

# What Matters to Me, Now

The voices of children and young  
people who live and learn in Barnsley.

**Director of Public Health  
Annual Report 2021**



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# Foreword

**As the Director of Public Health in Barnsley, I am required by law to produce an annual report about the health of people who live in our borough. I welcome the opportunity, as each year it helps me, my team and our wider partners to identify any key issues, flag up any problems, make new recommendations and describe how we are helping residents, their families and their friends to live healthier lives. For previous reports, I asked residents of Barnsley to tell me about their physical and mental health through the completion of a diary. It gave us invaluable insights into the daily challenges affecting their physical and mental health and a much better understanding about what people think makes their health better or worse.**

In this report we hear from Barnsley's children and young people. Over the past two years, they have spent nine months in 'lockdown' because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Working on the report has given us a unique opportunity to explore how the things that are important to them have changed over that time, before and after the arrival of the virus. We know the pandemic has had a massive impact on children's lives – they have lost out on vital educational and social activity and, by virtue of their age, have spent a larger proportion of their lives living with the impact of the constraints, stresses and strains that the pandemic has brought to all our lives.

This Annual Report is longer than past reports but it is so important that our children and young people have their voices recognised, especially those from more vulnerable groups. Their views are crucial in helping shape our priorities and our services. I am very grateful to the staff from the wonderful clubs, groups and services in Barnsley who have supported children and young people to get involved in this project. I am overwhelmed by all the hard work and dedication that has gone into the wonderful and creative artwork that makes this report what it is.

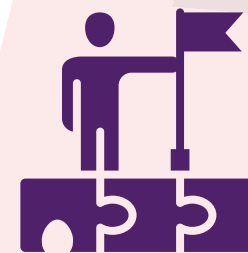
The Children's Society recently found a significant decline in children's happiness with their lives over the last ten years. Its Good Childhood Report 2021 highlights the deep regret that 'the joy of the great British childhood' seems to be slipping away. Perhaps the pandemic can provide a reset button for our lives in Barnsley, and it is now the right time to reflect on our priorities, using the opportunity to improve the lives of our children and young people so we can bring start to back some of that joy.



**Julia Burrows**  
**Director of Public Health**

# Our progress

since the 2020 Director of Public Health Annual Report



**For the 2020 Report, we asked Barnsley residents to tell us about how the COVID-19 pandemic had changed their lives by recording their thoughts and feelings about their mental and physical health in a single diary entry completed on 3 November 2020. Residents told us about the importance of having good mental health and keeping spirits high, the importance of having a good job and work life balance, our connections with others, helping each other, community spirit and looking after ourselves. Although we are still living with COVID-19 and the challenges this brings, our public health team has been working incredibly hard with our partners and residents to ensure everyone has every opportunity to live their best life. Here are a few examples of what we have been doing...**

## Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Barnsley's Health and Wellbeing Board has published a joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which builds on the findings of the 2020 DPH Annual Report and sets out the key priorities for health and wellbeing. The Strategy's key focus is on improving mental health for all ages and ensuring that Barnsley is a great place for a child to be born. To do this, we are taking a 'life-course' approach, having developed a series of ambitions across three stages of life: starting well, living well and ageing well. In Barnsley, we want to reduce health inequalities by acting on the wider factors that influence health and making sure everybody in the borough has access to a safe, warm and sustainable home, a good job and a good friend to talk to.

## Mental Health

A Mental Health Partnership has been set up to bring together leaders from across Barnsley to improve residents' mental health and wellbeing. The Partnership has overseen the development of a new mental health strategy, which details what's important for improving mental health in our borough. The priorities over the next year include improving outcomes for people with eating disorders, people who self-harm and improving the local crisis care offer. We have already achieved many things since the Partnership started, including opening the first Andy's Man Club in the borough and signing up to our Zero Suicide Ambition, which aims to prevent suicides in Barnsley.



## Physical Activity

Residents told us about the importance of being physically active in terms of how we feel and our short and long-term health. The Active in Barnsley Strategic Plan is being launched to guide our efforts for increasing the physical activity levels in the borough. The 'What's Your Move' campaign is growing in engagement and showing how people are being active in Barnsley and encouraging other people to move more. Back in July we launched the 'Moving Mental Health Forward' scheme to support those organisations, groups and clubs delivering sport and physical activity to be recognised for creating a positive mental health culture.

