

AMION
CONSULTING

Warrington Youth Zone Impact Study



Final Report




Warrington Youth Zone

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Final Report

January 2025

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Executive Summary

We are delighted to present this impact report following an extensive piece of research undertaken throughout 2024 following the first two years of operation of Warrington Youth Zone. The state-of-the-art facility based on Dallam Lane in Warrington has been created by the national charity OnSide Youth Zones and is exclusively for children and young people from Warrington.

This report was prepared by AMION Consulting, an independent research company, to assess the impact that Warrington Youth Zone has made since opening in July 2022. There are a broad range of areas covered following consultations with children and young people, parents and carers, partner agencies and businesses from across the borough. A number of benefits are highlighted below, with a comprehensive analysis contained within the report.

The report shows that the Youth Zone is delivering substantial benefits for children and young people who visit the Youth Zone, those surveyed highlighted that:

- 85% have made more friends;
- 51% are more self-confident;
- 46% are staying out of trouble;
- nearly 40% are more aware of the dangers associated with alcohol, cigarettes and drugs;
- 40% are less worried about their health and about school;
- 44% work harder at school; and
- 40% are less likely to miss school.
- parents and carers. For example, among parents and carers surveyed:
 - 100% say family life has improved;
 - 36% are less worried about the behaviour of their children;
 - 25% are less worried about their children at school;
 - 50% say their children are more physically active; and
 - 31% say their children are less likely to miss school.
- Warrington. For example, among businesses surveyed:
 - 76% think that Warrington is a better place;
 - 77% think that the Youth Zone has improved the image of Warrington; and
 - 82% think that there is less anti-social behaviour in Warrington as a result of the Youth Zone.

Warrington Youth Zone

2024 Impact Study Highlights



The Youth Zone is delivering substantial benefits for:

Young People who visit the Youth Zone. For example:

85% have made more friends **51%** are more self-confident **46%** are staying out of trouble

Nearly **40%** are more aware of the dangers associated with alcohol, cigarettes and drugs

40% are less worried about their health and about school **44%** work harder at school **40%** are less likely to miss school

100% say family life has improved

36% are less worried about the behaviour of their children

25% are less worried about their children at school

50% say their children are more physically active

31% say their children are less likely to miss school

Parents & carers. For example:

Warrington: For example

76% of businesses think that Warrington is a better place

77% of businesses think that the Youth Zone has improved the image of Warrington

The Youth Zone has contributed to a **46%** decrease in anti-social behaviour

”

We massively appreciate that the specialist facility exists and the support from the staff who are fantastic. It has made a huge difference to our lives.

”

It's a fantastic place and Warrington is so lucky to have it. The staff are amazing and the time they take to explain things to the children is wonderful.

”

I'm really grateful that my son is able to attend the Youth Zone and take part in the special programme for disabled children. Being included with other children in their activities has made a massive difference to my son's confidence and happiness.

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

AMION Consulting, in conjunction with Spirul, was appointed to carry out a study into the benefits delivered by Warrington Youth Zone.

The main purposes of this study are:

- to identify the benefits to young people arising from attending the Youth Zone;
- to identify the benefits to the families of young people attending the Youth Zone;
- to identify the benefits to businesses in the area and to Warrington town centre; and
- to assess how well the Youth Zone works with other organisations in the area to improve opportunities for young people.

1.2 Approach to the study

The main research stages were as follows:

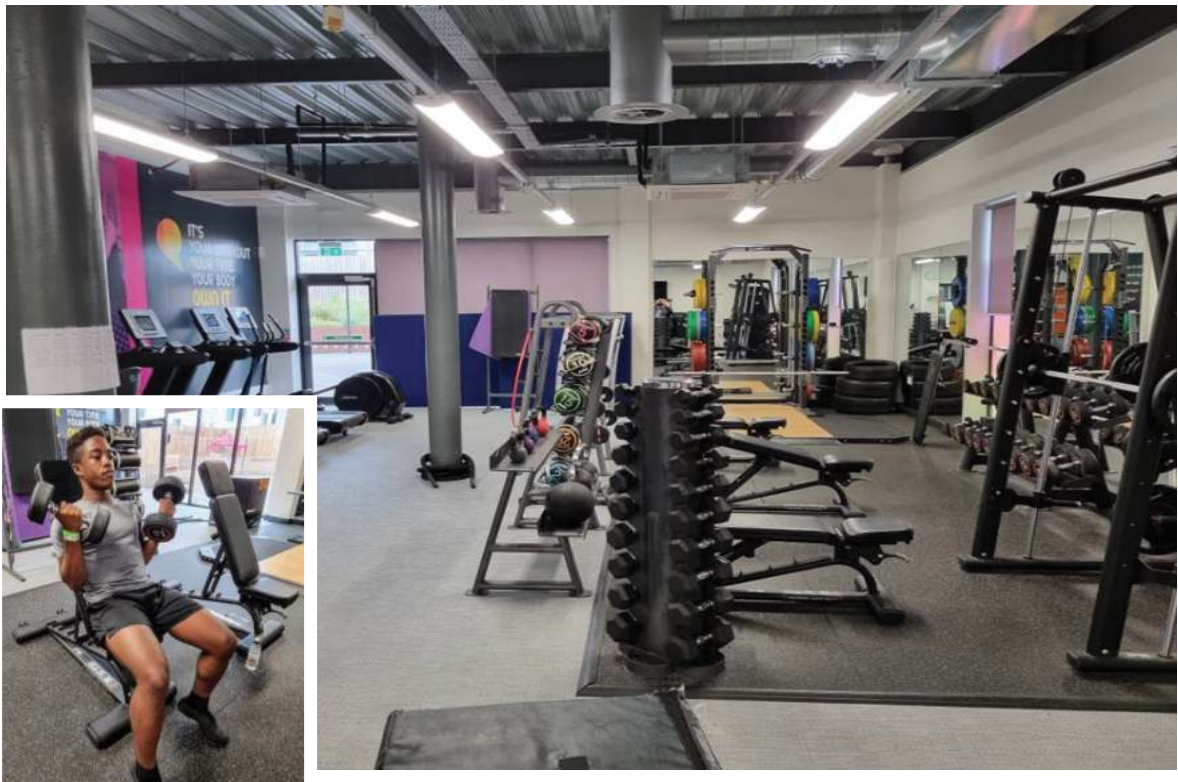
- Visit to the Youth Zone* – this enabled our team to become familiar with the background to the Youth Zone and to enhance our understanding of the facilities and services provided by the Youth Zone.
- Contextual review* – this included a review of the Warrington Children and Young People’s Plan to determine the extent to which the Youth Zone is consistent with local priorities. It also included an assessment of Warrington in relation to a range of relevant social factors such as demography, deprivation, crime, health and educational performance.
- Survey of young people attending the Youth Zone* – Spirul carried out a face-to-face survey within the Youth Zone, with 73 young people responding.
- Survey of parents and carers* – Spirul also carried out a survey of parents and carers of young people attending the Youth Zone, with 13 responses received.
- Survey of businesses in the area around the Youth Zone* – a further survey of 17 businesses located near the Youth Zone was also undertaken.
- Consultations* – these were carried out with a range of partners including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Cheshire Police, Warrington Borough Council (Youth Services and Early Help Departments) and Warrington Voluntary Action.
- Volunteer focus group* – a focus group was held with Youth Zone volunteers to discuss their views of the Youth Zone and its impact.

1.3 Structure of the report

The report continues in seven sections, as follows:

- Section 2 – provides background information on the Youth Zone and discusses the services and facilities provided by the Youth Zone;
- Section 3 – assesses the extent to which the Youth Zone is consistent with local priorities relating to children and young people and also considers Warrington’s performance in relation to a range of relevant social factors such as deprivation, education and crime;
- Section 4 – details the views of partners and volunteers regarding the importance of the Youth Zone;
- Section 5 – sets out the findings of the survey of young people attending the Youth Zone;
- Section 6 – provides an assessment of the views of parents and carers of young people attending the Youth Zone;
- Section 7 – sets out the findings of the business survey; and
- Section 8 - presents the conclusions of the report.

Image 1.1: Gym at the Youth Zone



2 Warrington Youth Zone

2.1 Introduction

This section provides an overview of the Youth Zone model more generally and a more detailed description of the background to Warrington Youth Zone and the activities and services it provides.

2.2 The Youth Zone model

The Youth Zone model was developed by OnSide. OnSide was created in 2008 and was a response to the success of Bolton Lads and Girls Club. OnSide’s founders believed that more young people, towns and cities could benefit from replicating the Bolton model. As a result, a further 14 Youth Zones have been established across the country and seven more are in development. In 2023/24, 50,975 young people attended Youth Zones resulting in 574,933 engagements across the network.

The Youth Zone model is underpinned by a clear vision and purpose that aims to meet the needs and expectations of the different target groups in the local area, including:

- young people – Youth Zone ‘customers’;
- staff, board and volunteers – the people who run the Youth Zone;
- parents and the local community – who can influence the development of the Youth Zone; and
- policy makers, stakeholders and funders – without these people a Youth Zone would not be possible.

Through positive relationships with all of these people and organisations, Youth Zones enable young people to enjoy their leisure time and to reach their full potential. Although each Youth Zone is developed in partnership with OnSide, each one is an independent, registered charity and they all develop their own ways of working and meeting local needs and preferences.

At the core of the approach to each Youth Zone, there has to be:

- 21st century youth facilities;
- a strong, focus on universal, open access youth work;
- active participation of young people – from design to management; and
- sustainable funding.

Additional pre-requisites include:

- a wide range of high-quality activities, from sport to arts;
- nominal entry fees;

- long opening hours (seven nights, weekends and all holidays);
- young people focused;
- a strong focus on maintaining and refreshing high quality youth work delivery and offer;
- a safe, non-threatening environment which is welcoming, accessible and fully inclusive;
- clear safeguarding arrangements;
- a great atmosphere and a ‘tonight will be better than last night’ philosophy; and
- a range of targeted projects (such as mentoring) for the needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people.

