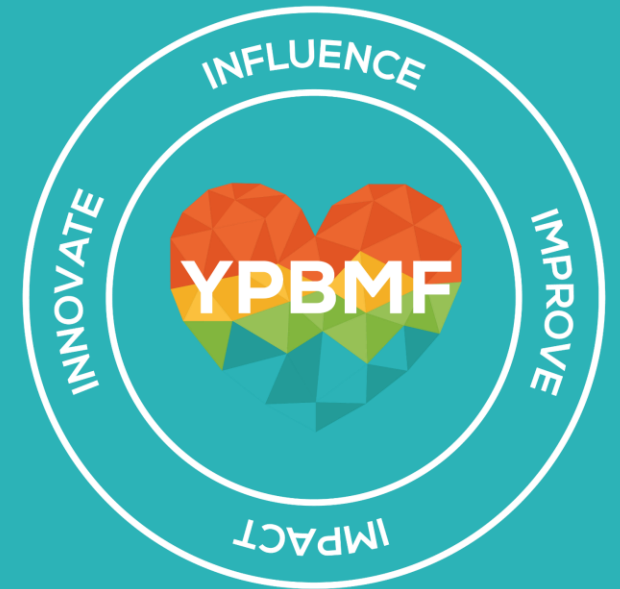


# YPBMF

## In Their Own Words



12<sup>th</sup> July 2024  
Follow @nlcbf @ypbmf





# Welcome & Introduction





## Welcome & Introduction



**HRH Princess Anne presents last years Local Hero Award Care Leavers Celebration Event in Birmingham**

## National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum

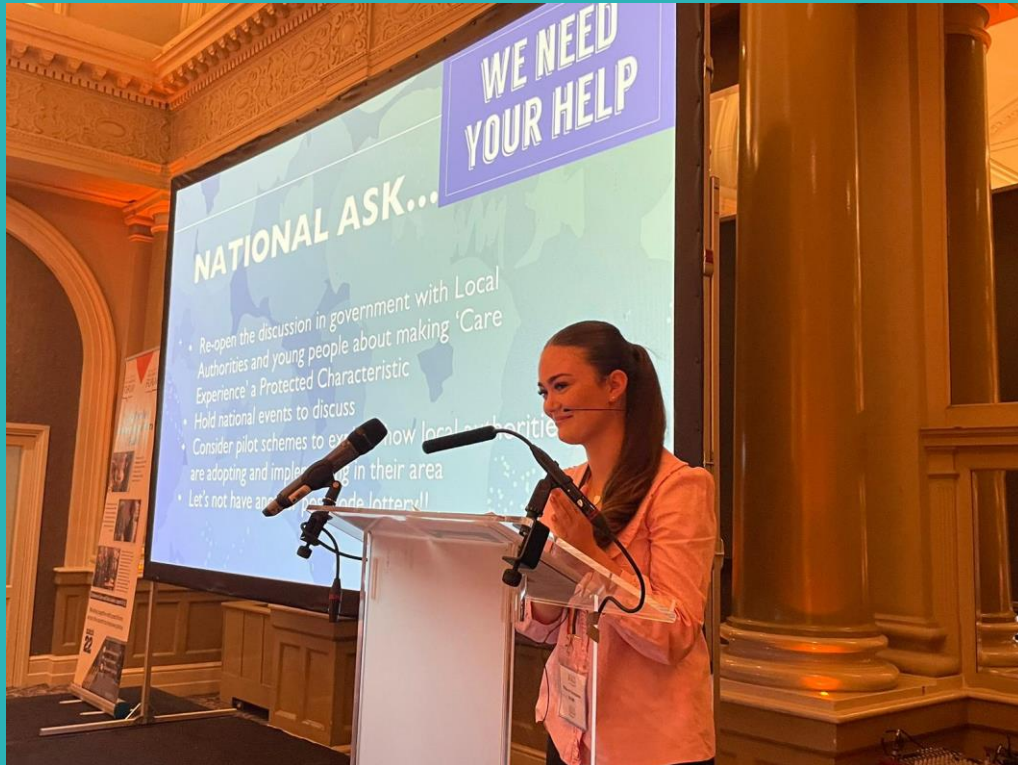
- 133 Local Authority Leaving Care Teams
- Improving services & support by sharing best practice
- The heart of the forum = Young People's Benchmarking Forum (YPBMF)



# In Their Own Words



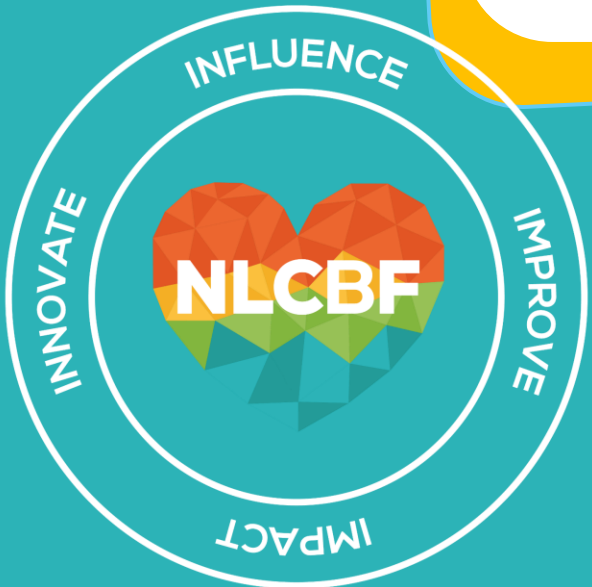
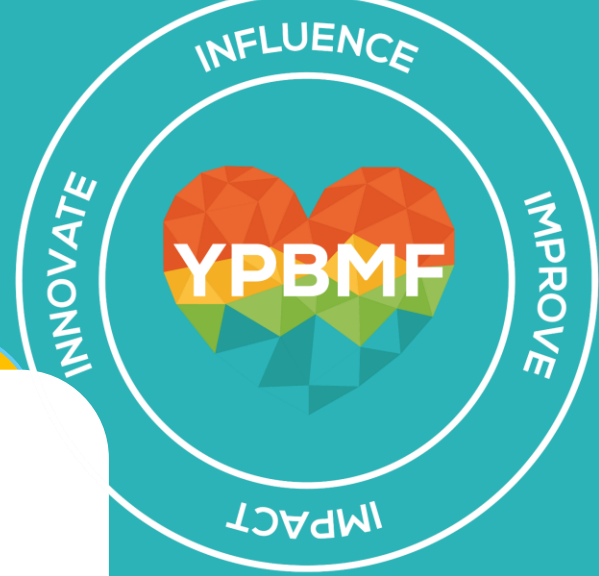
## Our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual In Their Own Words



## In Their Own Words 2023

- Impact review recommended bringing our messages directly to you our corporate parents
- Last year we talked about Free Bus travel, Care Leavers Hubs, Cost of Living, Separated Young People and Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic
- This year we have 4 new topics, and we also want to talk about the Cost of Living again....it's still a thing

# In Their Own Words 2024



### Deciding the 5 key topics

- Care Experienced Young People voted up issues that were important to them
- We shortlisted 5 topics

### Creating a survey

- YPBMF Champions & Legends highlighted questions and challenges around the 5 topics
- YPBMF Champions & Legends worked with NLCBF Team to refine the questions & created a 2-part survey

### Distributing the survey

- The survey was sent out across the country to NLCBF Local Authorities, Charities supporting Care Experienced people and partners

### Analysing the results

- YPBMF Champions and Legends met to reflect on the results, discuss trends and decide which early learning points to share

### Create presentations

- YPBMF Champions & Legends have worked over the last couple of weeks to prepare key message presentations for the In Their Own Words event this year

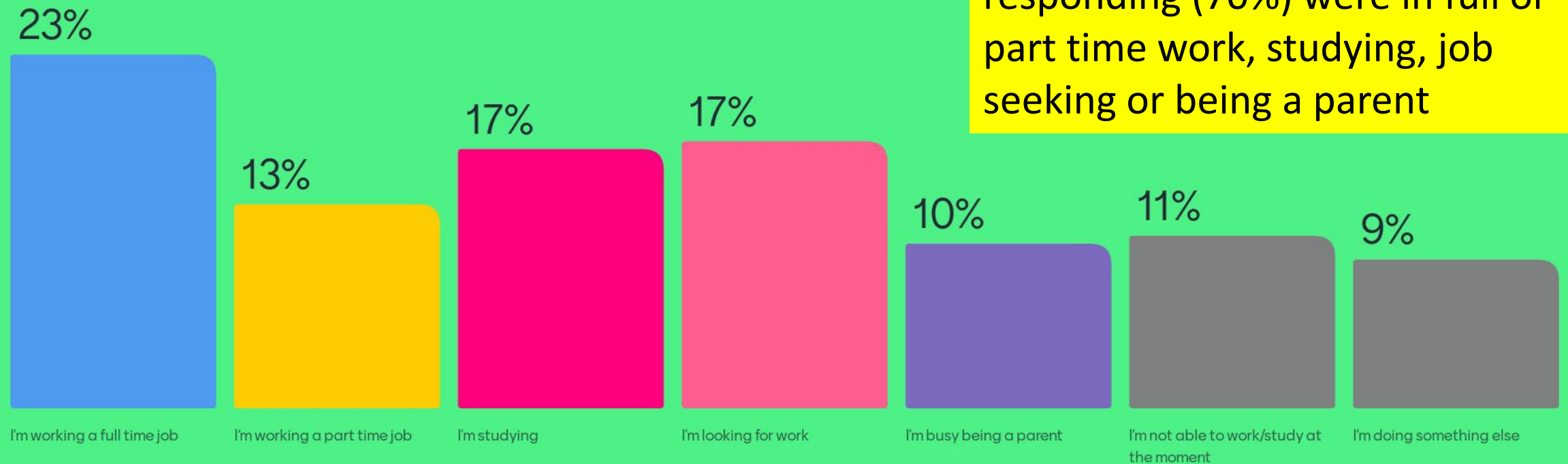
# Pin on the map where you live:

**Over 200 people took part in our “In Their Own Words Survey” from all over the UK**





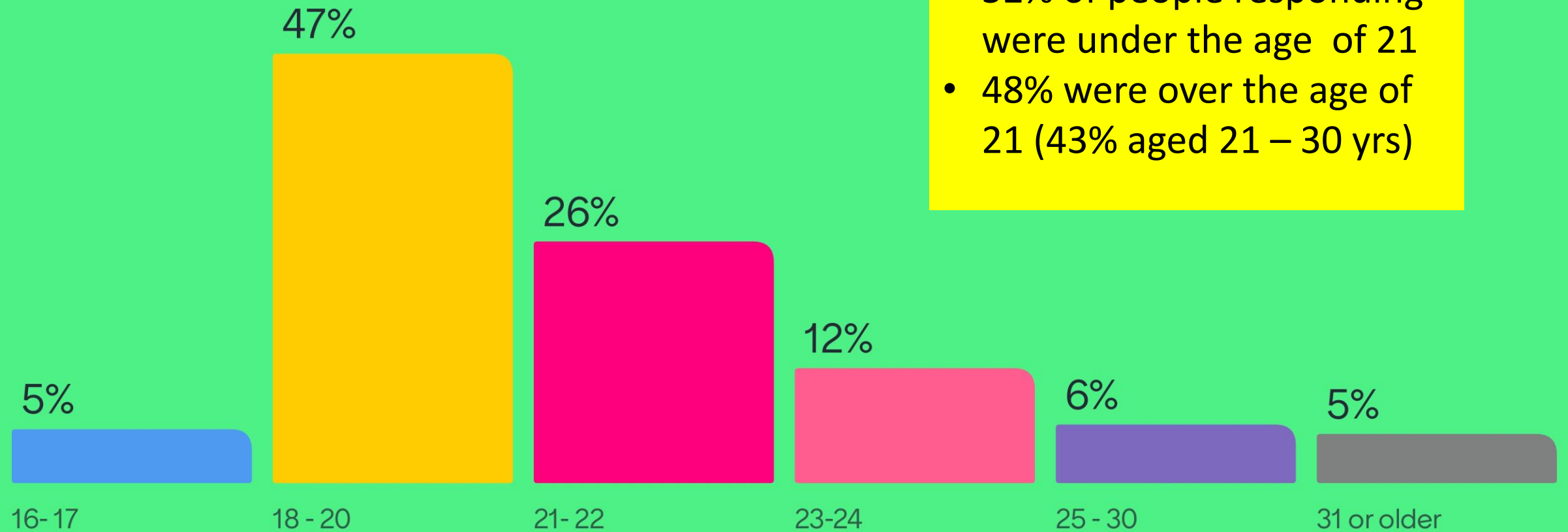
# What's the MAIN thing you are doing at the moment?



The majority of people responding (70%) were in full or part time work, studying, job seeking or being a parent

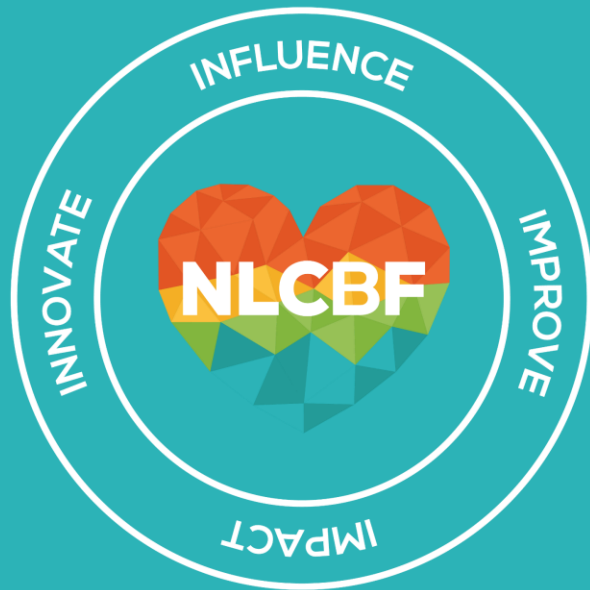


# How old are you?

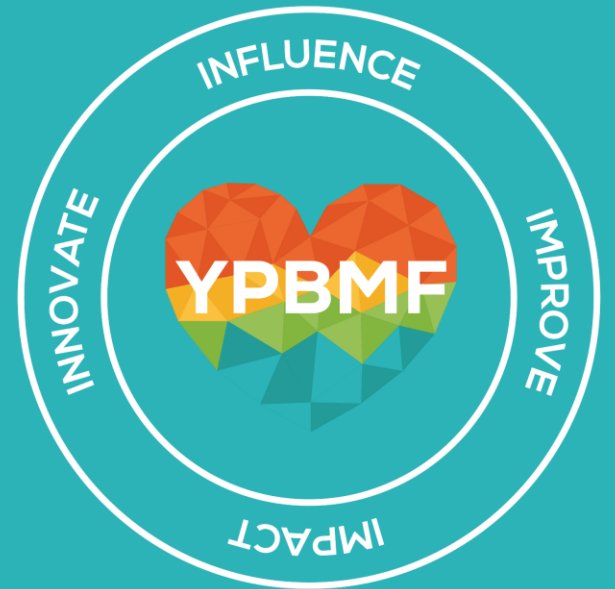


- 52% of people responding were under the age of 21
- 48% were over the age of 21 (43% aged 21 – 30 yrs)

