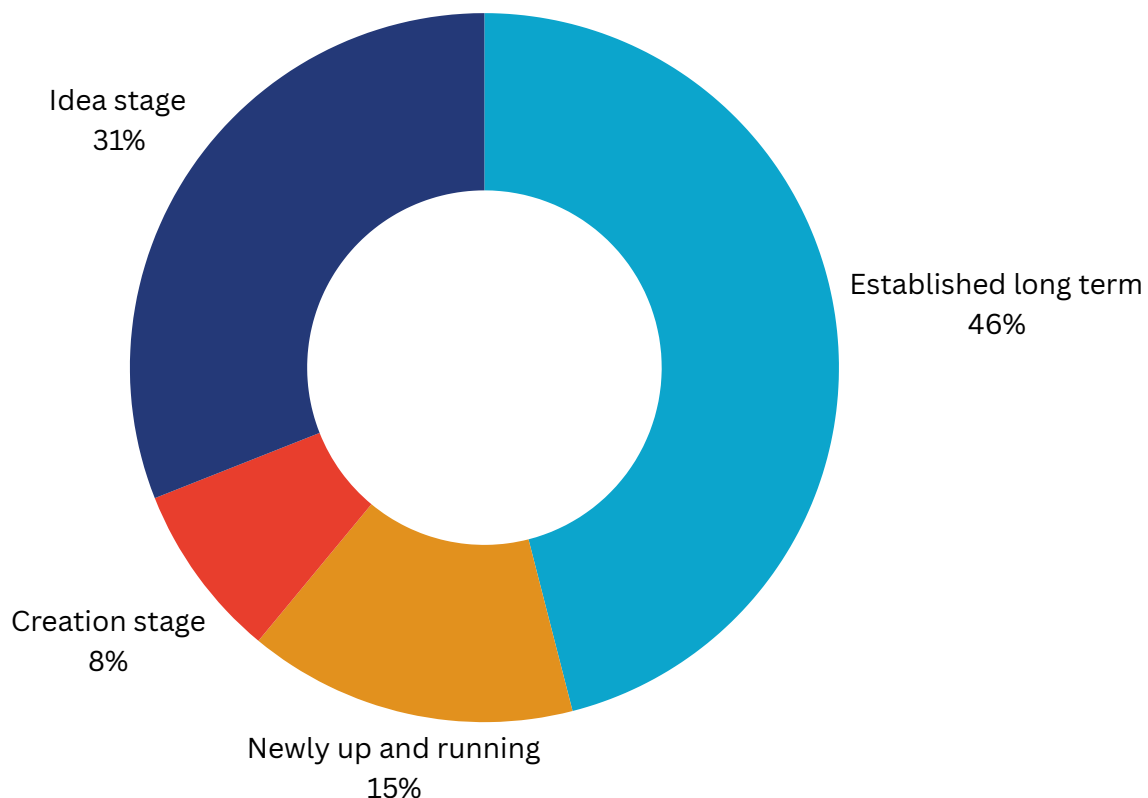


Mid Sussex Youth Focus Group Winter 2024 Findings

On Thursday 14th November 2024, we held a Youth Focus Group at No. 34 America Lane in Haywards Heath, to identify need for youth provision across Mid Sussex. The aim of this meeting was to look at ideas of support for new and existing groups.

We were joined by representatives from both new and established youth groups operating across Mid Sussex, and people in the idea or creation stage of starting a youth provision group.

Status of groups/individual participants:





Challenges

We asked small groups to discuss the challenges to providing youth services and collected responses.