Through local cross sector partnerships, Youth Zones provide facilities and places for young people to go to, activities to keep them engaged, and other young people to talk to. Every Youth Zone is staffed by skilled and dedicated youth workers who truly believe in young people – helping them see what they could achieve, equipping them with the skills, confidence and ambition to go for it. By empowering young people to make decisions about how they spend their time and allowing them to make choices for themselves, Youth Zones support them in taking charge of their own futures.

2.3 Warrington Youth Zone

2.3.1 Background

The origins of Warrington Youth Zone go back to 1930 when a group of mothers who were concerned that their sons were getting into trouble after school started a Youth Club. This developed into Warrington Boys’ Club in 1935. In 1952, the Boys’ Club took up residence at a new site on Rodney Street, a few hundred metres from the current Youth Zone building. In 2000, the Boys’ Club moved to the Peace Centre, which was opened in memory of two boys who died in the Warrington bombing in 1993. At this point the organisation changed its name to Warrington Youth Club.

The concept of a Youth Zone in Warrington has been a vision since 2008 when the then Chair of Warrington Youth Club was involved with the development of the OnSide movement. Whilst it took over 12 years and many challenges, with the support of many people including Nick Hopkinson (Hoppy), former chair, supporter, fundraiser, donor, friend and mentor of the charity, and Professor Steven Broomhead, Chief Executive of Warrington Borough Council, who was equally instrumental in the development, the vision became a reality.

On 2 July 2022 Warrington Youth Zone opened at the site on Dallam Lane, an ideal location for the charity as it faces Central Station and is next to Warrington Bus Interchange. The Youth Zone is open seven days a week, 52 weeks of the year, providing a range of social and personal development opportunities for children and young people aged from 7 to 19 or up to 25 for those with additional needs.

2.3.2 The Youth Zone’s offer to young people in Warrington

The Youth Zone offers young people in Warrington a welcoming place to call their own. Featuring state-of-the-art facilities, and open when schools are closed, it provides a diverse activity programme for children and young people from across Warrington. With over 20 activities to explore each session, the Youth Zone creates opportunities for young people to try new things, develop skills, and build aspirations.

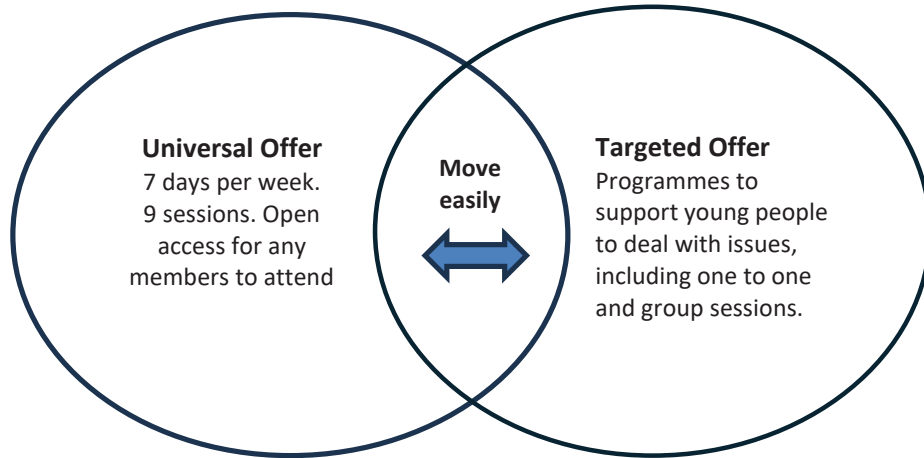
Skilled youth workers are on hand to provide guidance and support, fostering a positive environment where young people are encouraged to thrive. The Youth Zone staff work towards helping children and young people to grow in confidence and boost their self-esteem, whether that is through a conversation over the pool table, sharing a meal, producing their own music track or reaching the top of the climbing wall.

Image 2.1: Music Room at Warrington Youth Zone



The offer for children and young people is divided into two areas, Universal and Targeted, which the Youth Zone delivers simultaneously, ensuring that members can move seamlessly between the two. Figure 2.1 summarises the Youth Work offer.

Figure 2.1: The Warrington Youth Zone offer



Many young people attending the Youth Zone only access the Universal Offer, enjoying access to amazing facilities delivered by a passionate and committed team. Approximately 15% of members access Targeted Programmes. Some of these members may be struggling with their mental health or emotional wellbeing or need some one-to-one support to alleviate challenges they are facing during the transition to adulthood. Youth Zones are unique in that they offer both services with a smooth movement between the two, removing the need to make referrals or place young people on waiting lists.

Some of the services provided through the Youth Zone Universal Offer include:

- **Sports Offer:** a Sports Team run a diverse and inclusive sports programme utilising the fully equipped Gym, four court Sports Hall, 25 foot high 13 line Climbing Wall, Boxing and Martial Arts Studio, and 3G AstroTurf Football Pitch on the roof. Whilst the facilities and the building can accommodate large numbers of children and young people, staff also provide individual and bespoke support for children and young people who want to focus on their health and fitness or who want to enhance their skills within a specific sport or activity.
- **Arts Offer:** an Arts Team encourage children and young people to explore a range of topics, issues and cultural events through a rich and diverse array of activities which are often delivered in the fully equipped Arts Room. Staff encourage children and young people to develop and express their thoughts, feelings, opinions and ideas. For some this is achieved in the Performing Arts and Dance Studio or taking to the stage on the Rooftop Stage. Others have found a passion for creating podcasts and broadcasting their own radio shows in the state-of-the-art Radio Studio.
- **Music Offer:** a Music Team consisting of highly qualified musicians and performers have been able to use the top-class facilities within the Music Room to provide music lessons to individual children and young people and to small groups. Several members are in the process of achieving various levels of piano and guitar qualifications.

Image 2.2: A music session at the Youth Zone



- **Welcome:** a Rec Team meet and greet children, young people and parents when they arrive at the Youth Zone and then engage young people in a range of fun activities, making sure they feel settled and comfortable while they are at the Youth Zone.
- **Catering:** during every session a high-quality food offer is provided for children and young people to ensure they have a hot, nutritious meal while they are at the Youth Zone. Through the Training Kitchen a Catering Team teach children and young people how to prepare meals and how to cater on a budget, which are essential life skills that young people need to develop.
- **Enterprise:** an Employability Team works both in the Youth Zone and across Warrington with some of the most marginalised young people to support them to build the confidence and self-esteem needed to progress into education, employment or training.

The charity believes that Warrington Youth Zone should be available for every child and young person from across the Borough and staff work with a broad range of agencies to promote the programme and remove or reduce any barriers to accessing the Youth Zone. Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are encouraged to attend all sessions and the Youth Zone provides a comprehensive support structure for those whose support needs are more complex.

The Youth Zone does not aim to become a specialist training academy for any one activity or sport, but has a mantra of *'Try, Train, Team'*. Children and young people can try new activities at the Youth Zone and if they have an interest, Youth Workers will aim to offer some training to allow them to further develop their interest, knowledge and passion. Youth Zone team members will then aim to introduce young people to a team or group that can further nurture their interest and skills and allow them to flourish in their chosen activity.

The Youth Zone's Targeted Offer includes:

- **Buddy Up:** this programme was established in 2010 to provide support to children who have a range of disabilities and vulnerabilities. Support is provided by a 'Peer Buddy' rather than an adult carer. The programme has proven to provide significantly positive outcomes for the disabled child and their family and for the young volunteer (the 'Buddy').
- **Mentoring:** one-to-one support is an element of many programmes and the ability to match a young person who is struggling with a range of challenges with a volunteer adult mentor, who can provide time and consistent support, has proven over many decades to have a huge impact on the life of the young person and the mentor.
- **Youth in Mind:** this provides one-to-one and small group support for children and young people who are struggling with their mental health and emotional wellbeing, seven days each week at the Youth Zone, in the community and online. Youth Zone staff work closely with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team (CAMHS) to ensure that young people across Warrington have access to the support they need as easily as possible.

Image 2.3: A one-to-one session at the Youth Zone



The range of Targeted Programmes changes and develops year on year in response to the needs that the Youth Zone staff hear from young people and the funds they can access to deliver programmes to address these prevailing issues.

2.4 Summary

The vision for Warrington Youth Zone went back many years and finally became a reality in 2022 when the Youth Zone opened in Warrington town centre. It is part of a wider national network of Youth Zones developed by OnSide, all of which aim to ensure that young people enjoy their leisure time and reach their full potential.

Warrington Youth Zone provides a comprehensive activity programme for children and young people from across Warrington, with support provided through skilled youth workers who are dedicated to assisting young people to achieve their full potential.

The services provided through the Youth Zone include a wide range of sports, arts and musical activities which are available to all young people as well as more targeted support for young people facing particular challenges. This includes mentoring and small group support for young people facing emotional and mental health issues.

3 Context to the Youth Zone

3.1 Introduction

This section sets out the extent to which Warrington Youth Zone is consistent with Warrington’s Children and Young People’s Plan. It also sets out the socio-economic context to the Youth Zone in relation to a range of issues including crime, education, health and deprivation.

Image 3.1: Boxing studio at Warrington Youth Zone



3.2 Warrington’s Children and Young People’s Plan

The overarching vision of the Children and Young People’s Plan is that *‘every child and young person in Warrington is safe, healthy and has the opportunity to reach their potential’*.

The Plan sets out a number of strategic outcomes for young people in Warrington. These are for young people to:

- stay safe;
- live in settled families;
- get the best from school and college;
- be healthy; and
- have successful adult lives.