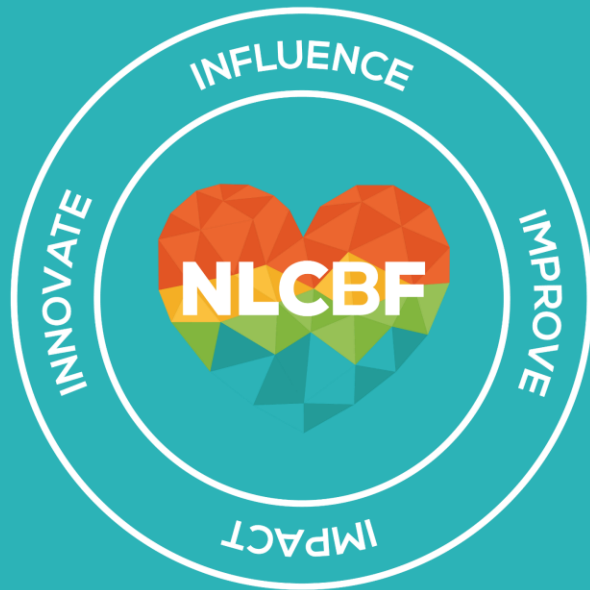
# Opening Address



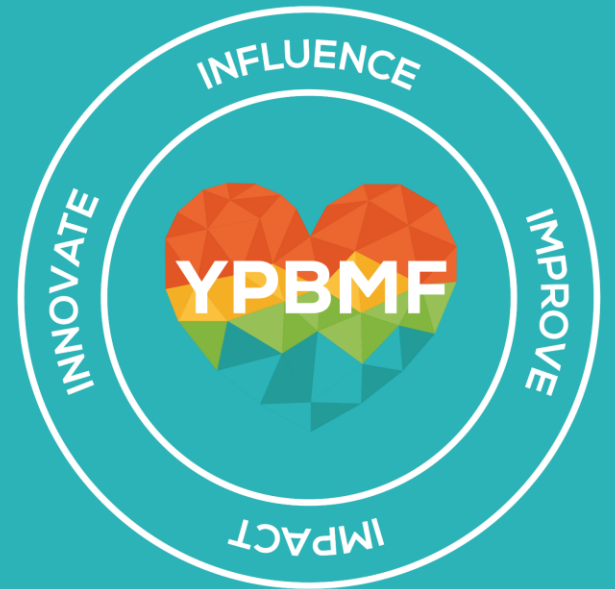
Naomi Hulston  
Catch22 CEO



# Topic 1: Cost of Living

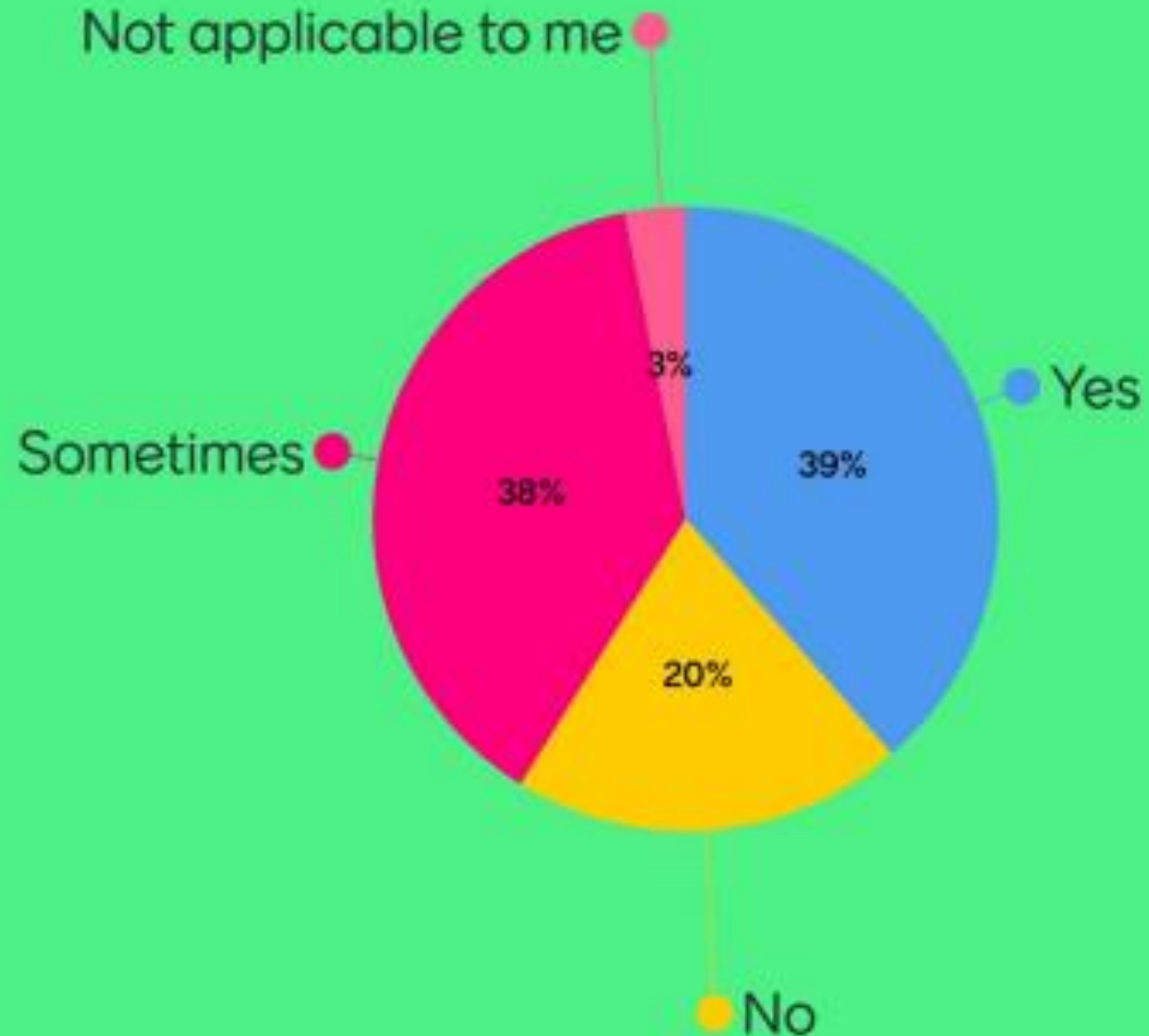


Mark & Victoria

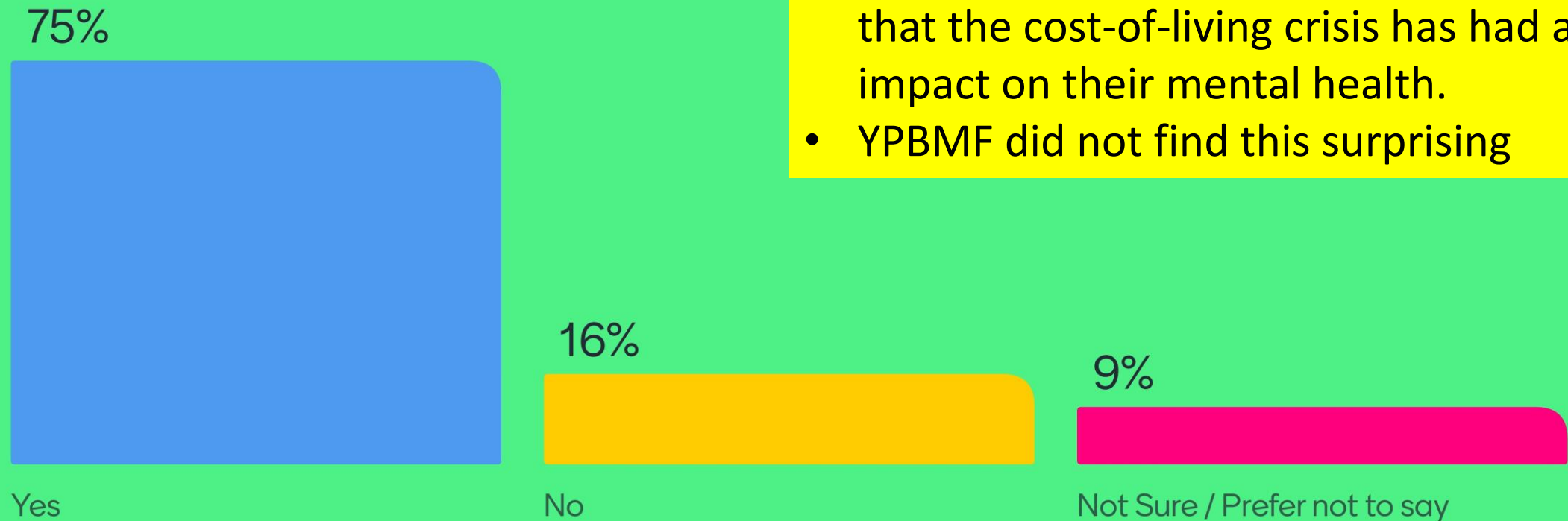


# Are you struggling to buy food?

- 77% of young people are struggling to buy food at least some of the time or all the time
- YPBMF were not surprised given the cost of food now.
- Local Authorities sometimes have foodbanks or a pantry within their Care leavers Hub which is very useful in times of need

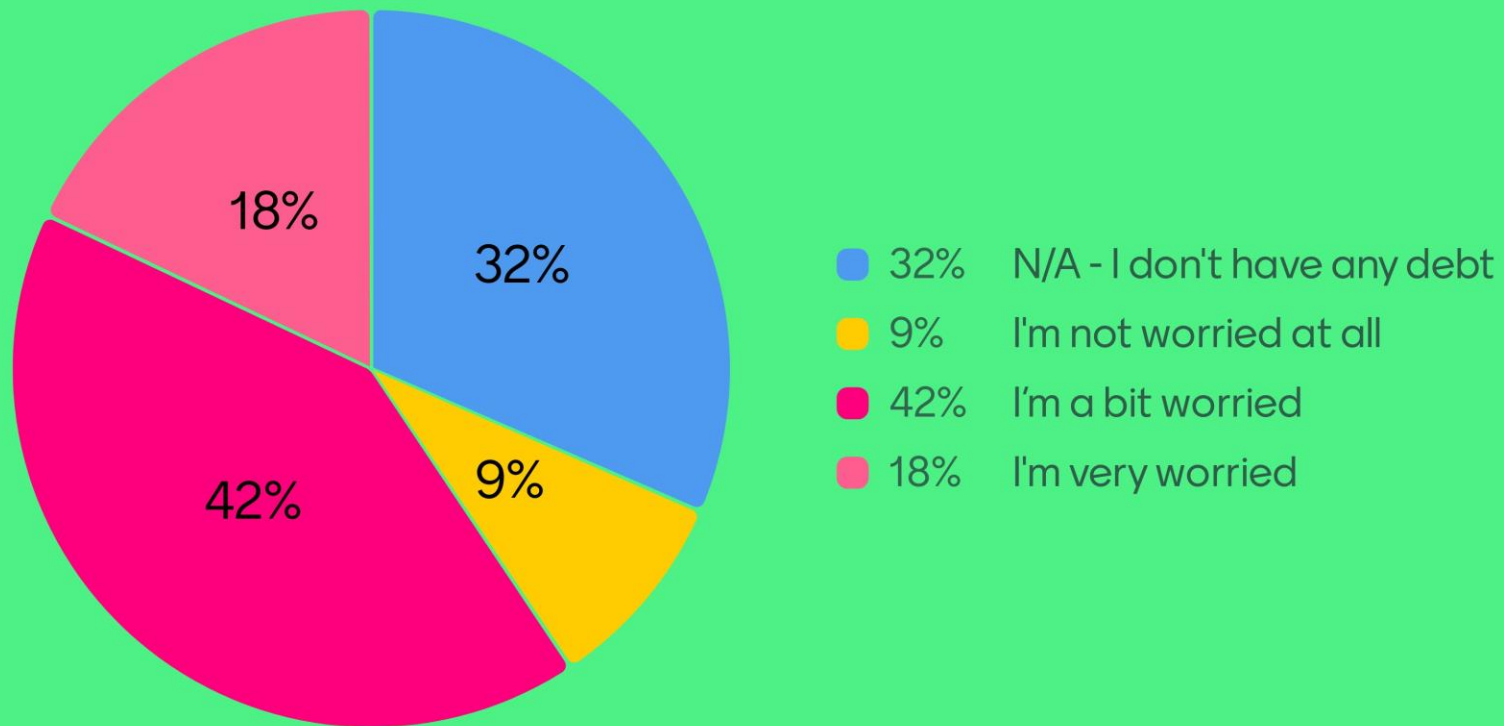


# Has the cost of living crisis had an impact on your mental health?



- 75% of Care Experienced people told us that the cost-of-living crisis has had an impact on their mental health.
- YPBMF did not find this surprising

# How worried do you feel about the level of debt you have?

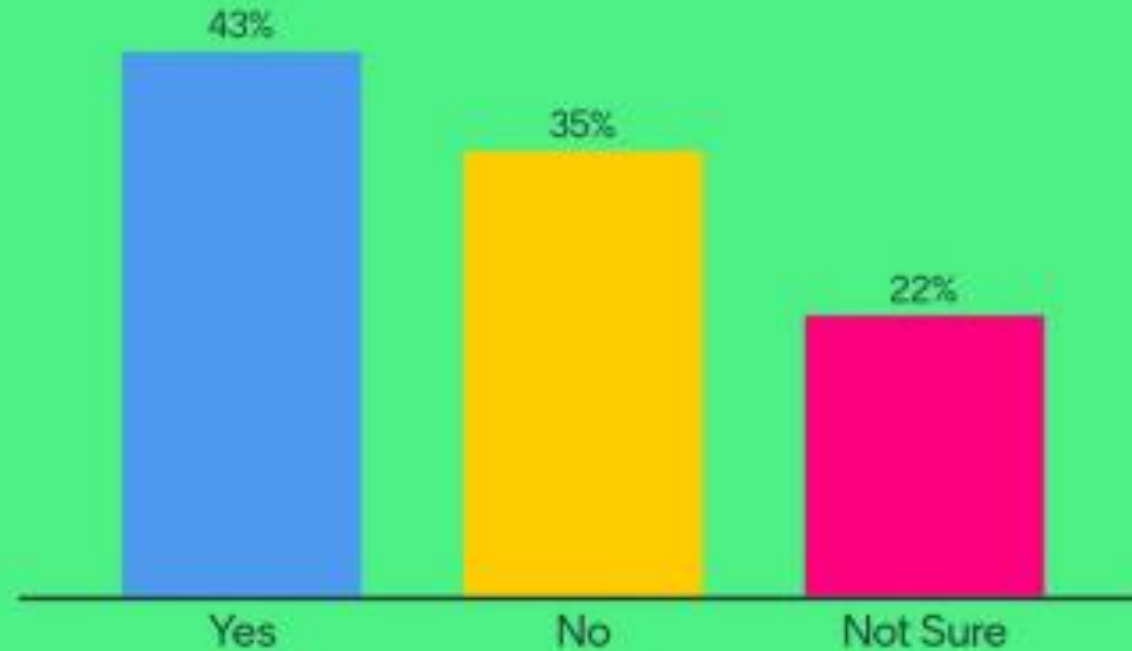


## YPBMF Said:

- It's great to see that so many individuals don't have debt (blue bar)
- But we still see 60% are worried about their levels of debt
- "This will be impacting their mental health."