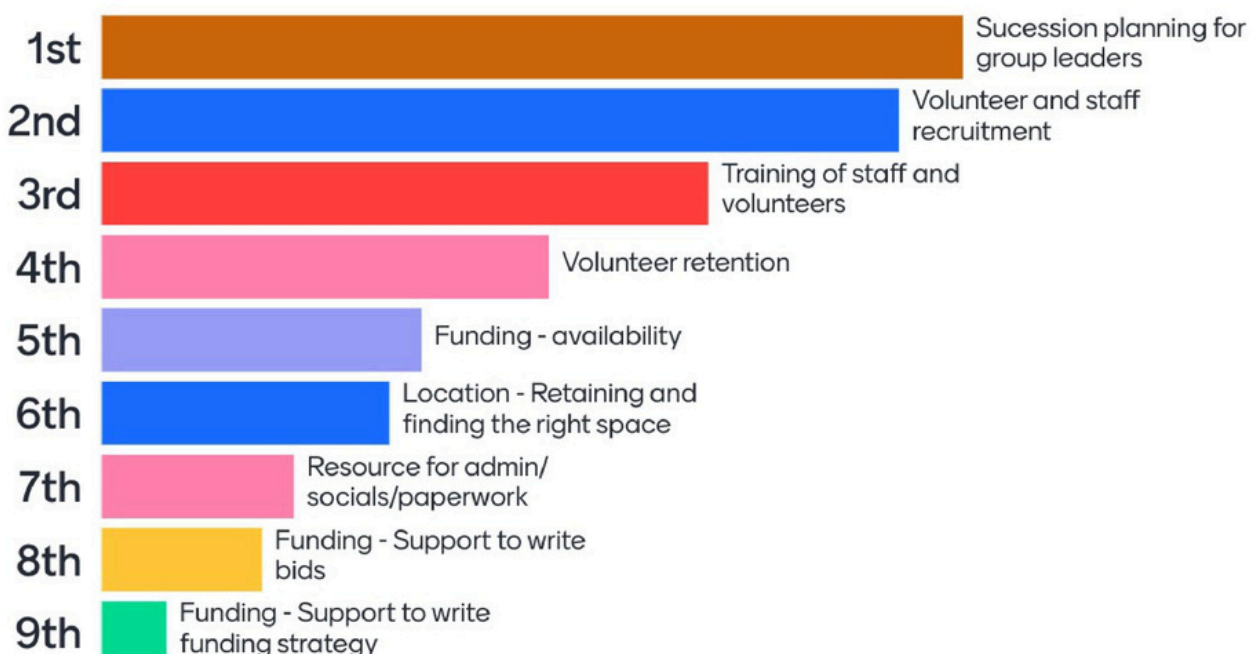
A variety of concerns were raised: high demand for youth services shown by rapid booking of any offers, difficulty recruiting and retaining volunteers in the face of safeguarding and training requirements. There were also worries about the burdens of administration, rising utility and rent costs and lack of purpose-built facilities; the lack of esteem given to youth work in society, and the lack of new people coming into the profession.

The following are the main themes identified.

- Recruitment and retainment of volunteers, staff and trustees
- Funding
- Succession planning
- Training, especially safeguarding and how to work with young people

We asked people who were invited but unable to attend the in-person session the same question in a different format on Mentimeter. These are the results:

➡ Visualise your group in 10 years time, what are your top 3 biggest challenges to achieving this vision?



Solutions

We then asked the groups to discuss potential solutions to the challenges they identified with the same process. A variety of creative solutions were brainstormed by the groups including creating a bank of resources and training that could be shared by youth groups, working on increasing engagement with councils, an online forum for youth group workers to share experiences and troubleshoot issues, and a county-wide database of current youth service provision. A question was raised as to how groups would be vetted before inclusion to ensure that satisfactory safeguarding and safety standards were being met before including groups on any such database.