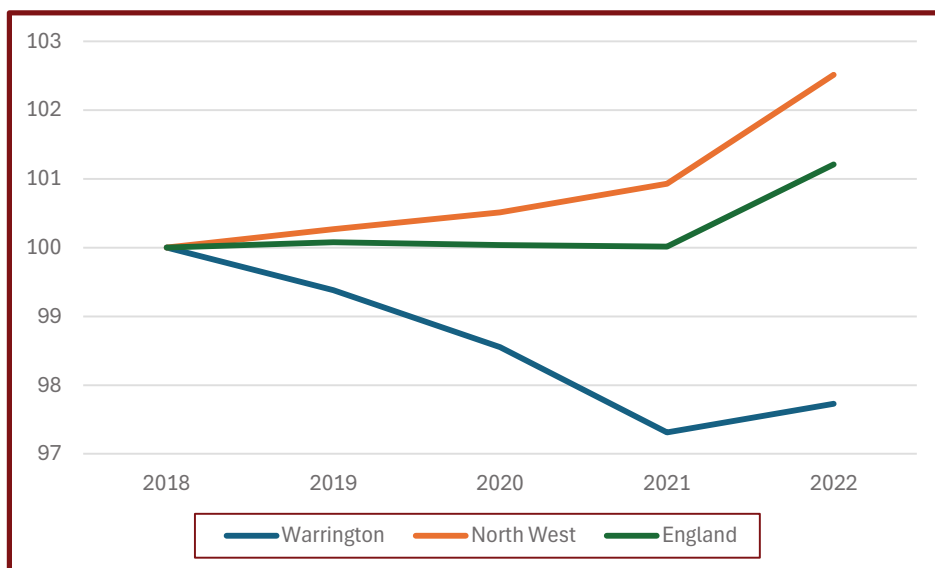
Warrington Youth Zone is impacting on a number of these outcomes. It is providing a safe space for children and young people and is providing activities which improve the fitness and health of young people as well as opportunities to learn how to prepare healthy meals. The overall support provision is having a positive impact on all aspects of the lives of the young people attending the Youth Zone, including in relation to their performance in school. All of this is preparing young people to become successful in their later lives.

3.3 Socio-economic context

3.3.1 Demography

In 2022 there were 47,300 people aged 19 or under in Warrington, equating to 22.4% of the overall population. This was below the North West rate of 23.5% and the rate for England of 23.0%. Moreover, as shown in Figure 3.1, the number of people aged 19 and below in Warrington has, overall, been in decline over the last few years, whereas both regionally and nationally there has been an increase.

Figure 3.1: Indexed change in population aged 19 and below (2018=100)



Source: population estimates, Nomis

The decline in the population aged 19 and under means that young people have fewer opportunities to interact with each other. This increases the importance of the Youth Zone as a place where young people can meet and engage with people of a similar age.

3.3.2 Education

GCSE results

The average number of points achieved by Warrington pupils in GCSE examinations in 2023 was 48.0, above the overall score for England of 44.6. However, the overall score masks the fact that of the 13 secondary schools in Warrington (excluding special schools), five had scores below the national average (source: Department for Education figures).

Staying in education or going into employment

94% of 2021 school leavers in Warrington either stayed in education or went into employment, the same as the national rate. However, six of the 13 secondary schools in Warrington had rates below the Warrington and national averages (source: Department for Education figures).

School absences

In the autumn term of 2023 / 2024, the unauthorised absence rate for school pupils in Warrington was 2.0%, below the regional figure of 2.4% and the figure for England of 2.2%. The rate for severe absenteeism (50% or more lessons missed) was 1.5% in Warrington, below the regional and national figures of 2.0% for both (source: Department for Education figures).

The Youth Zone is having a positive impact in relation to education. Sections 5 and 6 of this report demonstrate that both young people attending the Youth Zone and their parents / carers believe that the Youth Zone is having a positive impact in relation to issues such as school attendance and the marks young people receive in class and for coursework.

3.3.3 Health

Warrington performs well in relation to a range of relevant health indicators, with fewer deaths from drug misuse and hospital admissions for alcohol related conditions per 100,000 residents than the national average and a lower rate of obesity among 10 to 11 year olds than the national average. However, as shown in Table 3.1, Warrington has a relatively high rate for conceptions among the under 18 age group.

Table 3.1: Health indicators

Indicator	Warrington	England
Year 6 prevalence of obesity	35.5%	36.6%
Conceptions among the under 18 age group	15.7 per 1,000	13.1 per 1,000
Deaths from drug misuse	3.7 per 100,000	5.2 per 100,000
Hospital admissions for alcohol-related conditions	396 per 100,000	475 per 100,000

Source: Public Health England

Although Warrington performs relatively well in relation to health indicators, the Youth Zone is having a positive impact among young people. For example, Section 5 of this report shows that young people are more physically active as a result of the Youth Zone and are more aware of the dangers associated with cigarettes, alcohol, drugs and vaping.

3.3.4 Crime

Warrington's figures for youth crime are combined with those of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Halton, making it impossible to identify the Warrington-specific figures.

Between 2020 / 21 and 2022 / 23 the number of children cautioned or sentenced by the Youth Justice Service in Cheshire East, Cheshire West, Halton and Warrington increased by 39.9% to 228. Across England and Wales over the same period the number of children cautioned or sentenced fell from 15,800 to 13,700, a decline of 13.3% (source: Youth Justice Service statistics).

Ministry of Justice figures for 2021 showed that 11 of the 40 offenders in Warrington aged 10 to 17 went on to re-offend within a year of being convicted or released from prison (27.5%). This was below the overall rate for England and Wales of 31.4%. (source: Warrington Guardian, November 2023).

The Youth Zone is having a positive impact in relation to crime in the area. As shown in Section 5 of this report, 46% of young people attending the Youth Zone stated that they are staying out of trouble more as a result of the Youth Zone. Among parents / carers, Section 6 shows that the same percentage believe that the young people in their care are staying out of trouble more as a result of the Youth Zone. Section 7 shows that among businesses, 82% believe that the Youth Zone has reduced anti-social behaviour and 59% believe that it has reduced the fear of crime.

3.3.5 Deprivation

Overall, Warrington does not suffer from particularly high levels of deprivation, with only 35 of Warrington's 127 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA) being in the most deprived 30% of LSOAs in England. However, there are severe pockets of deprivation in Warrington, particularly around the town centre and nearby areas.

The Youth Zone is having a positive impact in alleviating some of the issues faced by families experiencing deprivation and hardship. This is achieved through the delivery of the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme for children eligible for free school meals; the provision of bursary places which allows the charity to offer free membership and entry onto sessions; and ongoing support of families affected by food poverty, including the provision of 32,000 hot meals free of charge since the Youth Zone opened.

3.4 Summary

This section has demonstrated that Warrington Youth Zone is fully consistent with the aims and objectives of Warrington's Children and Young People's Plan. This consistency results from the Youth Zone's role in providing a safe space for children, improving the fitness and health of young people and in improving their educational performance.

The Youth Zone is also impacting positively with regard to a range of social indicators. For example, it is improving Warrington's performance in relation to health, crime and education.

4 Stakeholder views

4.1 Introduction

This section sets out the views of a range of stakeholders in Warrington. It includes the views of, among others, relevant departments within Warrington Borough Council, the Police, the business community, the community sector and Youth Zone volunteers.

4.2 Warrington Borough Council

4.2.1 *Early Help Team*

Both the Youth Zone and the Early Help Team are represented on the Strategic Board of Young Warrington and the two organisations work together on a number of initiatives, including ‘Baby Zone’ at Warrington Youth Zone (delivered in partnership with the national charity Baby Zone and with Home-Start Warrington and Cheshire). The Youth Zone’s Aspire programme provides activities for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) during school holidays, a service commissioned by Warrington Borough Council.

Both the Youth Zone and the Early Help Team refer young people to each other and share details of young people needing particular support, such as health assessments and safeguarding.

The Youth Zone is seen as having a massive impact. For example, in 2024, the Youth Zone supported over 170 SEND children, many of whom required support with personal care, PEG feeding or application of medication.

The Youth Zone is also seen as having a positive impact on the mental health of young people in Warrington.

Image 4.1: Young people taking part in an employability session at EE office in Warrington



4.2.2 *Youth Service*

The Council's Youth Service has a strong relationship with the Youth Zone, with both providing services for young people (the Youth Service provides a more targeted offer whereas the Youth Zone offer is more universal). Both organisations play leading roles in Young Warrington and refer young people to each other. This includes sharing details of young people needing particular support, such as health assessments and safeguarding.

The Youth Service see the Youth Zone as being a vital part of the youth offer in Warrington and offering very low cost facilities which are of an equal standard to high profile organisations such as David Lloyd Leisure Centres. The wide range of services and activities provided at the Youth Zone ensures that it provides a facility for the vast majority of young people.

The Youth Service believe that the Youth Zone is having a major impact on the lives of children and young people. The town centre location ensures that it is easy to get to and therefore well used, it provides a safe environment and young people choose to go there in their free time. The Youth Zone is also making a big difference to young people with disabilities through the provision of accessible services and facilities.

4.3 **Voluntary and community sector**

4.3.1 *Warrington Voluntary Action*

Warrington Voluntary Action engage with the Youth Zone through a formal alliance between the two organisations, particularly focusing on (mental) health matters of children and the relevant stakeholders.

A major strength of the Youth Zone relates to the people-centric and child-centred approach to delivery that is prioritised by the Youth Zone, with the facility and organisation clearly organised around elevating individuals, respect and validation.

Another strength of the Youth Zone is how the team at the Youth Zone consider wider, complementary services for young people and ensure that they are also represented and included in conversations.

The Youth Zone is working closely with a large number of voluntary sector organisations, including Home-Start Warrington and Cheshire (a charity providing a broad range of support to parents and families who are in most need). This work ensures that there is synergy for families and smooth access between organisations, thereby enhancing safeguarding and providing seamless, targeted support for those children, young people and families who are in most need. The Youth Zone ensures that the voice of the child is heard and embedded within important conversations regarding a range of issues the child, young person or whole family may be experiencing.