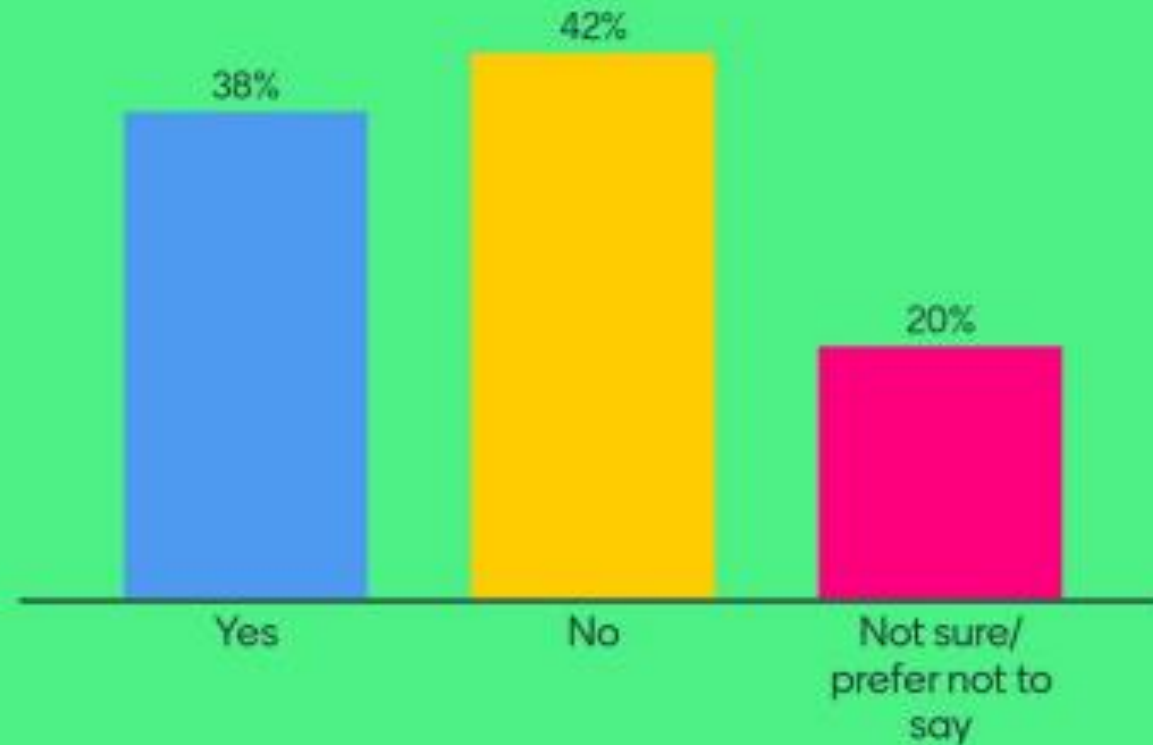
# Have you received additional financial support from your Local Authority in the last year?

- Lots of care experienced people struggling to buy food & concerned about debts
- YPBMF were surprised so few report receiving financial assistance over the year.



# Have you placed yourself in a vulnerable position to help pay for essentials such as food and heating?

- 38% of people saying they have put themselves in a vulnerable position to pay for essentials
- This could be higher actually as this is something young people may under report
- It is very worrying that care experienced young people are more vulnerable to exploitation because of the cost-of-living crisis.





# What support have you received that has helped?

## **Positive responses:**

- Support from Personal Advisor is very important - most frequently mentioned
- Council tax exemption is helpful
- Food vouchers make a difference – regular food vouchers every month
- University accommodation being paid for (term time and out of term)
- Cost of living payments e.g. Household Support Fund

## **Negative responses:**

- multiple mentions of 'No support' & 'not much'
- Big challenges for young people living out of area

# Care Experienced Views & Experiences

If you were a normal child or a young adult in a normal home, you could ask parents to help out with costs. I think we should be the same, I have no one to turn to like others do

Mental support for trauma is working but that's it for me...nothing else is supporting me, I'm in crushing debt every month because every month I can't pay my utilities bill. My PA is lovely though

I haven't received any support yet but it should be coming. Everything is a struggle, my wage is just enough to live on, but not enough to do things I actually want, just to live.

# What do you think would be helpful to support care experienced young people with the cost of living?

- **Getting about** - about e.g. to work, see family, recreation – help to fun Driving lessons, free public transport e.g. Cornwall & Greater Manchester
- **Help in a crisis** - food vouchers/food box with essentials
- **Being well enough to work** - more access to mental health & people to talk to, in general but also when returning to or starting work
- **Better EET support** - including support for graduates between graduating & getting a job
- **Support for young parents** – funding activities to do with children
- **How to budget** - cooking on a budget, running a household e.g. Money House
- **Be ambitious for young people** - focus on making it possible to save for the future too, financial advice around savings, credit and mortgages.

# Care Experienced Views & Experiences

**I think that more focus needs to be placed on recognising that once young people start working full-time, that they should not be paying for everything. They should be saving for the future**

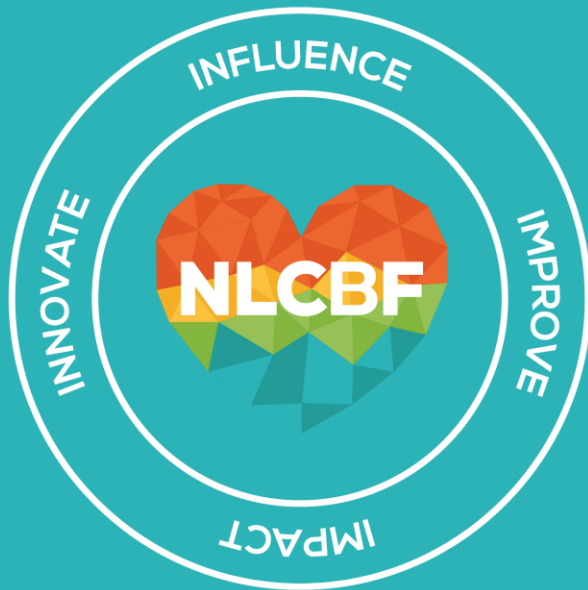
# Local Authority Asks

- **Assume we are struggling** - Provide all care leavers with regular food vouchers, assuming that the majority are struggling. It's hard to keep coming back asking.
- **Funding for additional/specific needs** - Think about financial needs of particular groups of young people E.g. Providing young parents with funding for activities with their children; Graduates.
- **Help us become more independent** - Fully fund driving lessons, find local transport solutions
- **Cost of Living Payment** - Ringfence fund e.g. Household Support Fund for care experienced young people (where not already in place)

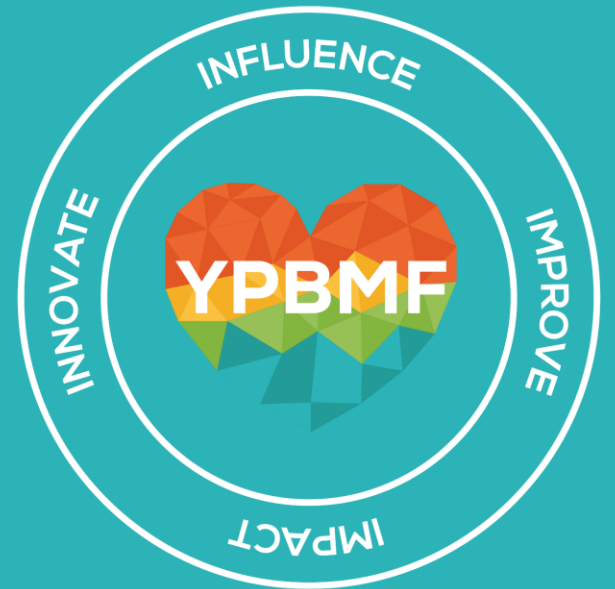
# National Asks

- **Universal Credit** – Give the Over 25 rate of Universal credit to care experienced young people from the age of 18. Unlike many they are living and supporting themselves independently and don't have others to turn to for financial support
- **Free Transport** – influence all areas to provide free/discounted buses, trams, trains...like an over 60's pass but for your children....us
- **Local funding to care leavers as priority group** - Ensure that all Local Authorities recognise care leavers as a priority group for Cost-of-living payments, extend the Household Support Fund and ensure it is ringfenced.
- **Walk in our shoes** – find out what it's like to live on the average income of a care experienced individual in the current cost of living crisis.

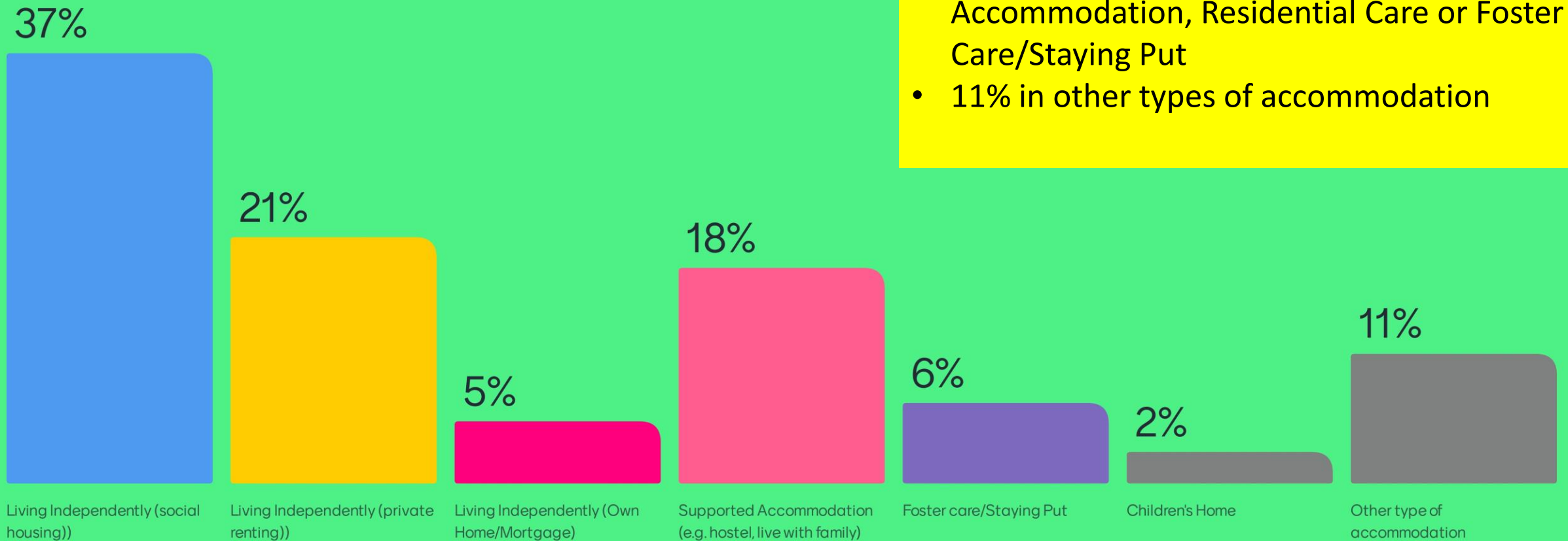
# Topic 2: Safe & Affordable Accommodation



Esla & Harlie



# Where are you living?

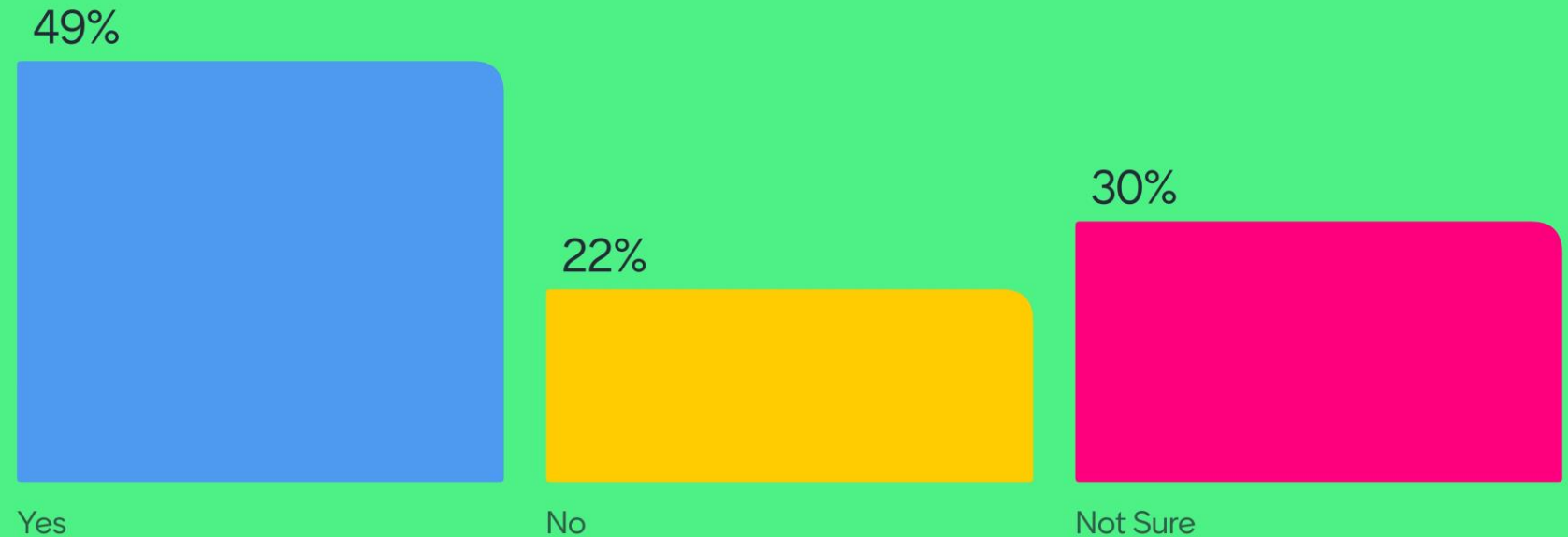


- 63% of people were living in their own home either social housing, private renting or their own home.
- 26% were living in Supported Accommodation, Residential Care or Foster Care/Staying Put
- 11% in other types of accommodation



## Are care leavers prioritised for housing in your area? i.e. social housing, council housing/flats etc

- YPBMF could not understand why social housing wasn't always prioritised for care experienced individuals

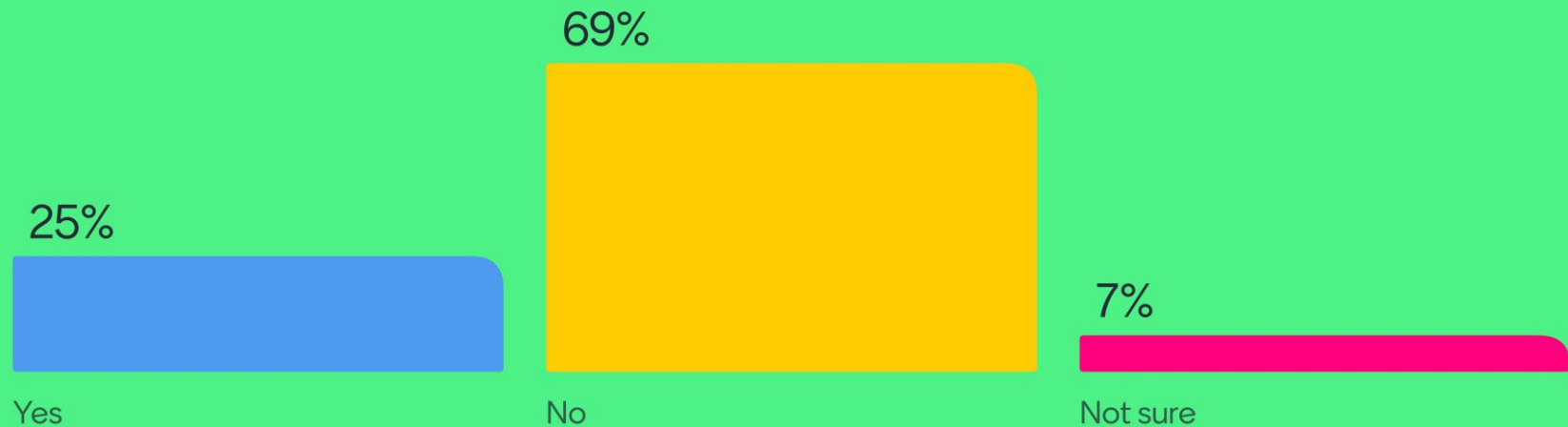


- Some Care Leavers experienced District Councils can overrule priority given by LA council
- Cross boundary is an issue with neighbouring councils
- Care Leavers should have option to keep carpets, curtains and white goods in house from previous tenants where safe – care leavers/services should be able to gift items (could there be a disclaimer)



# Have you ever been advised to make yourself homeless in order to move to a more appropriate home?

YPBMF did not understand why this happens at all but had experienced it



# Care Experienced Views & Experiences

There should be legislation that controls private landlords. My home is in disrepair and has mould but there are no affordable alternatives.