## Employment

Residents also highlighted the importance of having a good quality, safe and secure job and striving for a positive work-life balance. Working towards and achieving a good work-life balance can have huge benefits for our physical and mental health and over the past few years, for many people, this has become more difficult to achieve. Throughout the pandemic we have been working with key partners to ensure we have plans and practical support available for residents most in need of employment and health support. 'More and Better Jobs' is Barnsley's employment and skills strategy for 2021-2024. It explains how the local council, working closely with partners across the borough, will support and invest in Barnsley's employment and skills system over the next three years. Our vision is for Barnsley to be a place of possibilities. A great place to learn, live and work, where businesses can grow, and residents have access to lifelong learning.

## Alcohol

Some of those who completed a diary told us about how their relationship with alcohol had changed during the pandemic. As a result, DrinkCoach was launched in Barnsley in 2021, offering a Barnsley specific website and mobile application where residents can complete an alcohol screening tool and receive brief advice and local treatment options. Residents that score increasing or higher risk have the option to book an online DrinkCoach appointment, connecting them to an alcohol specialist who will offer up to six free sessions, available in multiple languages.



## Food

Residents told us how they wanted to eat healthier and so our Barnsley Food Plan 2022-2025 is almost ready to be published. Our key priorities are food access, education, diet-related ill-health, food environment and sustainability. With the support of key stakeholders, we will work together to achieve action against these priorities and work towards our vision for everyone in Barnsley to have access to nutritious food that benefits their health and wellbeing. We know we need to do more to make our environment more conducive to making it easier to be healthy and being able to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. To protect our children and all residents from widespread exposure to high fat, sugar and/or salt (HFSS) advertising and marketing, Public Health have been developing a Policy Guidance Note to restrict the advertisement of foods and drinks that are HFSS on all council-owned advertising space. It is hoped that instead of advertising unhealthy food and drink products, food manufacturers and retailers will choose to promote and advertise the healthier products within their ranges.

## Community

During the pandemic, the six Area Council Teams across the borough have provided a significant amount of support to local communities. A range of offers have been commissioned across the six areas to meet the different needs in their areas, particularly for people facing increased levels of isolation, including older people, young families, men, and support for young people too. Work continues as we move into a phase of living safely with COVID and the continued need to offer support to local people and to understand their needs. For example, in the North East area, the need for social interaction and learning new skills in a craft-based setting has led to the development of two new sewing groups in the area, Betty's Little Acorns and the Pins and Needles group.

The six area teams have been supporting their local Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector by providing grant opportunities through funding from the Council and Barnsley NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). This has equated to over £396,000 being awarded to local community groups and organisations who have suffered considerably throughout the pandemic. In addition, in 2021/22, over 7,518 volunteering opportunities were taken up through work linked with Area Councils and Ward Alliances, amounting to around £389,203 of cashable volunteer hours (not including quarter four data), as part of the 'Love Where You Live' campaign.



# Introduction to the 2021 DPH Annual Report



**The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development including physical, intellectual, and emotional development, are established in early childhood<sup>1</sup>. Sustaining this across the life-course for children and young people is important to improve health and wellbeing outcomes and reduce inequalities<sup>2</sup>. Beyond the school years, these foundations continue to have an impact on an individual's health and wellbeing, that lasts well into adulthood. Research suggests that regardless of parental income, education and social class, those who experience poor health as children have significantly lower educational attainment, poorer health, and lower social status as adults<sup>3</sup>. Improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people in Barnsley is therefore crucial for improving the public health of all Barnsley residents. It's why we decided to focus on children and young people, initially for our 2019 DPH Annual Report.**

**Good health, wellbeing and resilience are vital for all our children, both now and for the future of society.**



## How do we measure children and young people's health and wellbeing?

There is good evidence about what is important for achieving good health, wellbeing and resilience and improving children and young people's public health, and this is brought together in the national Healthy Child Programme<sup>2</sup>. In addition, the Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF) sets out the desired outcomes and the indicators that will help us understand how well public health is being improved and protected. There are currently **72 PHOF indicators** relevant to children and young people's health, but all of these are quantitative measures. The current project therefore adds another dimension, gathering qualitative evidence to help us understand children's lives today and the things that may affect their health and well-being.