4.3.2 *Cheshire Community Foundation*

Cheshire Community Foundation have provided a number of grants to the Youth Zone to enable the Youth Zone to provide services to the community.

The Foundation are fully supportive of the Youth Zone as it is having a ‘phenomenal impact’ in terms of engaging with young people, providing a safe haven for young people and providing holiday activities.

The Youth Zone is seen as being very well connected with, for example, the Council, social workers, youth workers and businesses, which enables the Youth Zone to engage with harder to reach young people and to identify and address the needs of young people in Warrington.

4.4 Business community

4.4.1 Warrington Business Improvement District (BID)

The Youth Zone maintains a close working relationship with the BID. For example, the BID and Youth Zone have worked closely on a number of different events such as the Warrington Pride Parade in 2023, a number of art projects and collaborations with Primark and other shops. Youth Zone volunteers also support other initiatives, including offering stewardship support at other events.

A particular example of the close working relationship is a programme which saw the BID act as funding partner for the Youth Zone which enabled youth workers to go into the town centre to boost engagement with youths and attract them to the Youth Zone.

The Youth Zone is involved in local discussions and recognises the importance of a partnership-based approach. Meetings of the BID Board are also held at the Youth Zone, which facilitates engagement with the business community and helps showcase some of the work that the Youth Zone does.

As a result of the Youth Zone, there are fewer young people hanging around the town centre, particularly in the late afternoon and early evening. This has led to fewer comments from visitors to the town centre regarding anti-social behaviour. There has been a noticeable improvement in how older people perceive and feel within the town centre. In relation to anti-social behaviour, the Youth Zone often provides support in dealing with any incidents and works closely with the BID and Police to provide trained support and act as an intermediary.

The BID sees the main strengths of the Youth Zone being:

- leadership and connectivity – the Youth Zone recognises the benefits of working in partnership and ensuring the Youth Zone remains involved in local conversations with other partners, authorities and local businesses;
- the ability of the Youth Zone to incubate projects with the BID and other partners and then continue them independently to ensure successful delivery;
- the Youth Zone provides advisory support to the BID where needed in terms of how best to deal with potentially sensitive situations; and
- the Youth Zone is fully inclusive and brings together young people from, for example, different ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds.

4.4.2 *Warrington's Own Buses*

The Bus Station is very close to the Youth Zone and a significant proportion of users of the Youth Zone use buses to travel to the facility.

As a result of the Youth Zone, fewer young people hang around the bus station despite the increase in young people using the bus station to access the Youth Zone.

The Youth Zone maintains a close working relationship with the bus station team, with frequent co-operation.

4.5 **Warrington Police**

The Youth Police Officer has significant contact with the Youth Zone and has a very strong relationship with the Youth Zone. The Officer can use rooms at the Youth Zone and has talks with young people at the Youth Zone. He also engages with the Youth Zone through advising the Youth Zone team on its outreach activities and where to find young people to engage with.

Prior to the Youth Zone, much of the provision for young people in Warrington was seen as little more than a baby-sitting service. The Youth Zone has changed the environment through moving towards a more holistic offer of activities and services.

The Police are able to use the Youth Zone as a tool to improve behaviour among young people in Warrington by banning young people from accessing the Youth Zone until their behaviour improves. The Youth Zone is seen as such a major attraction by young people that behaviour invariably improves. These behaviour improvements are overwhelmingly sustained in the long term.

The Youth Zone is part of the Community Safety Partnership, a Police-led partnership which diverts young people involved in lower-level anti-social behaviour into productive activities in their communities. The aim is to give them opportunities to make better choices and ensure they do not get drawn into a cycle of escalating criminality. This helps to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in the long-term.

There has been a reduction in the number of Police call-outs for incidents involving young people since the Youth Zone opened. This is reflected in the substantial decrease in the number of incidents of anti-social behaviour in the town centre since the opening of the Youth Zone. In the year to 30 June 2023 there were 312 anti-social behaviour incidents reported in the town centre. This had fallen to 168 for the year to 30 June 2024, a decrease of 46%.

The Police see the Youth Zone as a 'brilliant venue' which enables partners to engage with the local community and provides a safe place for young people. It has also improved the local area, with fewer young people hanging around the town centre, particularly around the bus station.

Image 4.2: Cheshire Police supporting the work of the Youth Zone



4.6 UTC Warrington

UTC Warrington is a technical college for 14 to 19 year olds located close to the Youth Zone. Its focus is on preparing students for high quality careers within science, technology, and engineering. Students study academic and technical subjects through a range of GCSE and post-16 qualifications.

The College has been heavily involved with the Youth Zone since it opened, with the Youth Zone catering to the needs of the College by learning what their needs are and doing their best to provide support. Strong communication links have been developed between the two organisations which have ensured that a strong relationship has been built. The College use the Youth Zone to deliver programmes related to healthy lifestyles in a similar way to Physical Education classes in schools. This enables the College and its students to benefit from the expertise of the Youth Zone's gym instructors who, for example, guide students on how to use the fitness suite or provide boxing classes.

The Youth Zone also support staff at the College to build their experience. For example, Safeguarding Officers at the College use the Youth Zone to help vulnerable students to build resilience. Other support provided to the College by the Youth Zone includes:

- a work experience programme for Year 10 students;
- rock climbing training for staff which enables them to help students using facilities at the Youth Zone;
- cooking classes for students;
- mentoring support for young people who may get overwhelmed on the UTC site; and
- music sessions as a form of 'therapy'.

The College believes that the Youth Zone is having a very positive impact on young people who attend the College in relation to, for example, their aspirations and behaviour. An example is the support provided through work placements at the Youth Zone, which provide young people with a flavour of how they can work to help others and also provide an insight into the world of work. Another example is the impact on the behaviour of students at the College. The College started taking young people with complex behavioural needs to the Youth Zone more regularly. This resulted in a 44% reduction in suspension rates among this group.

The Youth Zone is also helping to improve relationships between College staff and students as taking the students to the Youth Zone breaks down barriers between staff and young people which may exist in a standard classroom setting.

The College see the main strength of the Youth Zone as being the positive nature of the Youth Zone team as they are always willing to help and work with the students.

The positive nature of the relationship between the Youth Zone and the College is reflected in the College's desire to have more use of the Youth Zone and to be able to take more students to the facility.

Image 4.3: An education session at the Youth Zone



4.7 Youth Zone Volunteers

The work of the Youth Zone is supported by an army of volunteers who give up their time for the benefit of young people in Warrington. The main reason for volunteers participating in the Youth Zone is to make a difference to the lives of young people and increase the confidence of young people.

The Youth Zone has also had a positive impact on volunteers. For example, it has improved team building skills and confidence among volunteers and provided satisfaction in terms of seeing young people progress.

There are some volunteers who are engaged through the Hong Kong Pathway, a scheme which helps people from Hong Kong into the job market and to settle in the country. Working as volunteers has improved the job prospects of these volunteers and made them feel more a part of the community.

Image 4.4: A volunteer with young people at the Youth Zone



4.8 Summary

This section has demonstrated that the Youth Zone has developed strong relationships with a range of stakeholders in the Warrington area including colleges, the Council and the Police. These relationships have enabled the Youth Zone to play a key role not only in terms of providing activities for young people in the town but also in terms of improving their behaviour.

The Youth Zone has also been instrumental in bringing organisations in Warrington together to provide a more co-ordinated approach to supporting young people and has also had a very positive impact on reducing crime and anti-social behaviour in Warrington.

Furthermore, within the Youth Zone there have also been benefits to volunteers such as improved confidence and improved employment prospects.

5 The views of young people attending the Youth Zone

5.1 Introduction

This section presents the views of young people attending the Youth Zone, based on survey responses. It covers issues such as happiness, social skills, health and education.

5.2 The Youth Zone compared to other provision in Warrington

For the young people who attend the Youth Zone, survey results indicate that the Youth Zone is by far the youth service provision that they attend most regularly, as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Frequency of visits				
Regularity	Youth Zone	Other Youth Club	Scouts / Guides	Other Activity
Every day	19%	0%	2%	5%
2 or 3 times a week	42%	2%	0%	9%
Once a week	18%	5%	2%	14%
Hardly ever	7%	8%	9%	5%
Never	3%	66%	66%	45%
Don't know	11%	20%	22%	22%

Source: Survey of young people at the Youth Zone (2024)

Table 5.1 shows that nearly 80% of survey respondents attend the Youth Zone at least once per week. Prior to the Youth Zone opening, the majority of survey respondents either hardly ever or never participated in any alternative activities, as shown in Table 5.2.

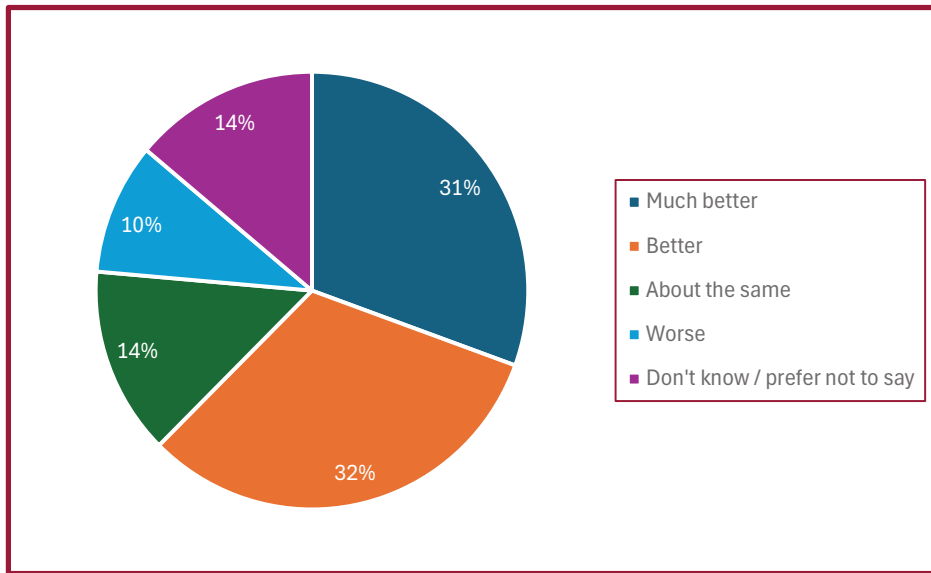
Table 5.2: Participation in other activities prior to the Youth Zone opening			
	Other Youth Club	Scouts / Guides	Other Activity
Every day	2%	2%	7%
2 or 3 times a week	3%	0%	10%
Once a week	5%	4%	18%
Hardly ever	8%	3%	8%
Never	61%	70%	42%
Don't know	22%	21%	15%

Source: Survey of young people at the Youth Zone (2024)

The Youth Zone has therefore provided a facility and a range of activities which are both appealing to young people in Warrington and which are largely additional in that the majority of participants would, in all likelihood, not be participating in any alternative activities if the Youth Zone had not opened.