Spend more time with you choosing furniture/paint etc offer their own opinions too. Mine just said "well it's your home do what you like" then afterwards told me she would have picked other stuff.

The Setting Up Home Allowance should be more than £3000 and young people should have more trust and choice with how they spend it

# Do you feel safe in your home and your neighbourhood/area?

- Very dependent on the area you live in
- Care experienced people often can't afford security measures e.g. Ring Doorbell, CCTV



- Less people felt safe in their neighbourhood
- Often down to crime levels and lack of connection

# What makes it difficult to get to places in your community like the shops or doctors?

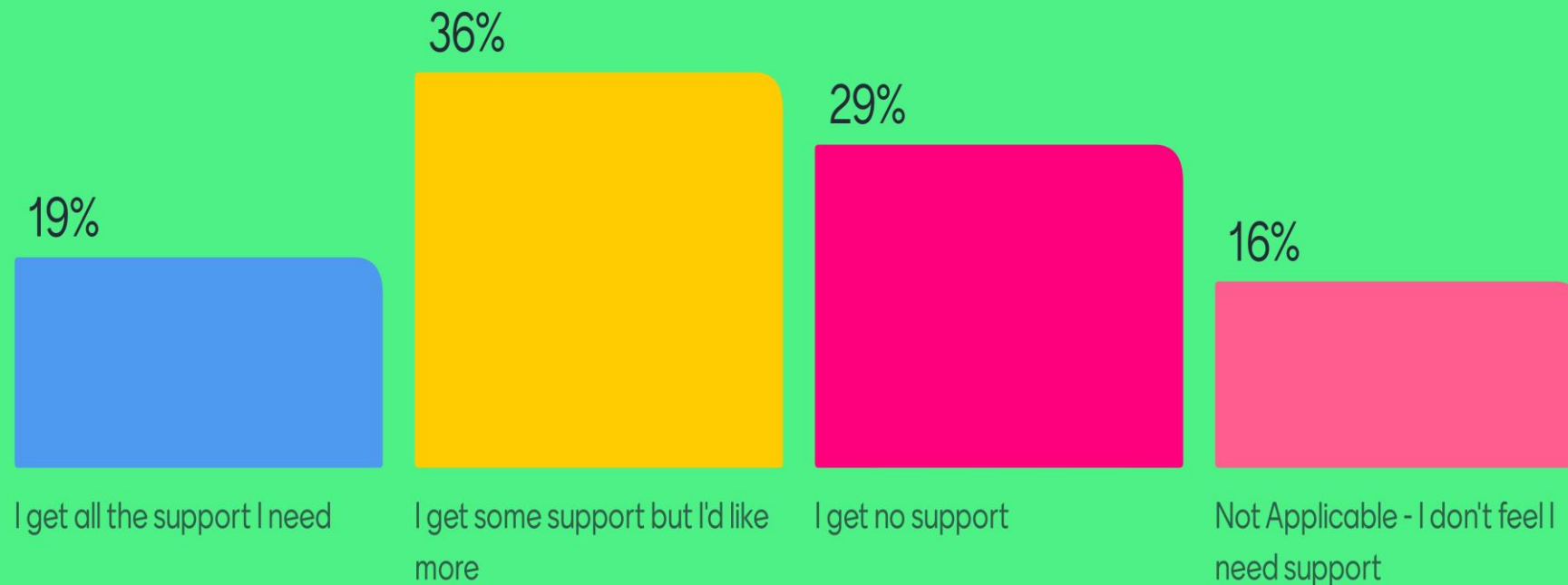
Not knowing the area well enough and with not much information around to what is in your local area

I moved from a busy city to somewhere slightly more rural. There's less public transport and it requires more walking to train stations. Passing by tight knit communities can be daunting

My anxiety I live close to shops but leaving the house makes me really overwhelmed from the people and all the noises. It really upsets me so I end up staying home



# Do you get the support you need to manage your home and monthly outgoings e.g. pay for bills, shopping



- 19% got all the support they needed which is great
- Worryingly 65% wanted more support or felt like they got no support
- The response may differ at different ages e.g. younger care experienced people getting more support

# Care Experienced Views & Experiences

**My Personal Advisor helps with  
everything.**

**Without her I'd genuinely have been  
kicked out of my flat a year ago.**

# What could Local Authorities and services do (or do more of)?

## What helps:

- Ring doorbell security/CCTV to make us feel safer – or homes in better areas (many individuals report crime and isolation as having a big impact on their mental health and anxiety).
- More visits – see how I'm getting on
- Increased Setting Up Home Allowance and more flexibility on what it can be spent on
- Provide WiFi (free/subsidised) and devices to help us maintain work, education and our relationships with family & friends who may be a long way from us
- Handyman services to help with DIY and maintenance of our homes

## What doesn't help:

- Delaying making decisions about funding and what it can be spent on to make a home a home
- Leaving us to contact all organisations on our own for additional support – help us to make the calls/send emails



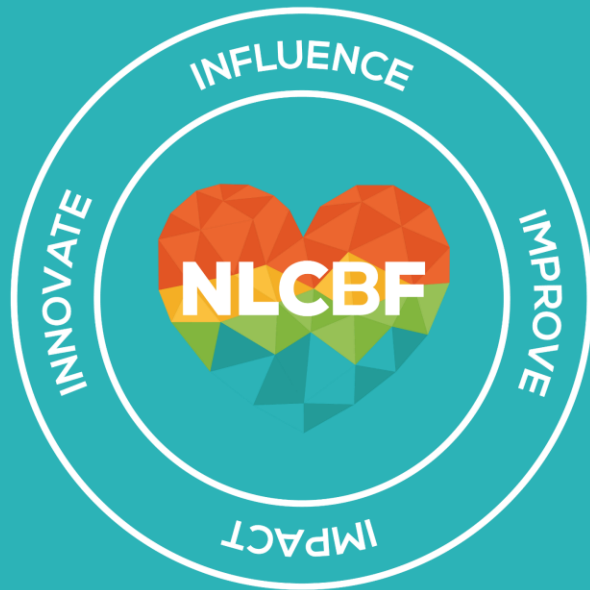
# Local Authority Asks

- **Clean affordable start** – The local authority should decorate the first home to a clean and neutral standard, add curtains, carpets/flooring and small essentials
- **Security of home** – A local offer that makes young people feel safe e.g. Ring Doorbell, CCTV and homes in safer areas
- **Help with maintenance** – Utilising in house/housing association handyman services to help with early repairs and understanding how to choose good maintenance services in the future. Especially where individuals don't have a support network
- **Check in** – We might have a job, a house etc. but that doesn't mean we are not struggling. Check in to help us resolve small problems before they get bigger

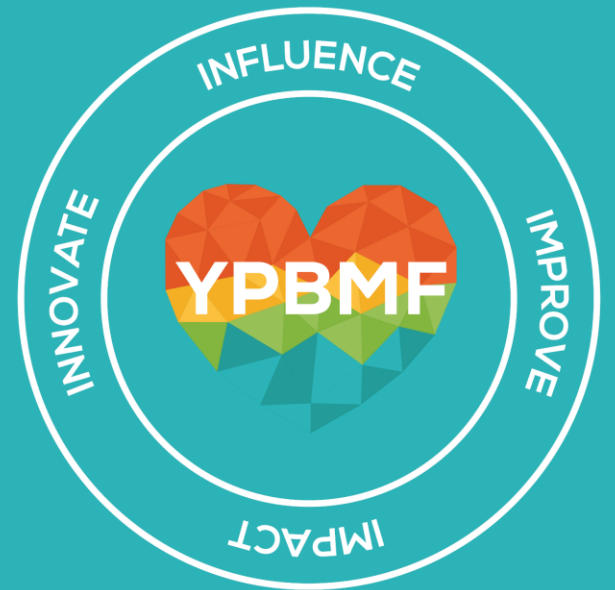
# National Asks

- **Setting Up Home Allowance/Leaving Care Grant** – £3,000 wasn't a big enough increase with the Cost of Living. Require a larger SUHA, a commitment to increase with inflation & recommended best practice on how it can be spent flexibly.
- **Priority Housing** – all Care Experienced individuals 18 – 25 years should be on priority banding. A national message.
- **Expand the National House Project** – NHP provides excellent support to get people in their own homes & learn how to manage their tenancy with a support network. It should be in more Local Authorities, with more able to access it
- **Have aspiration for us** – We are your children, and we deserve the option to work towards owning our own home. Build homes and help us to buy them.

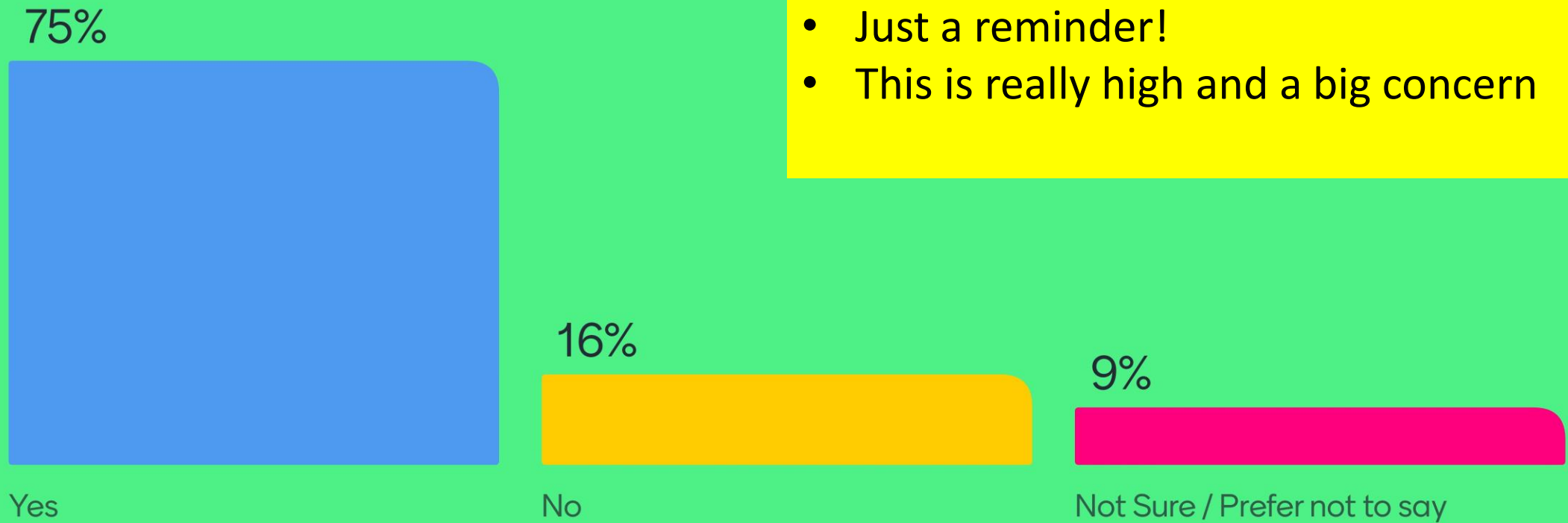
# Topic 3: Access to Health & Mental Health