## 2019: What Matters to Me?

The title of this report and the key question we asked children and young people was inspired by 'What Matters to You?' Day (WMTYD). Knowing what matters can play a huge part in helping to make our lives enjoyable and worthwhile. WMTY Day highlights the importance of healthcare practitioners asking their patients that one simple question in their everyday practice and emphasises the relationship between people and their health practitioners so that decisions are truly shared. In the context of public health, asking "What Matters to You?" simplifies how we engage with children and young people and enables us to combine what is important to them with what we know about public health outcomes and our expertise around evidence-based practice, to help us shape our priorities for the next few years.

## The engagement process

We wanted to make the engagement process fun and creative so, in November 2019, we contacted several children and young people's groups and services across Barnsley and asked them to send us artwork that represented what matters to them and their future in Barnsley. Artwork was received from the following groups and services who work with children and young people across Barnsley, ranging from 0 to 18 years or 25 years for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision:

- Barnsley Youth Council
- Barnsley Care4Us Council
- Barnsley Family Centres
- Healthwatch and Barnardo's Barnsley Young Carers Council
- Barnsley SEND Youth Forum
- Barnsley Vision Support Service
- Barnsley Targeted Youth Support Service
- YMCA Barnsley ACE Club (Horizon Community College)
- YMCA Barnsley Juniors Youth Club
- YMCA Barnsley TYI Friday Project (SEND provision)
- Barnsley Young People's Substance Misuse Service
- Barnsley Youth Justice Service
- Greenacre School (SEND provision)
- The EXODUS Project

As well as the call for artwork from groups and services, and to engage a greater number of children and young people from across the borough, we distributed 1,500 blank postcards asking individuals to draw or write about what mattered to them. The postcards were completed through the following settings:

- Barnsley Museums
- Barnsley Libraries
- Barnsley FUSION – Cultural and Education Partnership
- Barnsley Schools
- Barnsley Family Centres and childcare providers
- Barnsley Children in Care and Care Leavers' Celebration Event

We hoped the artwork would provide Barnsley's Public Health team with a wealth of data that would enhance our understanding about the wants, needs, hopes and dreams of children and young people in our borough. We also hoped the process of creating artwork would be beneficial to the health and wellbeing of the children and young people who took part.

**'The arts take us to another world where we can explore our thoughts and feelings free of fear of stigma or judgement. They help children and young people to express things that they sometimes cannot say in conversation, and to celebrate feelings and thoughts that previously troubled them. The creative process can also be a curative process.'**

Professor Peter Fonagy, CEO,  
Anna Freud Centre



**'Creativity in and of itself is important for remaining healthy, remaining connected to yourself and connected to the world.'** Christianne Strang, Professor of Neuroscience at the University of Alabama Birmingham and former president of the American Art Therapy Association





## 2021: What Matters to Me, Now?

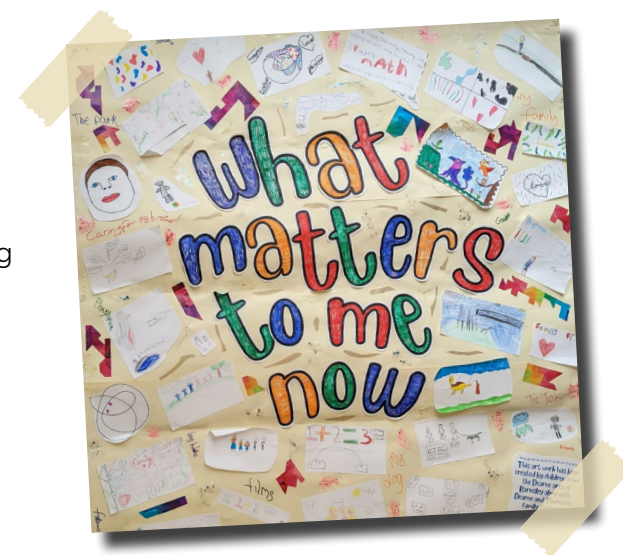
In November 2019, nobody had any idea about what was waiting around the corner in just a few months' time, and in March 2020 our whole world changed almost overnight. Six months into the project, the 2019 DPH Annual Report and the accompanying work was stopped in its tracks by COVID-19, as local authority Public Health teams were called upon to lead the local response to the global Coronavirus pandemic.

Children and young people's everyday lives changed significantly. Most stayed at home and learnt via online lessons, and for months, play centres were closed, libraries were closed, parks were closed, cinemas were closed, cafes and restaurants were closed, and gatherings were reduced to only a few people, if any at all.