The main reason for the popularity of the Youth Zone compared to other offers for young people in Warrington is the quality of the services and activities provided at the Youth Zone, as shown in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: How the Youth Zone compares to other offers for young people in Warrington



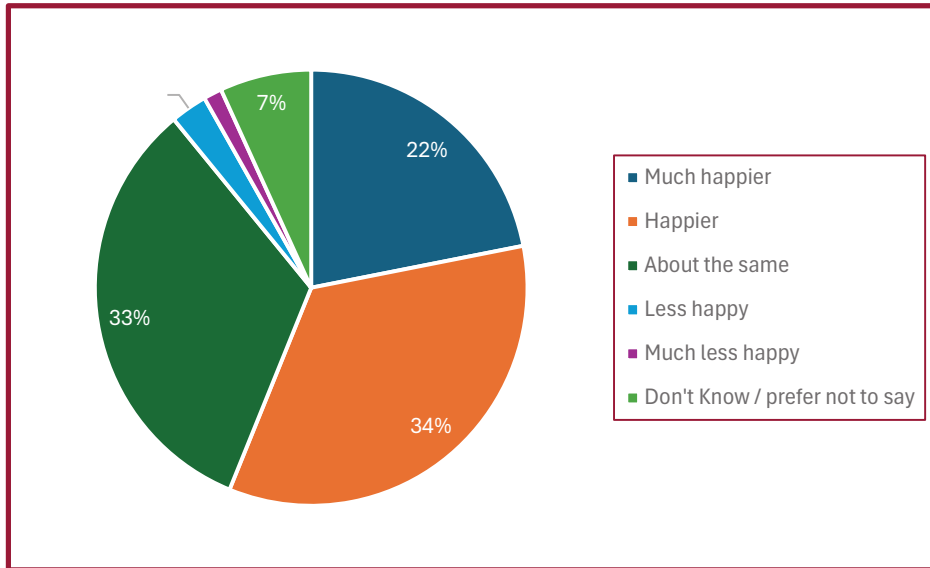
Source: Survey of young people at the Youth Zone (2024)

5.3 Impact on young people

5.3.1 Happiness

The Youth Zone is having a big impact on the happiness of young people who attend and take part in activities in the facility. Figure 5.2 shows that 56% of survey respondents feel happier when they attend the Youth Zone compared to only 4% who feel less happy.

Figure 5.2: Happiness when visiting the Youth Zone compared to other times



Source: Survey of young people at the Youth Zone (2024)

5.3.2 Social skills and attitudes

The Youth Zone is also having a substantial impact on the social skills and attitudes of the young people who attend. For example, 85% of young people who attend have made more friends and 46% are staying out of trouble, as shown in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Social skills and attitudes			
As a result of attending the Youth Zone I...	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
have made more friends	85%	13%	3%
find it easier to make friends	55%	41%	4%
get on better with other people	55%	41%	4%
am more self-confident	51%	39%	10%
am more confident in a group	51%	46%	2%
have learned how to do new things	48%	49%	4%
like to try new activities	47%	48%	6%
am staying out of trouble	46%	47%	7%
get on better with my family	35%	59%	5%

Source: Survey of young people at the Youth Zone (2024)

5.4 Health and wellbeing

5.4.1 Harmful and addictive substances

The Youth Zone is having a positive impact on young people with regard to addictive and dangerous substances. The responses of those surveyed indicate that far more young people attending the Youth Zone are now more aware of the dangers associated with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and vaping than the number with no increased awareness of the associated dangers, as shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Awareness of addictive and dangerous substances

	The Youth Zone has made me more aware of the dangers	Don't know / hard to say	The Youth Zone has had no impact on my awareness
Drugs	35%	57%	7%
Alcohol	35%	57%	7%
Cigarettes	38%	55%	7%
Vaping	34%	64%	2%

Source: Survey of young people at the Youth Zone (2024)

5.4.2 Anxiety

Young people attending the Youth Zone face a number of worries, including issues relating to school, family life and health. Table 5.5 shows that the Youth Zone is having a positive impact in helping young people to manage their anxieties.

Table 5.5: Impact of the Youth Zone on anxiety

	Much less worried / less worried	About the same	Much more worried / more worried	Don't know / won't say
Exams	38%	33%	3%	27%
School	40%	32%	2%	26%
The future	33%	37%	2%	28%
My own health	40%	28%	2%	31%
Someone else's health	41%	27%	5%	27%
Being talked about	39%	27%	5%	29%
Family rows	27%	32%	5%	36%
Getting a job	50%	35%	0%	15%
Money problems	39%	42%	3%	16%

Source: Survey of young people at the Youth Zone (2024)

5.4.3 Physical activity

The Youth Zone is also playing an important role in enabling the young people who attend to become more physically active. Table 5.6 shows that among those surveyed, 65% are physically active for 30 minutes per week or more at the Youth Zone compared to only 48% who are physically active for 30 minutes or more elsewhere.

Table 5.6: Physical activity		
	Warrington Youth Zone	Elsewhere
About 7 hours	10%	6%
About 4 to 6 hours	4%	4%
About 2 to 3 hours	13%	10%
About an hour	21%	19%
About 30 minutes	17%	9%
None	14%	16%
Don't know	21%	34%

Source: Survey of young people at the Youth Zone (2024)

5.4.4 Bullying

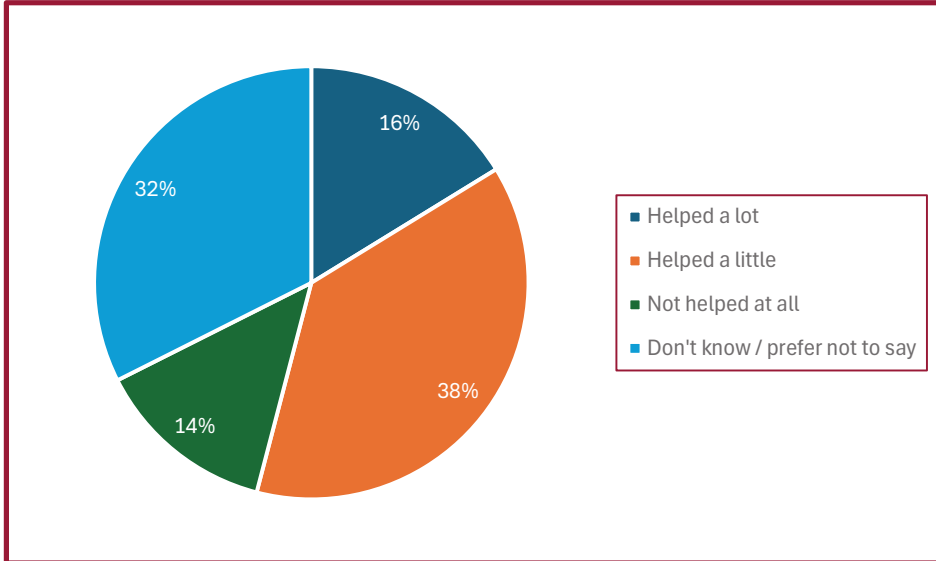
The Youth Zone also provides a safer environment for young people than schools. Although some young people have concerns about bullying at the Youth Zone, the extent of these concerns is much lower than for schools, as shown in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7: Fear of being bullied		
	Warrington Youth Zone	School
Very often	2%	6%
Often	8%	6%
Sometimes	14%	28%
Once or twice	11%	17%
Never	48%	25%
Don't know / prefer not to say	18%	19%

Source: Survey of young people at the Youth Zone (2024)

Furthermore, the Youth Zone has helped mitigate the fears of young people relating to bullying. Over 50% of young people surveyed stated that the Youth Zone has reduced their fear of being bullied, as shown in Figure 5.3.

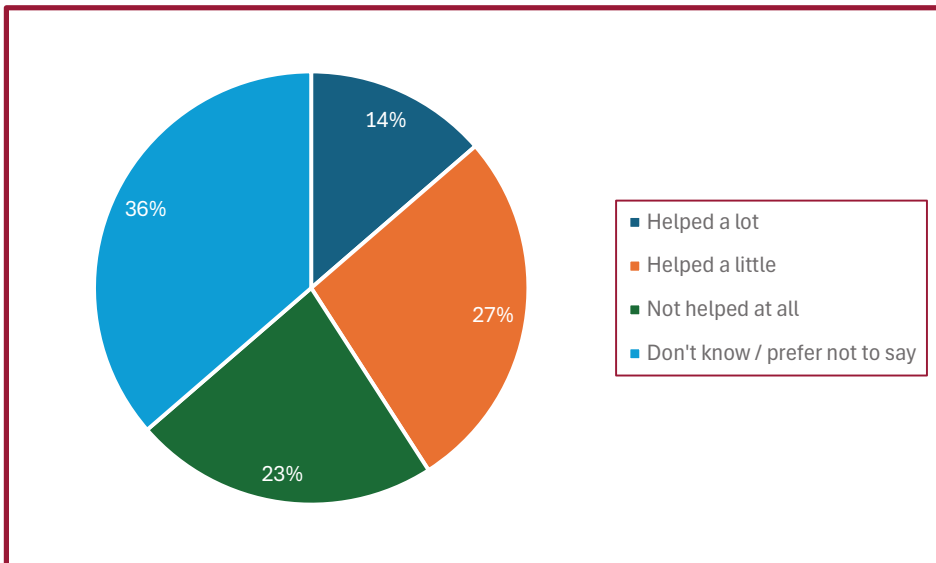
Figure 5.3: Impact of the Youth Zone on the fear of being bullied



Source: Survey of young people at the Youth Zone (2024)

The Youth Zone has also had a positive impact in addressing the behaviour of young people who participate in bullying. Figure 5.4 shows that over 40% of survey respondents who admitted to bullying others have seen their behaviour improve as a result of attending the Youth Zone.