Kim & Dyllan



# Has the cost of living crisis had an impact on your mental health?

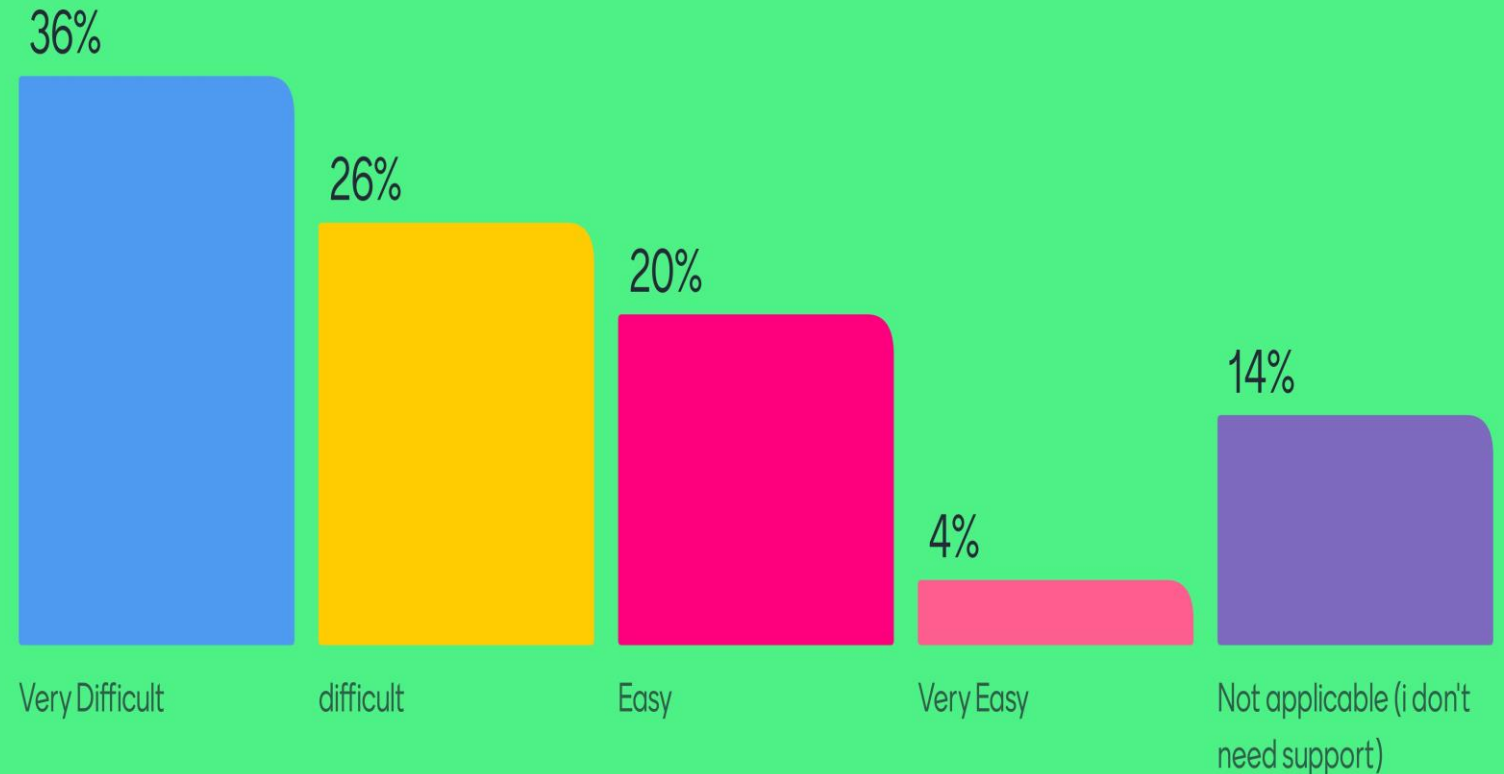


- Just a reminder!
- This is really high and a big concern

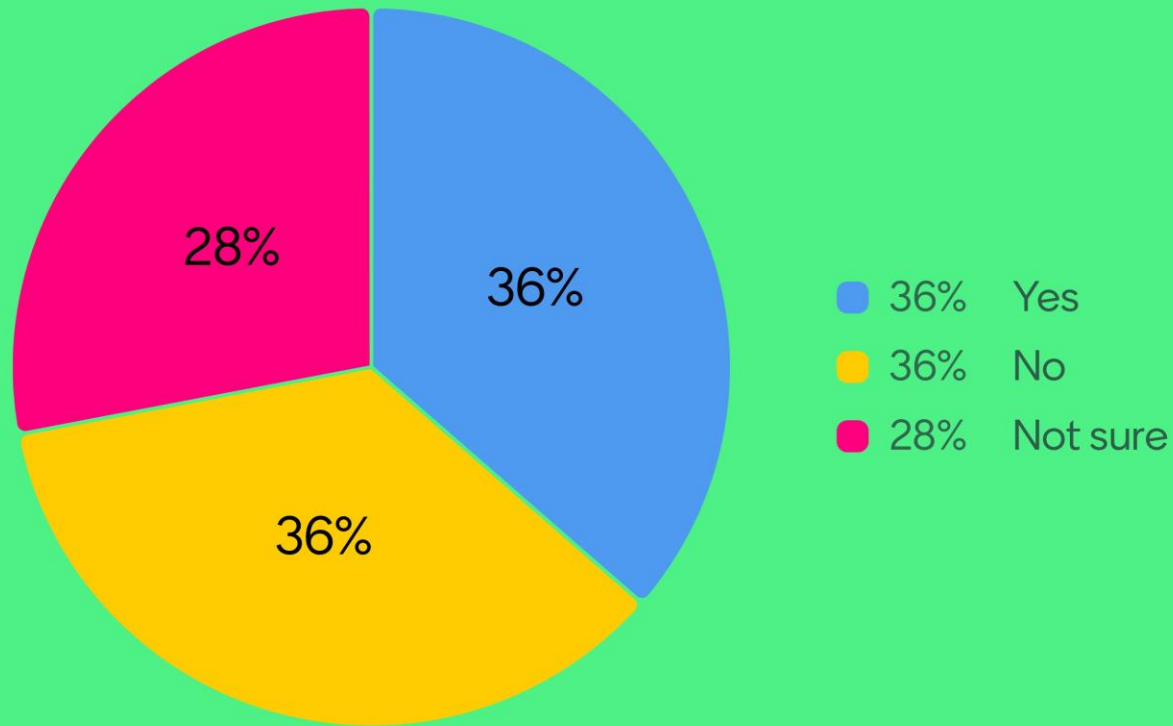


- 62% of care experience people found it difficult to get the mental health support they needed
- Only 24% found it easy to get the support they needed
- YPBMF said this doesn't surprise us, it's very difficult to access support
- Care Experienced people need a specialised approach "we don't fit into general services" which makes it harder

## How easy is it to get the mental health support that you need?



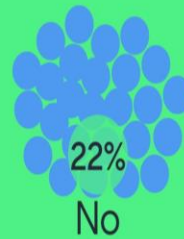
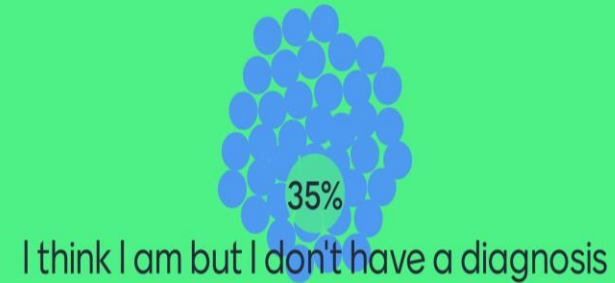
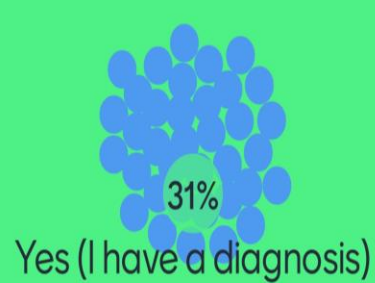
# Do you feel like your leaving care team/Personal Adviser are well trained around health and mental health?



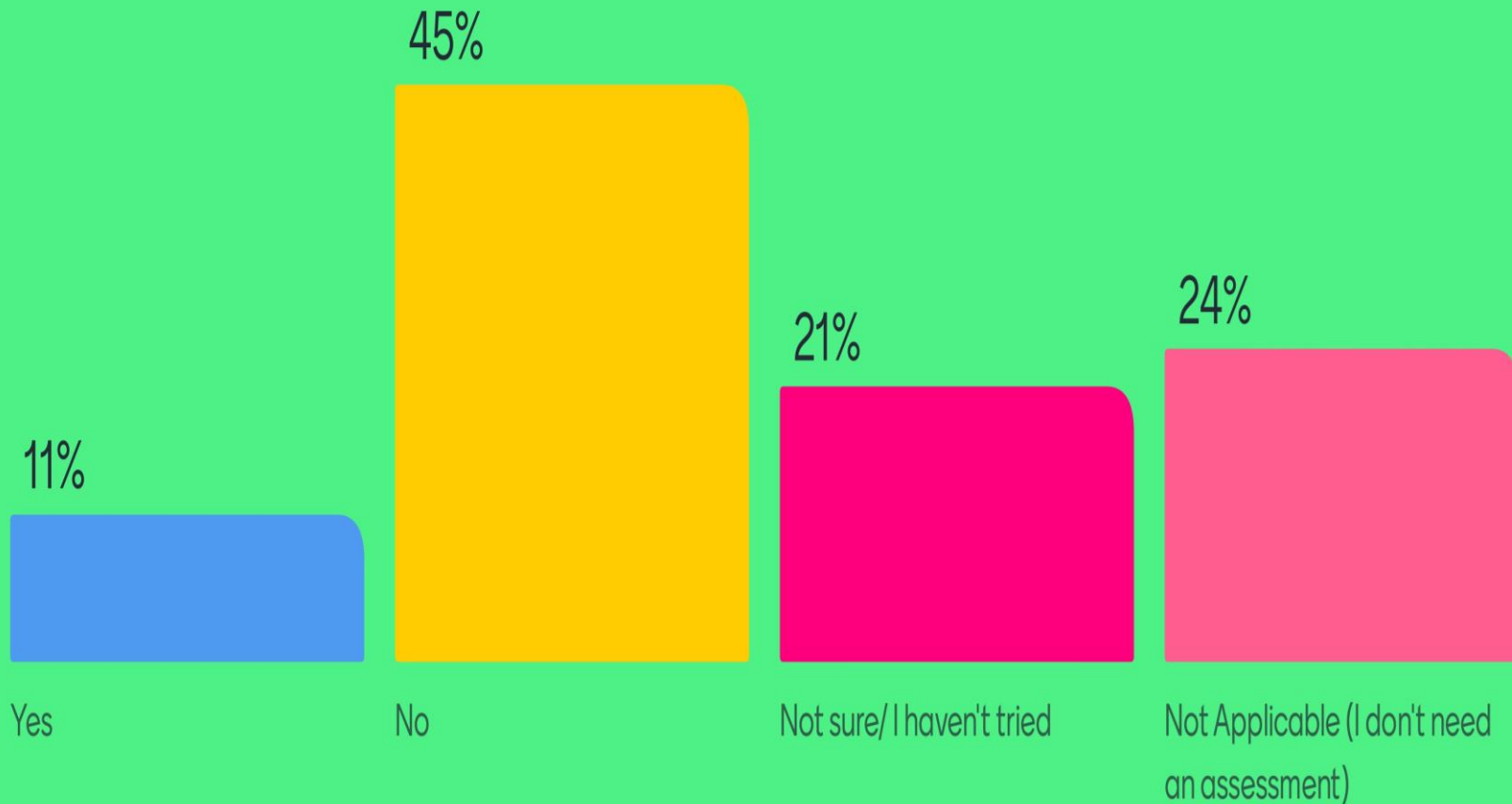
- Approx 1/3 of care experienced young people felt PA's were not well training around health and mental health support
- Young people felt that when PA's were specialist it was due to previous qualification or role and not training
- PA's seem to be offered short training courses but not to the level YP felt they needed

# Are you neurodivergent? E.g dyslexia, ADHD, Autism

- Some experts believe that as many as 70% of care experienced individuals are Neurodivergent
- 66% have a diagnosis or self-identify as Neurodivergent with a further 12% not sure
- YPBMF feel there needs to be some research into this



# Is it easy to get an assessment around neurodiversity? e.g. ADHD, Autism

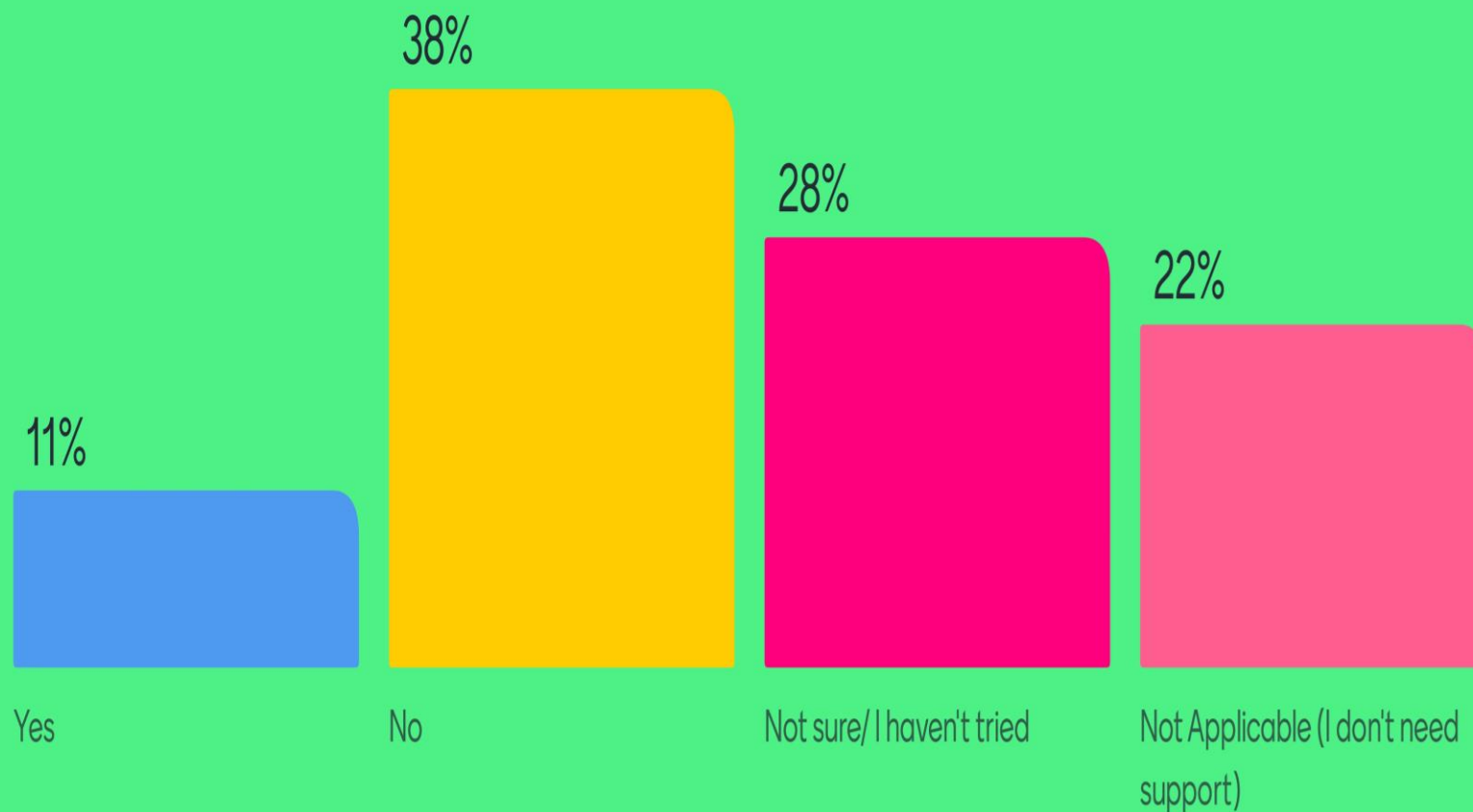


- 45% of care experienced people responding felt it wasn't easy to get an assessment and diagnosis
- Mental Health and Trauma could be prioritised above Neurodivergence – it's one or the other