Eventually the Government measures put in place to protect the public from the virus were removed. The extraordinary efforts made by key workers and community volunteers to ensure that critical services continued to be delivered, and that those needing extra help received ongoing support, meant that we could once again look forward to a brighter future. As we started to think about the 2021 DPH Annual Report, our Public Health team were keen for it to include the fantastic artwork that had been created by the children and young people back in 2019. Being able to use this work also presented us with an opportunity to repeat the engagement process and compare the output, allowing us to explore whether the things that were important to children and young people before the pandemic had been changed by their experiences over the last two years.

In November 2021, all the children and young people's groups and services who took part in the 2019 project were therefore invited again to create and submit artwork, this time representing the theme of 'what matters to me, **now**'. In addition, we distributed a further 800 postcards across the borough.

The current report therefore highlights what matters to children and young people who are living and learning in Barnsley and explores whether the COVID-19 pandemic has changed what's important for them. It also describes the health and wellbeing of Barnsley children and young people using some of the quantitative data available and provides examples of services and initiatives that have been delivered in the last year to make a difference to the health and wellbeing of children and young people. The artwork created by the children and young people as part of the engagement process was displayed at the Library @ The Lightbox as part of the *What Matters to Me, Now* exhibition from 23 – 29 May 2022. The catalogue of artwork is available digitally, [catalogue of artwork](#).





# What children and young people told us

**We received around 800 completed postcards. There were also 30 pieces of artwork for the project (20 in 2019 and 10 for 2021). The ages of the children and young people who took part ranged from two years to 24 years old, from right across Barnsley. Once collated, each postcard and piece of artwork was reviewed to identify themes for 2019 and 2021 respectively. This chapter describes the main themes that emerged in the analysis and provides a comparison of what mattered to the children and young people in our borough, both before and after the arrival of COVID-19. The strongest themes are described first in each section.**

# Themes found in both 2019 and 2021

## Family and home

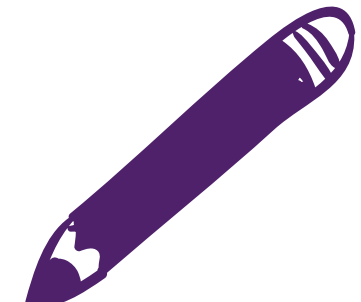
What matters is family, not just the nuclear family, but families of all kinds. Simply, they want to spend quality time with the people they love and who love them, including parents, foster carers, sisters and brothers, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. This also included pets, who they feel are equally part of their family. Teddies were also referenced several times by the younger children; an attachment figure and something that reminds them of home. The children and young people of Barnsley showed a lot of love for their families, and this extended across the ages.

**'I want my mum to have a good life'** Mohammed (age 6)

**'My family matters to me more than anything. Being in lockdown made me realise that my family is so, so special to me, even before COVID. Each member of my family hold a special place in my heart and they matter to me the very most.'** Beth (age 13)

Children and young people also want their homes to be warm, somewhere to 'chill' and relax and somewhere they feel safe.

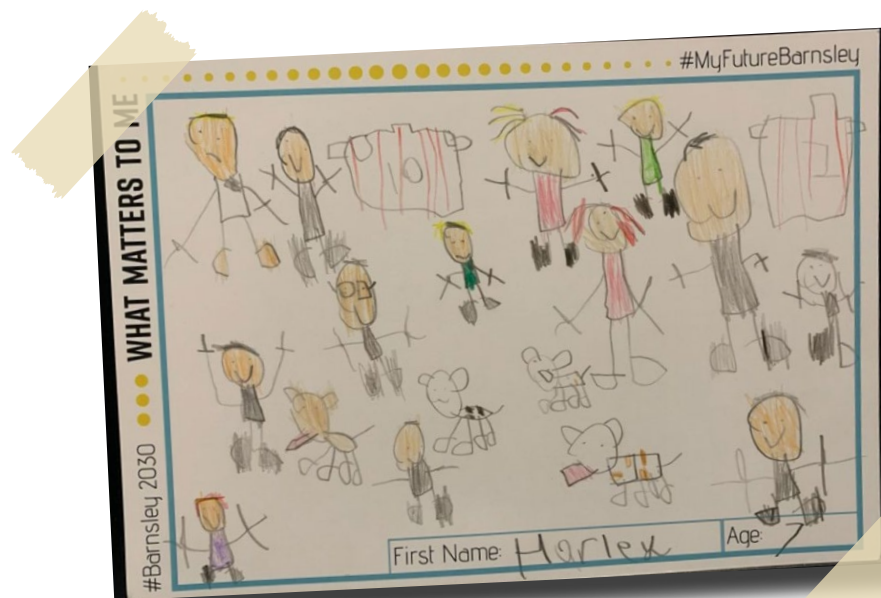
It is highly likely that children and young people have been directly affected by bereavement because of the COVID-19 pandemic and in the 2021 postcards, there were several references to remembering family who had died, highlighting the importance of this to children and young people in our borough.