Figure 5.4: Impact of the Youth Zone on the behaviour of young people who bully others



Source: Survey of young people at the Youth Zone (2024)

5.5 Educational impacts

Attending the Youth Zone is also having a positive impact in relation to the educational performance of young people. For example, the Youth Zone is having a positive impact in relation to issues such as school attendance, how hard young people work in school and the marks they get both in class and in exams, as shown in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8: Educational impacts			
As a result of attending the Youth Zone I...	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
am less likely to miss school / college	40%	46%	14%
work harder at school / college	44%	51%	6%
enjoy school / college more	23%	57%	22%
get better marks in class	27%	63%	10%
get better marks in coursework and exams	32%	59%	10%
am more confident about getting the qualifications I need to progress	38%	58%	6%
am clearer about the qualifications I need for the job I want to do	36%	57%	8%

Source: Survey of young people at the Youth Zone (2024)

5.6 The future

Senior members of the Youth Zone were asked about their post school plans. 26% planned to get a job, 20% planned to move into further or higher education and 14% planned to get an apprenticeship. A small number of respondents planned to start job training schemes. Over 30% were undecided.

50% of survey respondents felt that the staff at the Youth Zone had encouraged them to think about their future compared to 33% who did not. The remaining 17% were undecided.

75% of survey respondents believe that the staff at the Youth Zone have prepared them either fairly well or very well for the future compared to only 8% with the opposite view. The remaining 17% were undecided.

5.7 Summary

This section has shown that the Youth Zone is having an overwhelmingly positive impact on young people in Warrington. For example, it is enhancing their social skills and attitudes such as in relation to making new friends, self-confidence and getting on with others. It is also having positive impacts on health and wellbeing, examples being improved awareness of the dangers associated with dangerous and addictive substances, anxiety over issues such as school and exams, and increased physical activity. Finally, the Youth Zone is having positive educational impacts. For example, young people attending the Youth Zone are less likely to miss school and they also perform better in their schoolwork.

6 The views of parents and carers

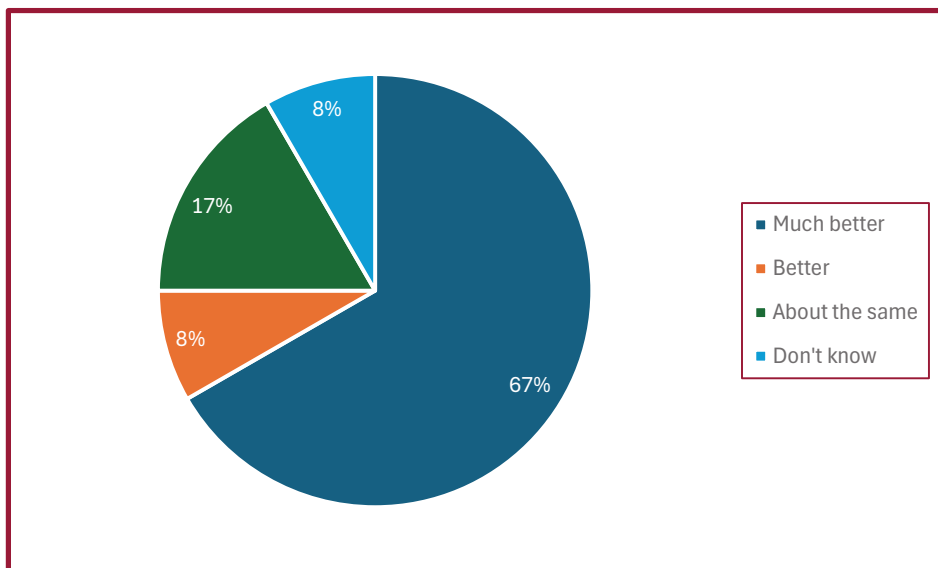
6.1 Introduction

This section presents the responses to the survey of parents and carers of the young people who attend the Youth Zone. It covers issues such as the social skills and attitudes of the young people in their care and the impact on the education of the young people in their care.

6.2 The Youth Zone compared to other places in Warrington

Parents and carers overwhelmingly believe that the Youth Zone is better than other facilities and services for young people in Warrington. Figure 6.1 shows that 75% of parents and carers believe that the Youth Zone is better than other provision in Warrington and none think that it is worse.

Figure 6.1: The Youth Zone compared to other provision in Warrington



Source: Survey of parents and carers (2024)

6.3 Social skills and attitudes

Parents and carers believe that the Youth Zone is also having a substantial impact on the social skills and attitudes of the young people who attend. For example, all of the parents and carers surveyed believe that the young people in their care are more self-confident and more confident in group situations as a result of attending the Youth Zone, as shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Social skills and attitudes

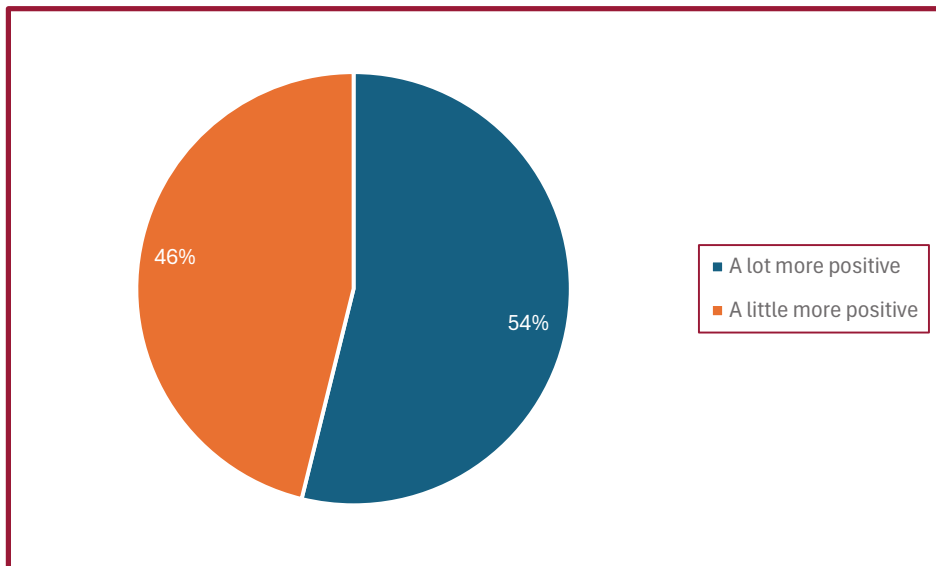
As a result of attending the Youth Zone, my son, daughter, ward...	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
has made more friends	77%	8%	15%
finds it easier to make friends	77%	8%	15%
gets on better with other people	64%	18%	18%
is more self-confident	100%	0%	0%
is more confident in a group	100%	0%	0%
has learned how to do new things	100%	0%	0%
likes to try new activities	85%	15%	0%
is staying out of trouble	46%	46%	8%
gets on better with family	69%	19%	13%

Source: Survey of parents and carers (2024)

6.4 Impact on family life

All of the parent and carers responding to the survey believe that the Youth Zone is having a positive impact on family life, as shown in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2: Impact of the Youth Zone on family life



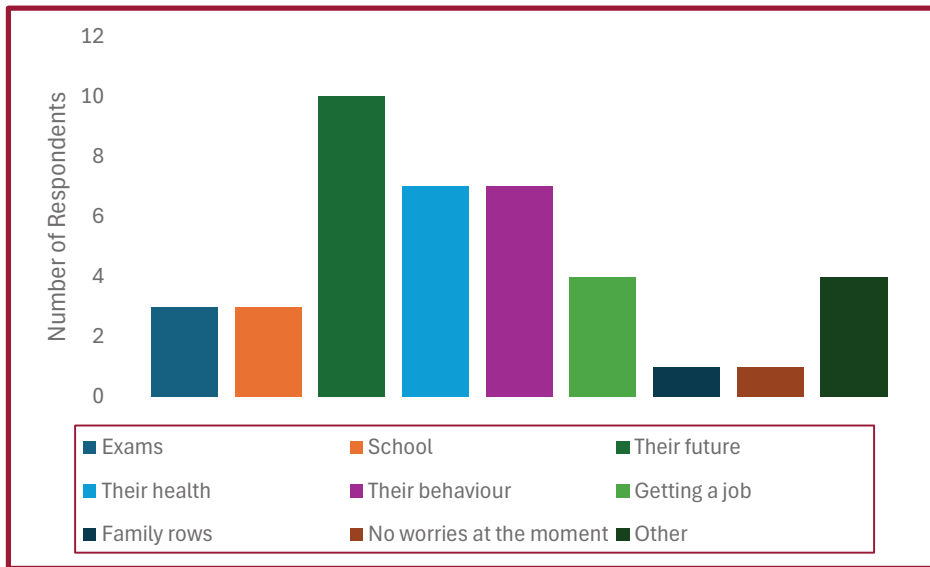
Source: Survey of parents and carers (2024)

6.5 Health and wellbeing

6.5.1 Anxiety

Amongst the parent / carer respondents, the most frequently cited concern, highlighted by over 80%, was the future of their son / daughter / ward. Health and behaviour were also identified as key concerns by over 50% of respondents, whilst future employment concerns were shared by a third of respondents. Other concerns included those relating to social matters such as friendships, as shown in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3: Main concerns of parents / caregivers



Source: Survey of parents and carers (2024)

The Youth Zone is having a positive impact on alleviating these concerns of parents and carers. For example, nearly 40% of parents and carers are less worried about exams and the behaviour of young people in their care as a result of the Youth Zone, as shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Impact of the Youth Zone on anxiety

	Much less worried / less worried	About the same	Much more worried / more worried	Don't know / won't say
Exams	38%	38%	13%	13%
School	25%	50%	13%	13%
The future	27%	55%	9%	9%
Their health	9%	73%	9%	9%
Their behaviour	36%	45%	9%	9%
Family rows	17%	50%	17%	17%
Getting a job	25%	50%	0%	25%

Source: Survey of parents and carers (2024)

6.5.2 Physical activity

As identified in Section 5, many young people attending the Youth Zone partake in sport-related, physical activities at the Youth Zone. 75% of respondents confirmed that their son / daughter / ward was physically active for 60 minutes at least 3 days per week.