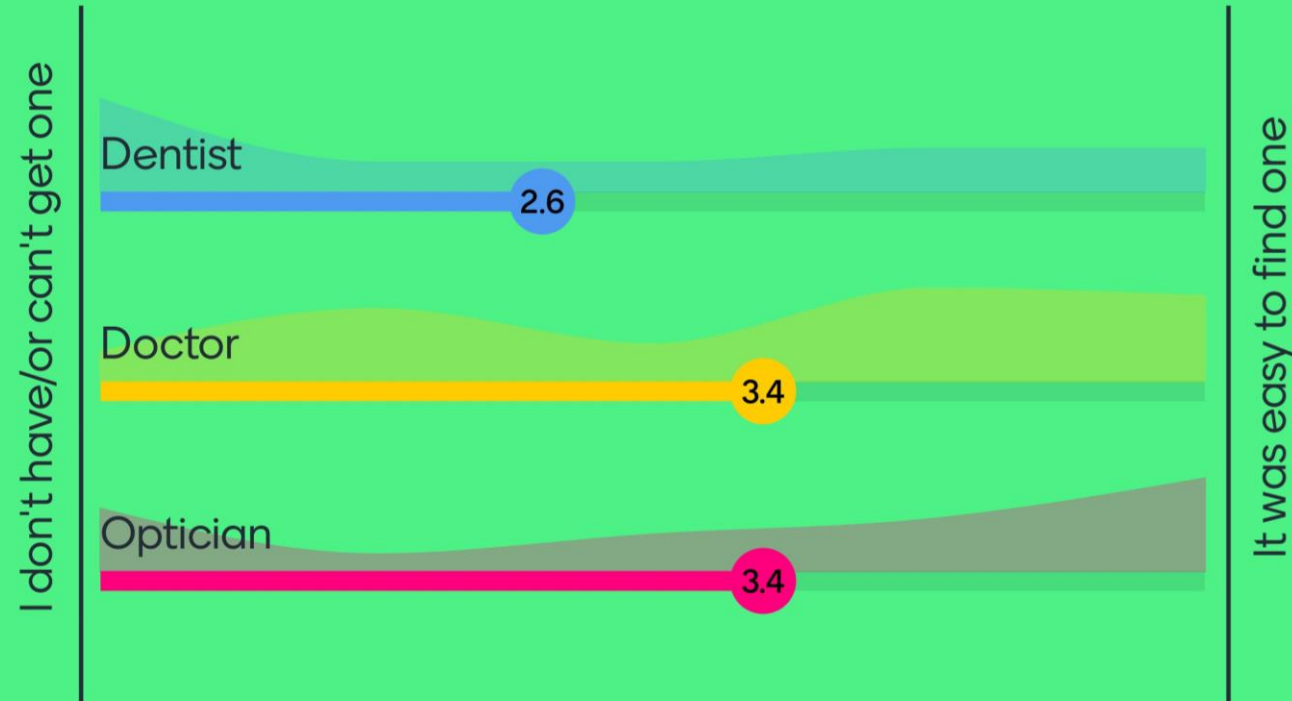
## Is it easy to get support around neurodiversity? e.g. ADHD, Autism

- 38% said that it wasn't easy to get support for their neurodiversity
- Specialist support was hard to come by
- Other things could overshadow neurodiversity e.g. ADHD, and it's not treated seriously
- Sometimes communication between health professionals and social care is inconsistent
- Understanding of needs can be poor and it doesn't help you to keep up with self-care and medication



# How easy is it to find and get an appointment at the following:

- Getting an NHS Dentist appointment is very difficult
- Accessing the doctors is also a big problem
- Additional costs such as prescriptions make it difficult for care leavers to maintain health



- Individuals also find it hard to register and provide necessary information
- Neurodiversity can impact on ability to access the right support

# What support have you received that has helped?

## **Helpful**

- Gym memberships most frequent response
- Free prescriptions for medication
- Mental health worker at The Care Leavers Hub
- Providing resources to help young people understand their mental health and feel empowered

## **Not as helpful**

- Make sure the therapy offer is right e.g. CBT, art therapy etc isn't right for everyone
- Gym membership not available or accessible to all

# Care Experienced Views & Experiences

Mental health care leavers nurse. We need more of those! Community mental health services are god awful. That really needs looking at.

I need the opportunity to get assessed for ADHD and Autism. I struggle so so much. I get labelled as having anxiety and lazy with depression...but I genuinely can't focus

I recently had a mental health support request denied because I had "enough support" ....PA support and living in supported accommodation should not prevent you from getting a mental health referral

# What can help you to improve your health and mental health?

- **Access to assessments and support for Neurodiversity** – providing information about the process of diagnosis, Right to Choose and ways to fast track care experienced individuals
- **Help to get outside/ in nature** – leaving care teams or youth groups offering activities such as walking, gardening/allotments, running groups
- **Out of hours support** – Mental Health is not a Mon to Fri, 9 – 5 problem. Have flexible out of hours support such as Ask Jan (Rees Foundation) and Care Leavers Hubs can help
- **Reducing isolation** – creating opportunities and providing support for individuals to meet with others, share problems, have fun and feel healthier

# Care Experienced Views & Experienced

**My personal advisor went on a course to study Borderline Personality Disorder, to better help me. She did it in her spare time and out of her own money**

# Local Authority Asks

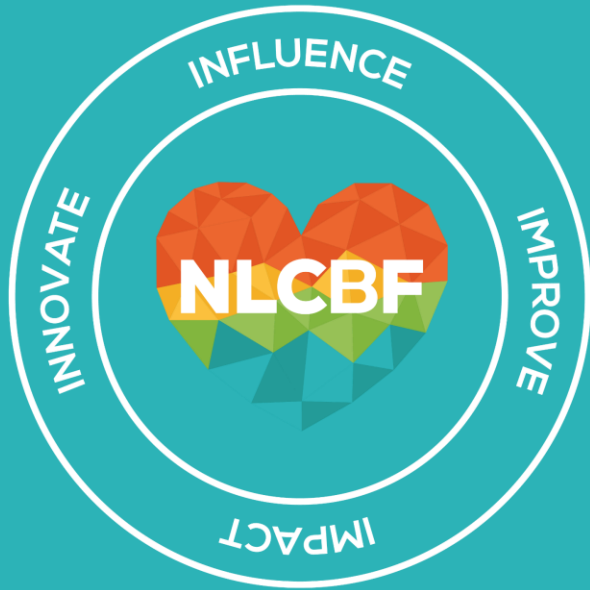
- **Mental Health & Health training** – leaving care teams benefit from having specialists within the team but all PAs should have Mental Health training and be trauma informed
- **Out of hours support** – finding solutions for out of hours support such as commissioning voluntary organisations, Care Leavers Hubs with crisis support and Apps e.g Kooth, Ask Jan
- **Health & Mental Health Specialist within Care Leavers Teams**– Having mental health workers, leaving care nurses who are accessible at Care Leavers Hubs
- **Creating and promoting groups and activities** – helping to reduce isolation and get care experienced people involved in positive activities and communities

# National Asks

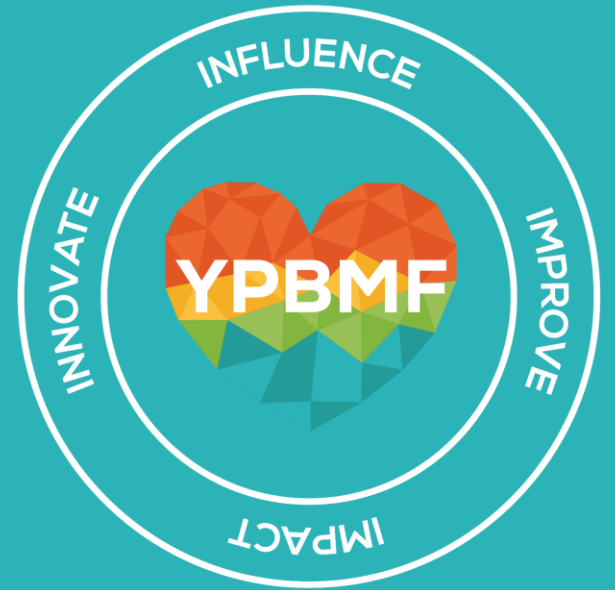
- **Neurodiversity Research** – fund national research into Neurodiversity and care experience to get an idea of the scale of the issue and how to support individuals appropriately to thrive in work, education and life in general
- **National offer around health** – ensure that Local Authorities and organisations are providing a good health offer in all areas e.g. gym memberships, free NHS prescriptions in all areas
- **Address the dental health crisis** – care experienced young people cannot get NHS dental health care and cannot afford private dental care. They can be left in debilitating pain which impacts on work, education and standard of life.
- **Specialised mental health support** – care experienced individuals often require mental health interventions which



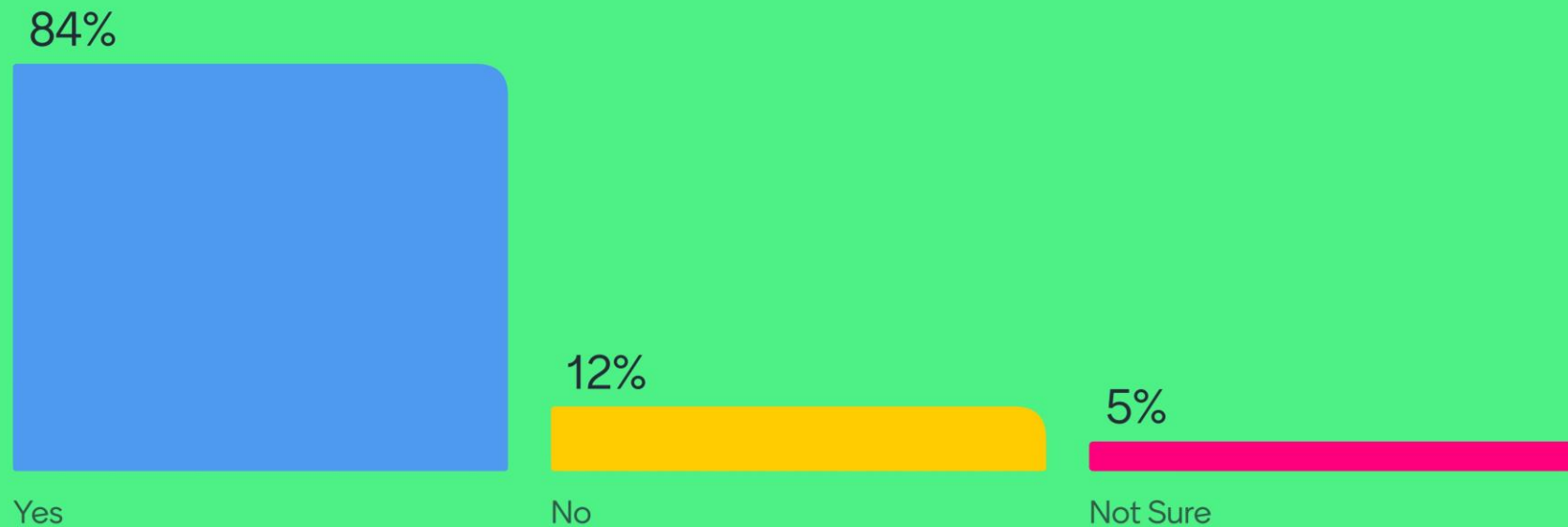
# Topic 4: Support after 21 & 25 years



Reece & Nathan

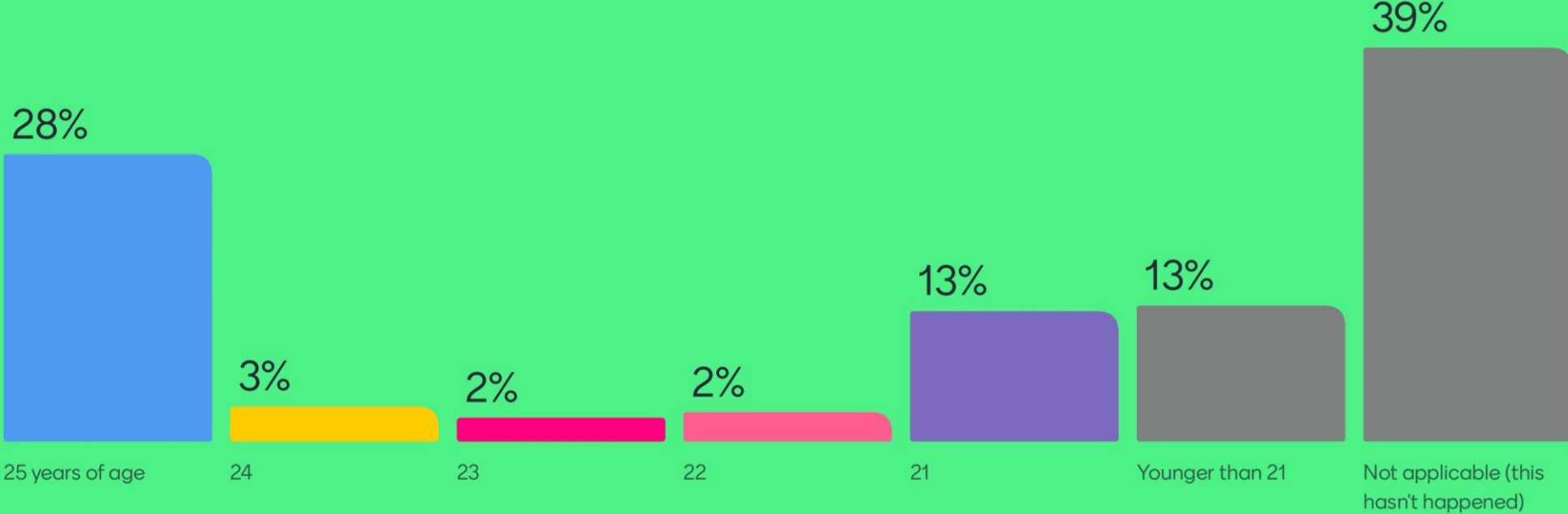


# Do you have a Personal Advisor/Leaving care Worker or support from your local authority?



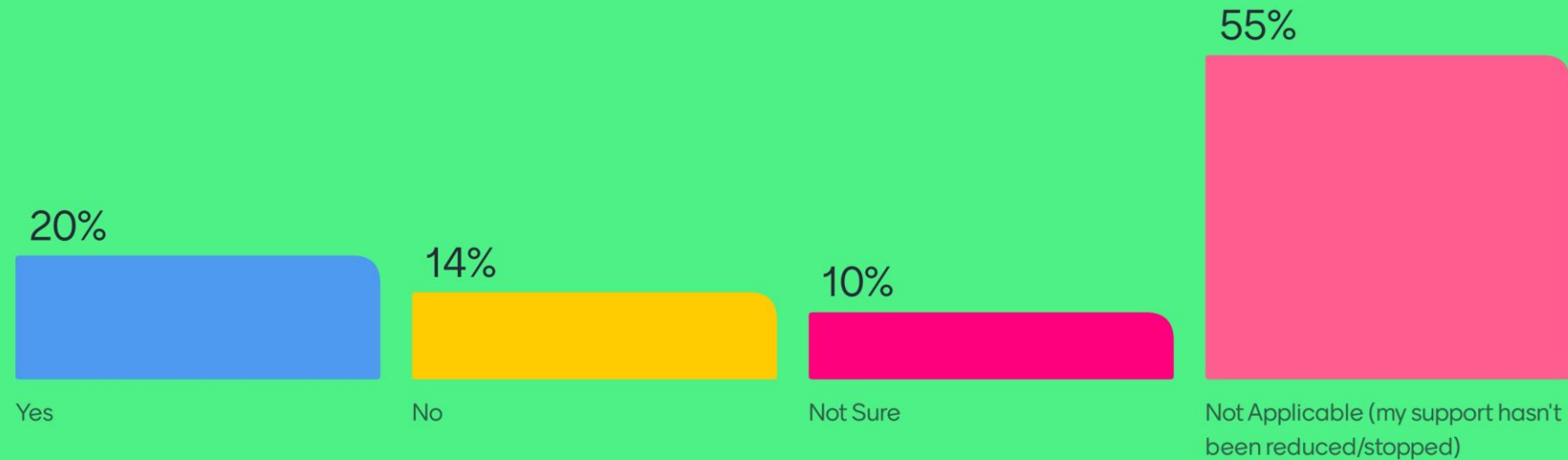
- 84% of people were still being support by a personal advisor or able to access Local Authority support
- This is encouraging as 48% of those responding were over 21 years of age