## Friendships and belonging

What matters is friends, making new friends and building strong friendships with people that they can depend on. It's important that they have opportunities to do this, for example, youth groups, drama clubs, dance clubs, sports clubs, and they would like more opportunities to volunteer and get involved in community groups and local charities. It gives them a sense of belonging.

Young carers specifically said that spending time together with other young carers is important to them, through group activities and days out. Many children and young people with SEND said that what really mattered to them was being able to do activities and see their friends during holidays and weekends, when they aren't at school, as they can spend a lot of time feeling lonely.



**'An area to play with your friends'** Millie (age 7)

**'Best friends. They stick by you know matter what, love you know matter who you love. Hold a torch in your darkest moments and join you at your best. Best friends are there in your lowest nights and darkest days'** Abi (age 13)

**'For young people to make more friends... Cheaper fares to travel (buses) so we can socialise'** Melissa (age 13)

It's also important that children and young people have places to play with their friends, as described further in the next theme. Older children also want more opportunities to socialise after school and they note that having reliable, affordable transport can help facilitate these opportunities.

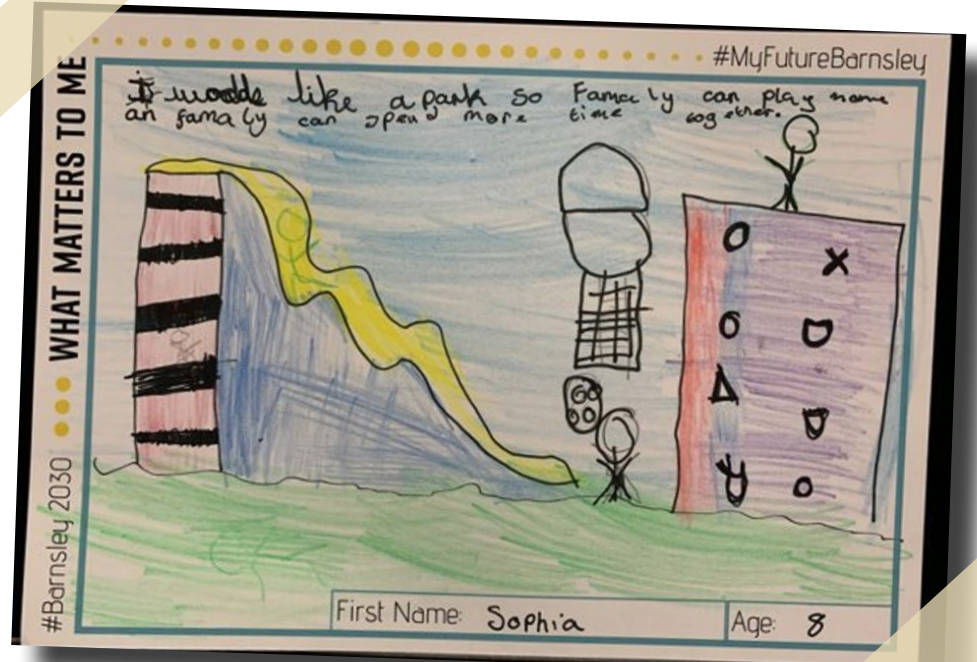
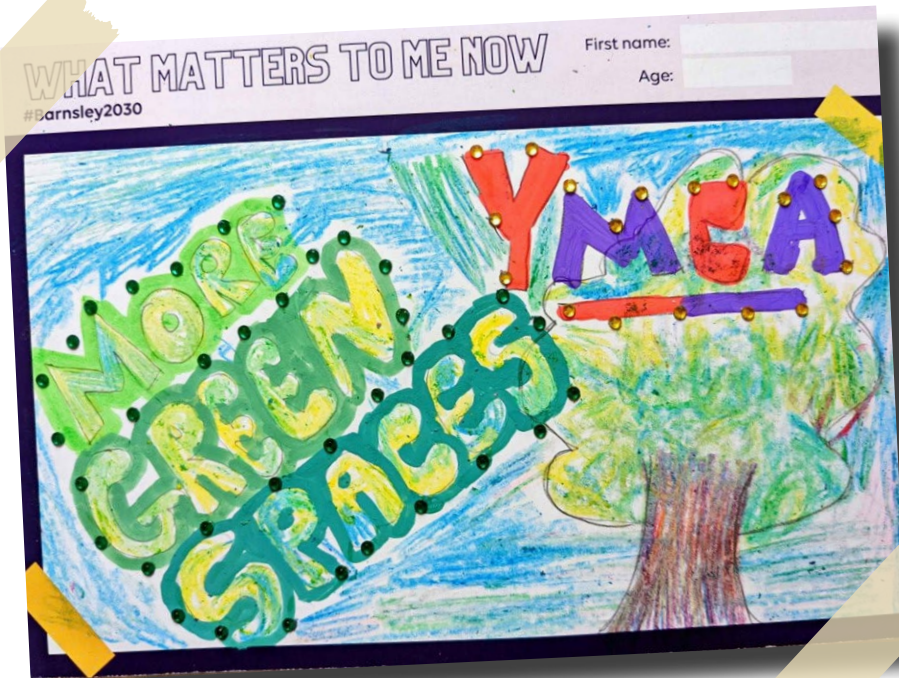