Of the 12 respondents, 50% believe that their son / daughter / ward has become more interested in physical activity, whilst no respondents acknowledged a reduction in interest.

6.6 Educational impacts

Parents and carers also believe that attending the Youth Zone is having a positive impact in relation to the educational performance of the young people in their care. For example, parents and carers believe that the Youth Zone is having a positive impact in relation to issues such as school attendance, enjoyment at school and the marks their young people get both in class and in exams, as shown in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Educational impacts

As a result of attending the Youth Zone, my son / daughter, ward...	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
is less likely to miss school / college	31%	54%	16%
works harder at school / college	16%	66%	17%
enjoys school / college more	23%	70%	8%
gets better marks in class	23%	70%	8%
gets better marks in coursework and exams	23%	70%	8%
is more confident about getting the qualifications needed to progress	25%	75%	0%
is clearer about the qualifications needed for the job they want to do	25%	75%	0%

Source: Survey of young people at the Youth Zone (2024)

6.7 Future plans (seniors only)

The survey responses demonstrated that senior attendees had different intentions upon leaving school or had made different choices. In spite of this, 50% of respondents recognise that the staff and volunteers at the Youth Zone encourage their son / daughter / ward to think about their future. In addition, the same 50% of respondents also believe that the Youth Zone directly prepares senior attendees for the future.

6.8 Other comments

A selection of comments taken from the survey of parents and carers are set out below.

"My son loves his time at Youth Zone. He is on the neurodevelopmental pathway and is well supported by staff."

"My daughter really enjoys the Youth Zone and has great experiences through the 1:1 service."

"It's a great place with lots of activities and lovely staff."

"We massively appreciate that the specialist facility exists and the support from the staff who are fantastic. It has made a huge difference to our lives. It would be really helpful if our son was able to attend more often than once a week."

"Having the Youth Zone has been an absolute Godsend. Our older daughter who also has autism attended and our younger daughter is now member of the Young Leaders and loves going to the Youth Zone. I don't know what I would do without it as it allows me some time to do general housekeeping jobs and has helped massively in finding ways to help my daughters."

“The staff are absolutely amazing. To have somewhere available to my son where I know he is safe and happy is priceless. Would be great to have more sessions available and for more families to be able to use the facility as there are a lot of families who are struggling.”

“I'm really grateful that my son is able to attend the Youth Zone and take part in the special programme for disabled children. It has enabled me to get DBS clearance so that I can take my son to other activities. Being included with other children in their activities has made a massive difference to my son's confidence and happiness.”

“It's a fantastic place and Warrington is so lucky to have it. The staff are amazing and the time they take to explain things to the children is wonderful.”

6.9 Summary

Parents and carers have overwhelmingly positive views of the Youth Zone and its impact on the young people in their care. 75% of parents and carers believe that the Youth Zone is the best provider of facilities for young people in Warrington. In addition, with regard to social skills and attitudes, parents and carers believe that the Youth Zone is having a major impact, for example in relation to self-confidence and family relationships.

All of the parents and carers surveyed believe that the Youth Zone is having a positive impact on family life. In addition, parents and carers face a range of worries about the young people in their care, including issues relating to school and their behaviour. This section has demonstrated that the Youth Zone has helped to alleviate these worries. Parents and carers also believe that the Youth Zone is having positive educational impacts, for example in relation to issues such as school attendance, enjoyment at school and the marks their young people get both in class and in exams.

7 The views of local businesses

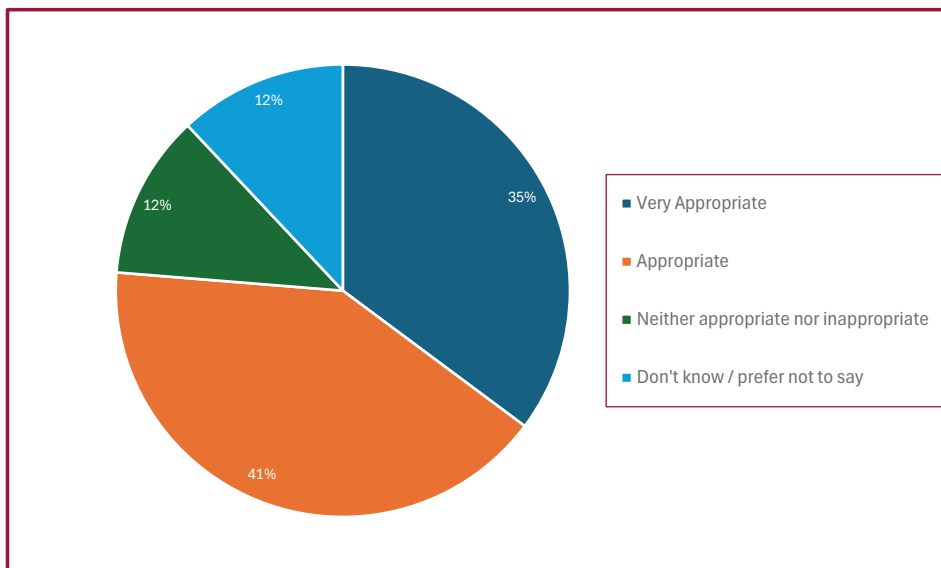
7.1 Introduction

This section presents the responses to the survey of businesses located near to the Youth Zone. It discusses issues such as the location of the Youth Zone, its impact on businesses and on the area as a business location and a range of wider benefits attributable to the Youth Zone.

7.2 Location of the Youth Zone

Of the 17 respondents to the survey of local businesses, over 75% recognise the location of the Youth Zone to be either ‘very appropriate’ or ‘appropriate’, with none believing the location to be inappropriate, as shown in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: Local businesses’ opinion on the appropriateness of the Youth Zone’s location



Source: Survey of local businesses (2024)

The main justifications for these opinions regarding the location of the Youth Zone are set out below, with frequently cited benefits including the proximity to the town centre, local colleges and transport services such as the bus and train station.

“The area was a condemned site so now much nicer. The proximity to the station and town centre means that it is easily accessible and brings more people into the town centre which helps local businesses.”

“Bringing footfall into the town that aligns with our products and prices.”

“Right in the centre of the town, good transport links and not far from the bus station.”

“College close by, perfect location.”

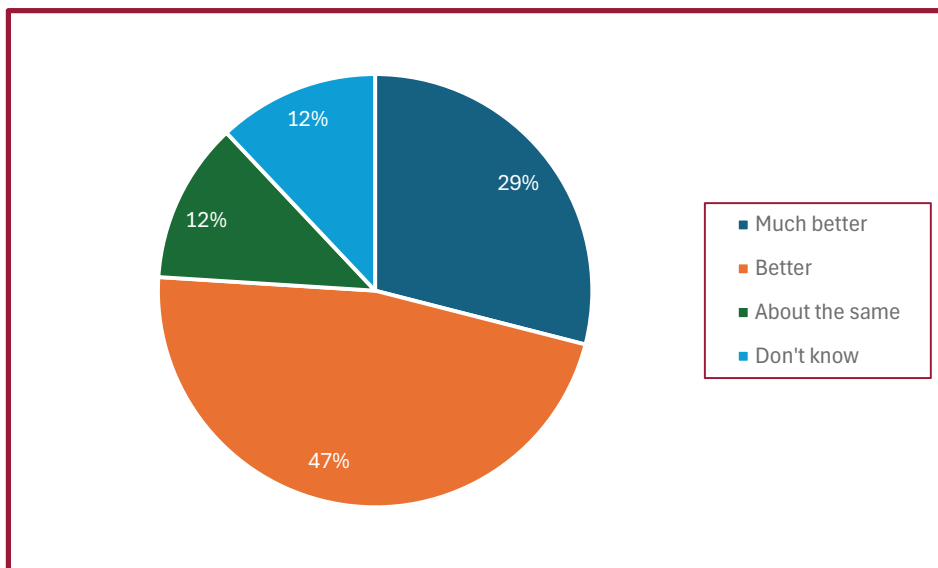
“Being near the bus station and opposite the train station makes it easy for young people to get to the Youth Zone.”

“Good that it's central and close to other facilities and shops.”

7.3 Impact of the Youth Zone on businesses and the town centre

Figure 7.2 shows that 76% of businesses responding to the survey believe that the Youth Zone has made Warrington a better place and none have the opposite view.

Figure 7.2: Impact of the Youth Zone on making Warrington a better place



Source: Survey of local businesses (2024)

Businesses also believe that the Youth Zone is providing a range of positive benefits in relation to businesses and the business environment. For example, 77% of respondents believe that the Youth Zone has improved Warrington’s image and 70% believe that it has improved the image of the town centre, as shown in Table 7.1.