# At what age were you told that they were no longer supporting you or reducing your support?



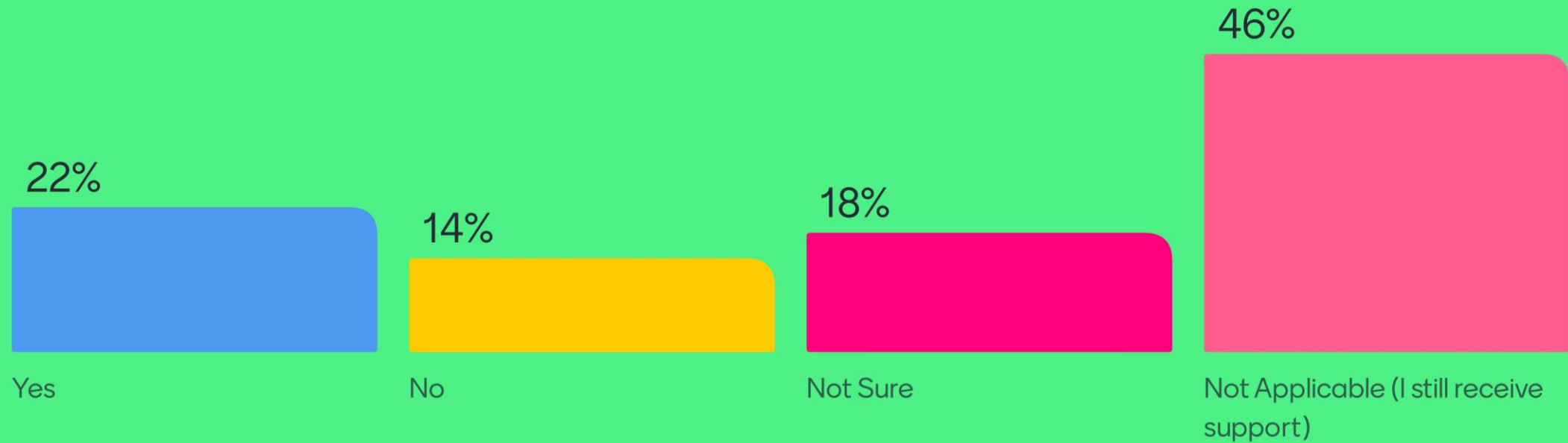
- Almost a 1/3 said support was withdrawn or reduced at 25 years
- 26% said that support was reduced or withdrawn at 21 years or under

If your support has been reduced or you no longer receive support from your PA/leaving care team, do they continue to stay in touch?



- Although support was withdrawn/reduced leaving care teams often stayed in touch
- The responses suggest that approaches to staying in touch could improve

# If you no longer get support from your PA / leaving care team do you know how to go back to ask for help if you need it?

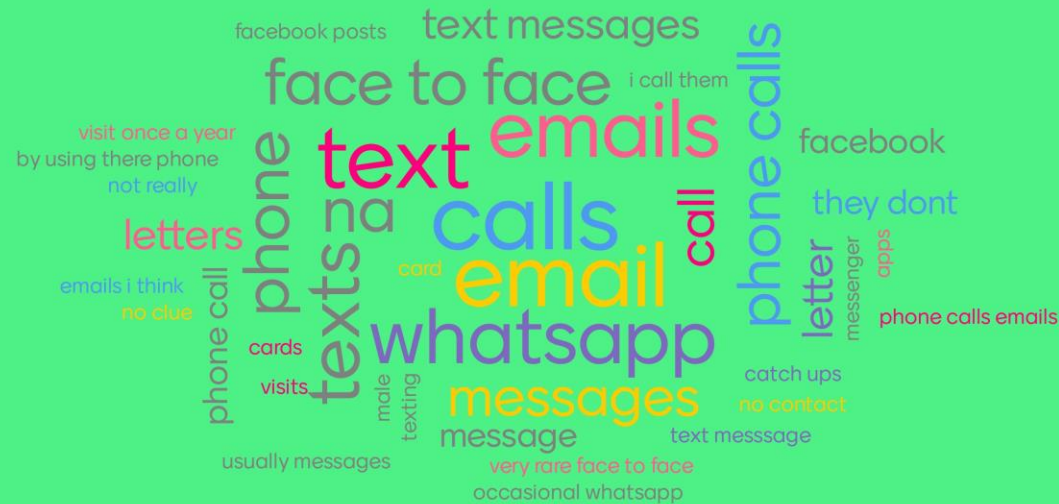


- Responses suggest that PA's and Local Authorities need to improve information about how young people go back to ask for help if they need it

# If they do keep in contact, how do they do it? e.g. cards, letters, emails, calls

188 responses

- Local Authorities use a variety of ways to keep in touch
- Popular ways include Text, Calls, WhatsApp, Emails and Face to Face
- Some responses suggested that face to face keeping in contact was rare



# Support for 21 – 25 year olds

## **Positive responses:**

- Care leavers hubs are useful – somewhere to return to
- App that stated what support was available
- Some young people said they didn't need support

## **Negative responses:**

- Feeling abandoned/rejected - feeling they leave you on your own
- Difficult to contact PA/services
- Several mentions of financial support ending

# Care Experienced Views & Experiences – after 21

After 21 I no longer got any Christmas or birthday money. I feel as if I am more alone and have less support now

The PA I currently have offers very good support

Nothing is better.  
They constantly try to close your case.



# Care Experienced Views & Experiences – after 25

In a way. I am aware I no longer need any plans or formal things but it's nice to know I can still turn to them as and when I need too

Everything is worse after 18. So many people involved directly with you go away. It's not acceptable because you get chucked out at 25 and everyone's 25 is different, which is why I don't agree with it. It should be if you have eligible care needs you get what you want and need

I have a child going through ADHD assessments and all the things I needed help with and questions I have are just not a priority anymore, I feel like I'm fighting a battle alone and no-one gives a crap.

# Care Experienced Views & Experiences

**I know I can go back to my LA and receive  
pathway support until 25**

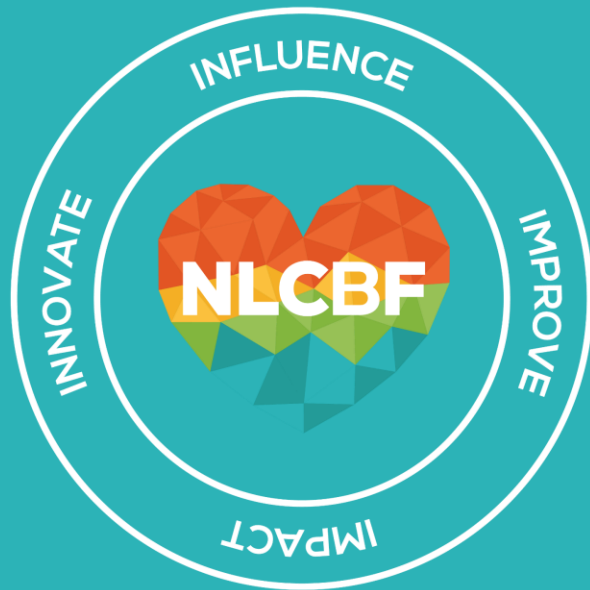
# Local Authority Asks

- **A clear offer for 21 - 25 years** - Young people need to know what support is available through the Local Offer
- **Look for best practice examples after 25 years** – North Yorkshire model
- **Commission organisations to create communities of support** - e.g Rees Foundation
- **Identify additional funding that can be offered after 21/25 years** – support organisations, Christmas dinners, Council Tax Exemption to 25
- **A place to return to** – could hubs host regular over 25 events

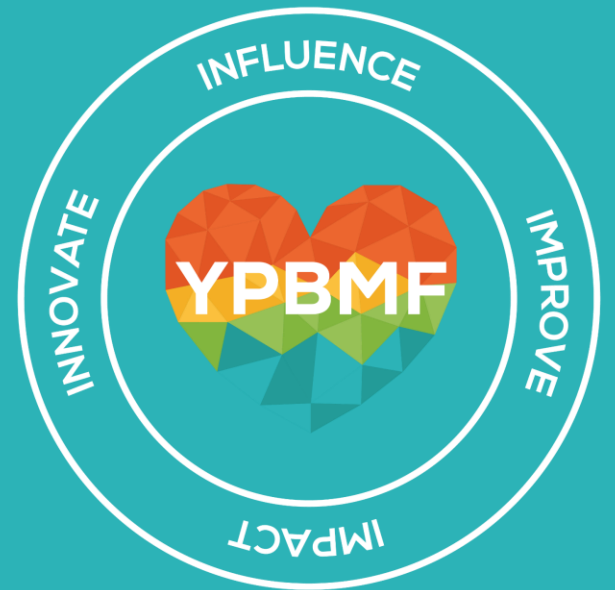
# National Asks

- **Care Review** – following up recommendations of the care review
- **Staying Close & Staying Put** – extend, review and make sure it is funded to ensure as many benefit as possible
- **Fund Networks of Support** – Youth groups activities, care leaver projects Post 25
- **Be our Corporate Parent** – You are all our corporate parents, find out how to be a good one

# Topic 5: Creating Communities of Support

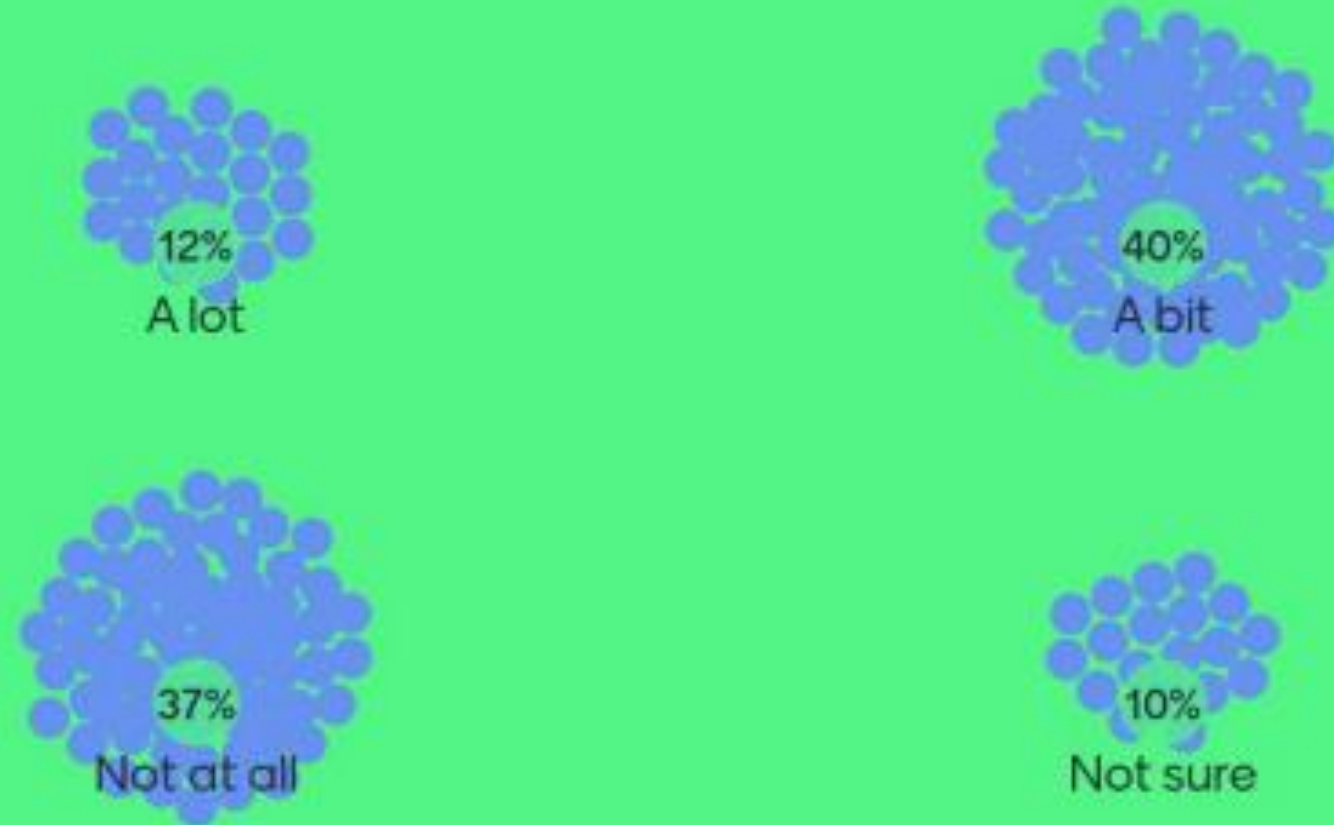


Dyllan & Harlie



# How connected to your local community do you feel?

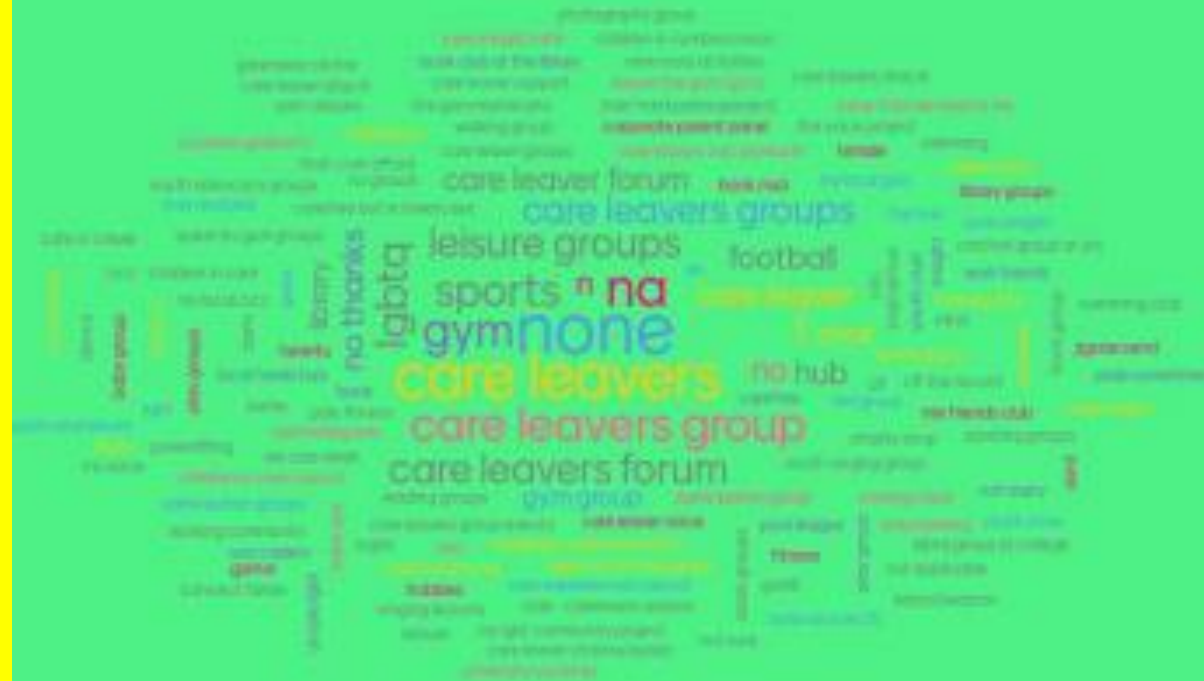
- 52% of young people felt connected to their community, but only 12% felt very connected
- YPBMF were surprised that so many young people felt 'not at all' connected



# What groups are you able to attend or be a part in your area? e.g. care leavers groups, LGBTQ+, BAME, book groups, sports and leisure groups

246 responses

- Top answers – Care Leavers groups & gym/football
- ‘None’ also a popular answer
- YPBMF felt it was good to see care leavers group featuring so highly
- Good to see people people’s work friends mentioned
- Someone put ‘no thanks’ – good to remember not everyone wants this.