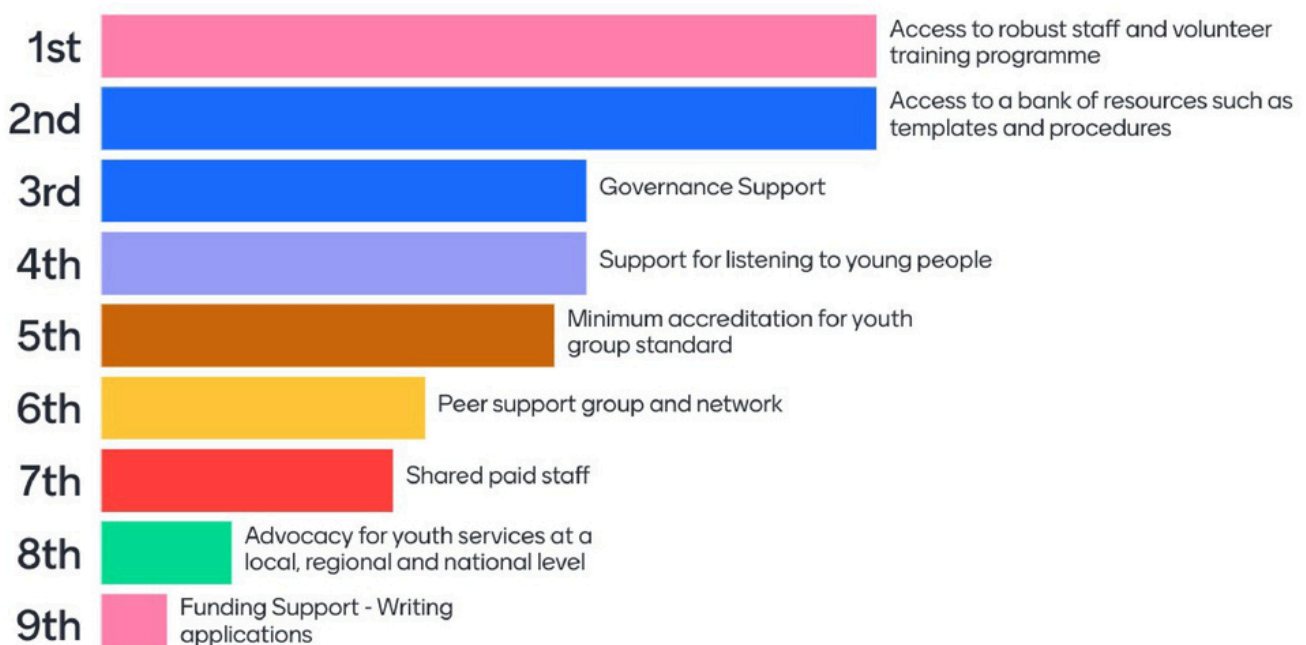
The following are the main themes identified.

- Finding new ways to engage with the wider community and recruit more volunteers
- Access to high quality, shared resources including policies and procedures
- Access to a robust staff and volunteer training programme
- Online forum for youth organisations to troubleshoot and share best practices
- Support for listening to young people
- Increased clarity and engagement of Mid Sussex District Council priorities on youth group provision

We asked people who were invited but unable to attend the in-person session the same question in a different format on Mentimeter. These are the results:



Going forward, what are the most powerful solutions in your opinion? Put these in order of priority for you:



Feedback, quotes and inspired thoughts going forward:

“There is no value in youth work in society.”

“It’s difficult to get youth clubs in rural areas due to lack of transportation.”

“Succession planning: lots of people working in the sector have done it for a very long time – we need new people to continue the work.”

“Applying for funding is a full time job.”

“It’s very difficult to get a paid youth worker to do just 3 hours a week.”

“(With youth work) ... everyone is solving the same problem over and over. Feels a lot like recreating the wheel.”

“Would be helpful if training was not piecemeal – e.g. one day and done. Also important to have a safe space to ask the “stupid questions”. Training is more fun when all together as well, energising.”

“Mental health provision is not there for young people – mental health provision is on its knees.”

“We need to know more about youth provision priorities in MSDC/WSCC.”



Conclusions

The session was active and engaged and the consensus was that attendees would strongly welcome a follow-up session. Meeting in-person helps get everyone out of their silos and connect the dots.

Therefore we shall be proposing **a meeting time in February** for the group to meet and review the suggested ideas.

Key discussions will be around the solutions that were deemed most significant to youth group provision including:

- Training programme
 - What are the priorities and needs
 - What does a quality programme look like?
- Bank of resources
 - What does this look like?
- Succession planning
 - How do we develop a robust programme of recruitment and retention for staff and volunteers?
- Long-term peer support for those involved in youth groups across Mid Sussex