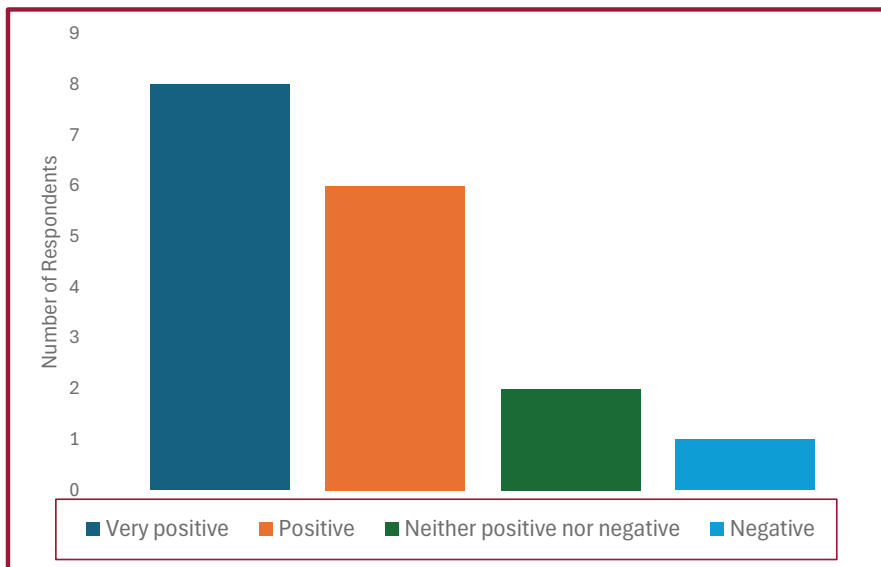
Table 7.1: Impact on businesses and on Warrington town centre			
The Youth Zone has...	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
brought more customers	35%	47%	18%
made Warrington a better place for businesses	36%	53%	12%
improved the image of the town centre	70%	18%	12%
improved the image of Warrington	77%	24%	0%
attracted more locals to the town centre	48%	48%	6%
made the town centre a more attractive place to live	47%	41%	12%

Source: Survey of local businesses (2024)

7.4 Perceptions of the local area

In terms of general attitudes towards the local area, 14 out of the 17 respondents have a ‘positive’ or ‘very positive’ attitude, with only one respondent having a ‘negative’ view of the area. The most frequent response from the local businesses surveyed was that they possess a ‘very positive’ attitude towards the local area, with eight out of the 17 respondents providing this feedback, as shown in Figure 7.3.

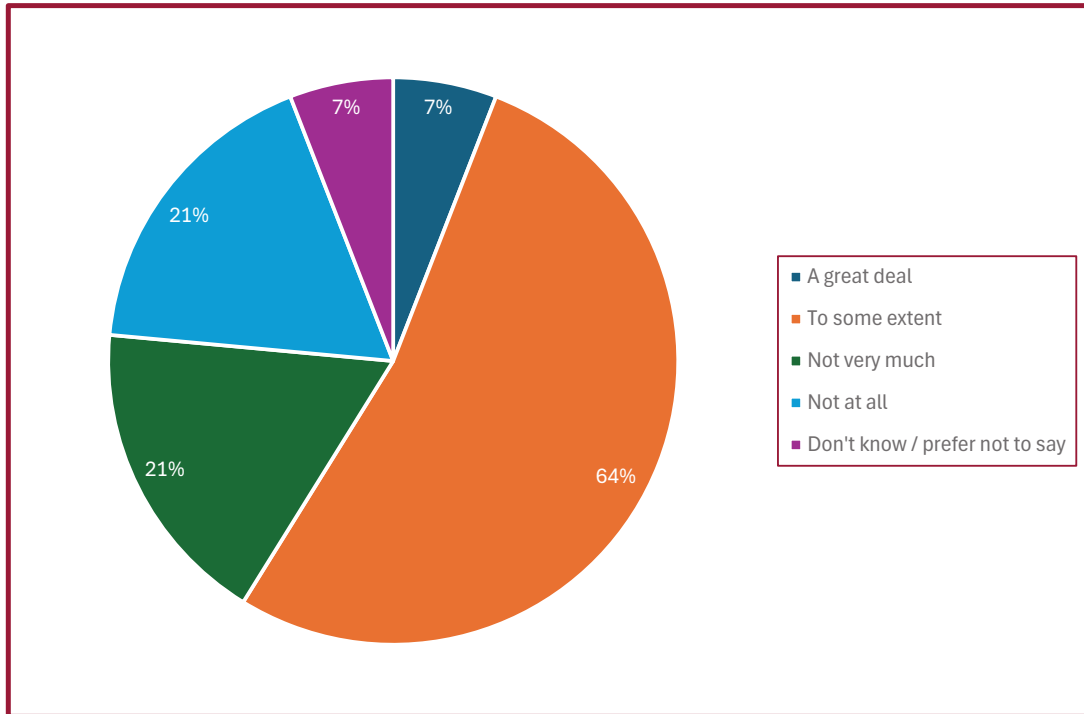
Figure 7.3: Local businesses’ attitudes towards the local area



Source: Survey of local businesses (2024)

Of the 14 respondents who possess more positive attitudes towards the local area, 10 believe that their positive perception of the local area can be attributed to the Youth Zone ‘to some extent’ or ‘a great deal’, as shown in Figure 7.4.

Figure 7.4: Extent to which the Youth Zone impacts these local attitudes



Source: Survey of local businesses (2024)

7.5 Impacts of the Youth Zone on the local area

Businesses surveyed overwhelmingly believe that the Youth Zone is having a positive impact on businesses, young people, residents, people who work in the area and visitors to the area. For example, 83% of survey respondents believe that the Youth Zone is improving the area either a great deal or to some extent for local residents and people who work in the area, as shown in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Impact on the local area

Impact on.....	A great deal	To some extent	Not very much	Not at all	Don't know / prefer not to say
local businesses	18%	59%	18%	0%	6%
young people	76%	18%	0%	0%	6%
local residents	24%	59%	18%	0%	0%
people who work in the area	18%	65%	18%	0%	0%
visitors	6%	31%	38%	0%	25%

Source: Survey of local businesses (2024)

7.6 Wider impacts of the Youth Zone

Businesses also believe that the Youth Zone is providing Warrington with a range of wider benefits. For example, there is a strong feeling among businesses that the Youth Zone is reducing anti-social behaviour and fear of crime in the area as well as increasing pride in the local area and encouraging more people to come to the area, as shown in Table 7.3.

The Youth Zone has...	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
improved the local environment	41%	53%	6%
contributed to reducing anti-social behaviour	82%	12%	6%
contributed to reducing the fear of crime	59%	41%	0%
made a positive contribution to young people in the area	94%	6%	0%
contributed to community safety	44%	56%	0%
increased pride in the local area	75%	25%	0%
enhanced community identity	60%	33%	7%
encouraged more people to come to the area	69%	19%	13%

Source: Survey of local businesses (2024)

7.7 Other comments

A selection of comments taken from the survey of local businesses are set out below.

“I think the Youth Zone is very well run and it's fantastic to see that businesses who have been difficult to engage in local affairs in the past are now on board after visiting the Youth Zone.”

“We are a major investor and wouldn't have joined if we didn't think it was going to be a good thing for Warrington and young people.”

“Massive contribution and very fortunate to have them.”

“Huge impact, made a huge difference to the area and loads of kids from Warrington go there.”

“Great for the area.”

7.8 Summary

Businesses in Warrington are very supportive of the Youth Zone having seen its impact on the business community, the town and the people who live and work in Warrington. Nearly 80% of businesses believe that the Youth Zone has made Warrington a better place and that it has improved Warrington's image. In addition, businesses surveyed believe that a range of other benefits have been delivered by the Youth Zone, including a reduction in anti-social behaviour and fear of crime, and increased pride in the local area.

Image 7.1: Climbing wall at Warrington Youth Zone



8 Conclusion

Warrington Youth Zone provides a vital facility for young people from Warrington, with numerous activities for young people to participate in. The Youth Zone also provides a wide range of other services including targeted support for young people facing particular challenges. This includes mentoring and small group support for young people facing emotional and mental health issues.

However, moving forwards there are a small number of issues that the Youth Zone needs to address. Some of the young people surveyed had concerns over the behaviour of some people in the Youth Zone and did not feel safe as a consequence. For some of those surveyed, this was a result of the Youth Zone feeling understaffed. There was also a comment from a parent / carer that the Youth Zone has plenty of activities for the under 10 age group and for those over 14, but little for the age group in-between. This issue was also raised by one of the respondents to the business survey. Finally, one of the businesses surveyed commented that the Youth Zone needs to be better promoted as there are still many people in Warrington unaware of its existence.

The Youth Zone is part of a network of Youth Zones across the country developed by OnSide, all of which have the overarching ambition of using high quality youth work relationships to enable young people to enjoy their leisure time and achieve their full potential.

This report has demonstrated that the Youth Zone has had very positive impacts on the young people who attend and is very highly regarded by the young people, their parents and carers, and by the local business community. The Youth Zone is also seen as a major asset for Warrington by a range of stakeholders, including various departments within Warrington Borough Council, the Police, education providers and the community sector. The Youth Zone has built positive relationships with all of these organisations and has also been instrumental in bringing these various organisations together to provide a more co-ordinated approach to supporting Warrington's young residents.

The wide range of benefits delivered by the Youth Zone go far beyond merely providing young people with a place to go. These benefits include:

- improved social skills and attitudes among young people – including, for example, self-confidence, ease of making friends and better family relationships;
- improved health and wellbeing – including more awareness of the dangers of alcohol and drugs, increased physical activity, alleviation of anxiety related to issues such as school and reduced levels of bullying;
- improved educational performance – including better attendance and better academic results;
- reduced anxiety for parents and carers – including less worry over issues such as school and the behaviour of the young people in their care;
- reduced anti-social behaviour and fear of crime in Warrington; and
- an improved image of Warrington and its town centre.

Image 8.1: Young people at the Youth Zone