# What fun things would you like to see in your area? (things you would get involved in)

276 responses

- Top answers – Gym, football, swimming, walking groups & cricket – Active activities
- Interesting to see so much variety E.g. Comicon, music festivals, cinema, art groups, gaming, sober hangout
- YPBMF felt ‘affordable gym’ made an important point, linking to cost of living pressures





# What makes it difficult to access places in your community?

- **Anxiety** – 66 mentions of anxiety, including social anxiety, travel anxiety & not feeling safe
- **Distance to travel & public transport** - Unreliable public transport mentioned many times, along with the distance to get places.
- **Affordability & Benefit issues**
- **Accessibility** – Young people with a disability & mobility issues identified this as a barrier
- **Young Parents** – Faced additional barriers

# Care Experienced Views & Experiences

I have no friends to go with to places. I am happy with my dog going on walks. I only feel safe with my dog. I feel uncomfortable & unsafe in my town

My anxiety – I don't completely understand it, but it's really hard. I struggle in social situations or going outside or in public. I feel more at ease when I'm in nature, but just leaving the house is so hard.

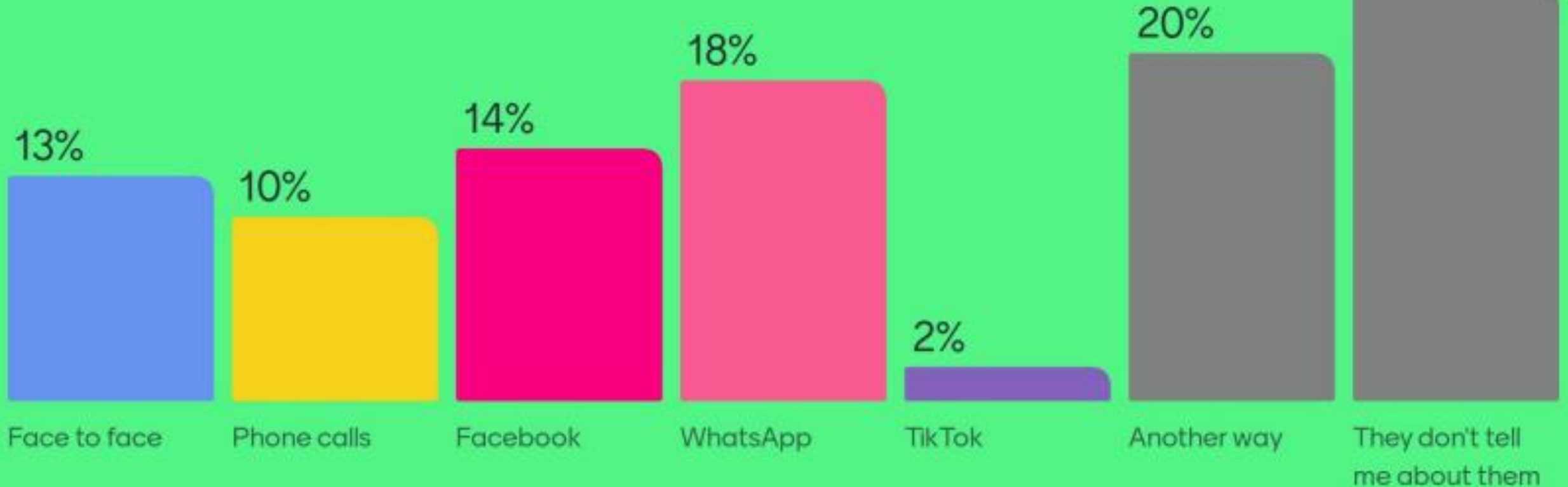
Anxiety, plus I don't have much money to spend, so I'd rather not spend it on bus fares or giving petrol money.

# Is there anything that would help you to get more involved in local groups or doing fun things in your local area?

- **Communication** - More notice given & more communication – mentioned many times
- **Buddy** - Going with someone, take your partner/friend/someone you know & being able to bring children to some events
- **Travel Costs**
- **Accessibility** – Providing information about accessibility & parking
- **Variety of events** – Including Sporting & nature related
- **Interests** – creating opportunities to exploring an individual's interests.

# How do your leaving care team let you know about groups, activities & opportunities to meet people & have fun?

- WhatsApp & Facebook coming in as the highest.
- Concerning how many people are not told – grey bar - although this is outweighed by people who are told.
- YPBMF wondered what ‘another way’ was. Email maybe?



**Is there anything that would help you to get more involved in local groups or doing fun things in your local community?**

**More awareness. Buddy system for first time attending.**

**Being told about fun events that are happening**

**I don't actually know anyone that lives in my area. When I moved, it would have been great to have the chance to sit with my PA & go through what's in the area**

# Local Authority Asks

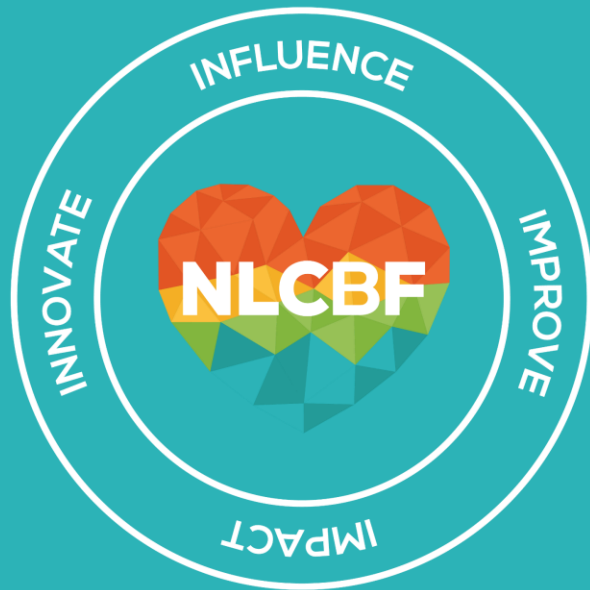
- **Variety of Opportunities** – Create a variety of opportunities for young people to engage with, including plenty of active activities & activities they can bring a friend/child to
- **Communication** – Tell us about what we can get involved with
- **Young People's Interests** - Support young people to explore their interests & see how you can support them to attend new things.
- **Address barriers** – Eg. Travel costs, gym costs
- **Anxiety** - Support us around anxiety

Good Practice – Wandsworth, £20/month 'wellbeing allowance' – can be spent on gym/hobbies etc.

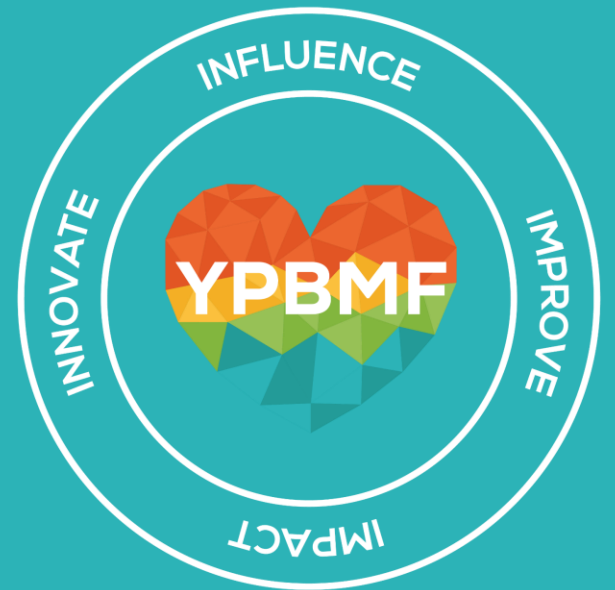
# National Asks

- **Universal free gym offer for young person plus one**
- **Wide range of taster & ongoing offers** – Care Leaver Covenant to source a wide range of leisure/interest offers for young people to try and get involved with including cinema, sports clubs, etc.
- **Free Travel** – To address the barrier of transport to accessing opportunities
- **Mental Health barriers** – Address the mental health barriers we face that prevent us being part of the community

# Workshops – Let's talk



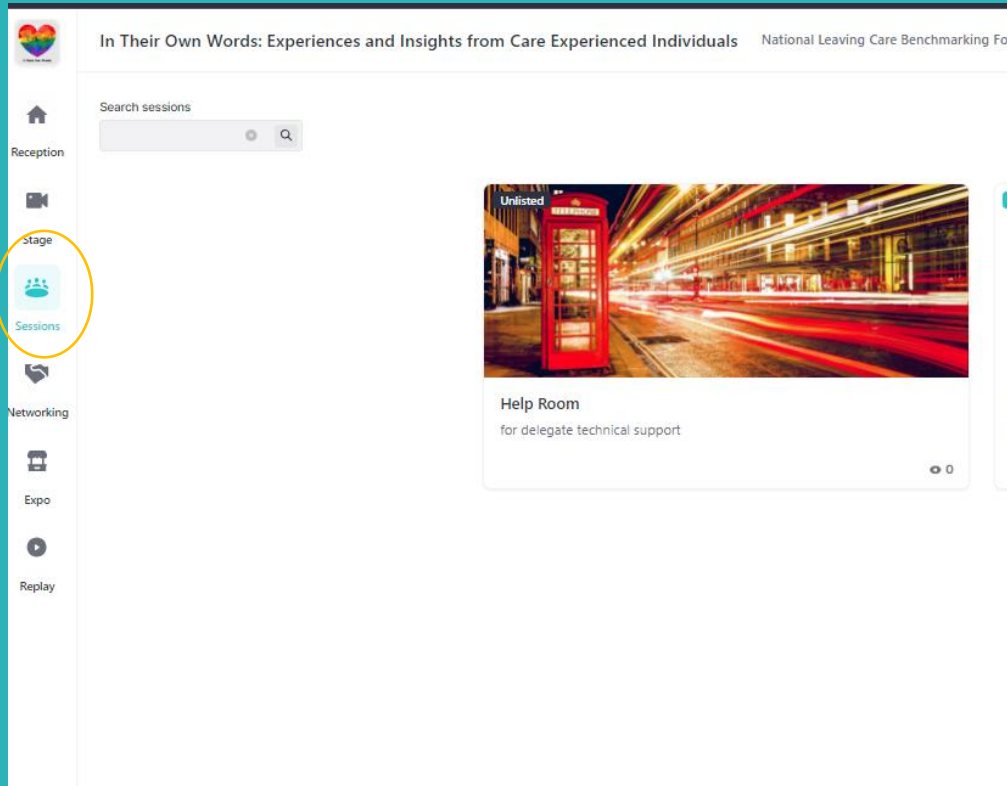
Harlie & Nat







# Online Workshops



**Hopin/Ring Central – on the Right side of your screen click “Sessions” and the themed Workshop rooms will appear**

- In the next 30 minutes you will have the opportunity to join a themed workshop room
- You can pick 2 of the key message themes to attend for 15 minutes each with a facilitator.
- Click “Sessions” to find the themed rooms
- You can share your video and audio to join a discussion
- Or you can use the chat function in the room
- After the first workshop click the “Sessions” button again and the rooms will appear again



# In Person - Workshops



- In the next 30 minutes you will have the opportunity to discuss the themes from “In Their Own Words”
- You can pick 2 of the key message themes to discuss on your table
- All 5 topics are on your table – spend a few minutes deciding which 2 subjects you would like to discuss on your table
- Display your topic so that YPBMF Champions/Legends can choose a table to join if they want to
- After 15 minutes we will encourage you to move on to another topic
- Think about what you have taken away from the key messages and what you aim to change

**Let us know:**

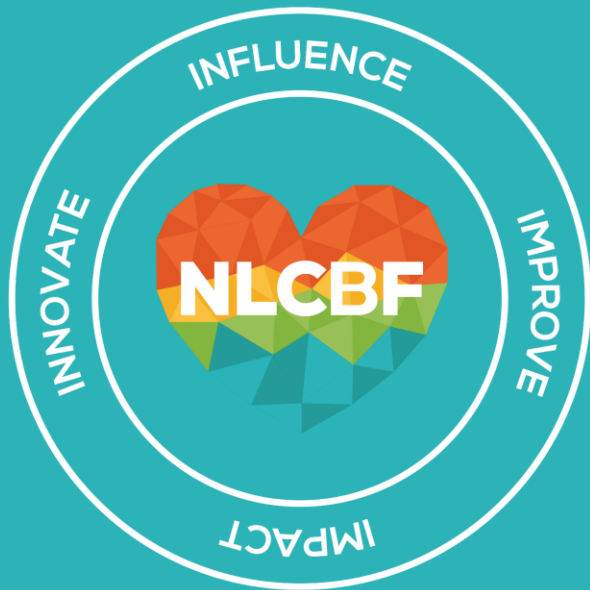
- **What you thought of the event**
- **What you are taking away**
- **What you plan to do as a result of what you have heard**

**Go to [www.menti.com](https://www.menti.com)**

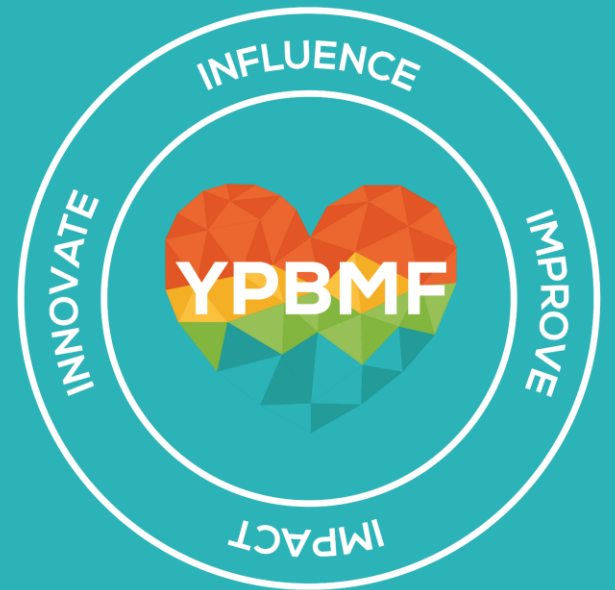
**Enter the code: 6236 3252**



# Reflections & Pledges



Cllr Jon Hubbard, Deputy  
Chair – LGA Children &  
Young People's Board &  
Chair of the Children's  
Scrutiny Committee in  
Wiltshire



**Let us know:**

- **What you thought of the event**
- **What you are taking away**
- **What you plan to do as a result of what you have heard**

**Go to [www.menti.com](https://www.menti.com)**

**Enter the code: 6236 3252**



# Next Steps

- We will listen to your take aways and pledges and add them to our final “In Their Own Words” reports
- We will launch the reports and videos from this event
- We hope to be invited to your meetings, to speak to decision makers and ensure that care experienced voices, experiences and ideas are heard

**Watch this space.....;)**



T<sub>1</sub>

H<sub>4</sub>

A<sub>1</sub>

N<sub>1</sub>

K<sub>5</sub>

S<sub>1</sub>