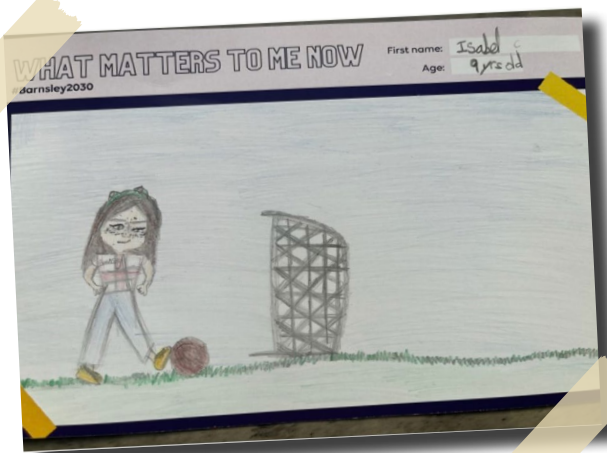
## Being active and outdoor play

What matters is being active and 'playing out' - it's important that they have fields for playing on, football pitches, more places to ride dirt bikes, cycle paths, walking trails and bike trails, and more opportunities for outdoor play, for older children as well as younger children. They enjoy swimming, bowling, cricket, cycling, dancing, ice skating, trampolining, boxing, playing golf, football, basketball, and netball. Children and young people also mentioned the need for more affordable access to leisure facilities, suggesting discounts for young carers, particularly during the school holidays. It was also clear in the analysis that this theme is extrinsically linked with the last two themes; children and young people want to do these activities with their family and friends.





**'I would like a park so family can play more and more family can spend more time together' Sophia (age 8)**



In the 2019 postcards there was noticeable reference to the rise in technology-use among their peers and an increase in sedentary behaviour, which led some children and young people to highlight the need to inspire others to get active outside and connect with others and/or nature. This is demonstrated in the quotes below.

**'Barnsley is good as it is but there could be more things to improve on and try to get people more active and not getting things delivered to your door and plant more trees and friendly parks for people to play in instead of going on technology'** Unknown

**'I would love to see the existing parks updated and modernised so children would be motivated to play outside'** Joseph (age 12)

**'I think there should be more parks. I would like this to happen because children in this generation are becoming more anti-social as technology develops... I would like to see that they include things that people my age would play with/on, because parks now days only include stuff for younger kids. If more parks are built, I believe that children won't be on the internet as much and won't use it for the wrong purposes such as cyber bullying.'** Tatiana (age 12)

This was not as noticeable in the 2021 artwork, possibly because the pandemic gave children and young people the opportunity to explore their local surroundings. Spending time outdoors with household members was one of the few things that children and young people were allowed to do during the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

As well as green space to be able to run and play in, calm outdoor spaces are important for children and young people too, somewhere they can reflect and be close to nature, some children felt this supported their emotional health and wellbeing.

## The environment

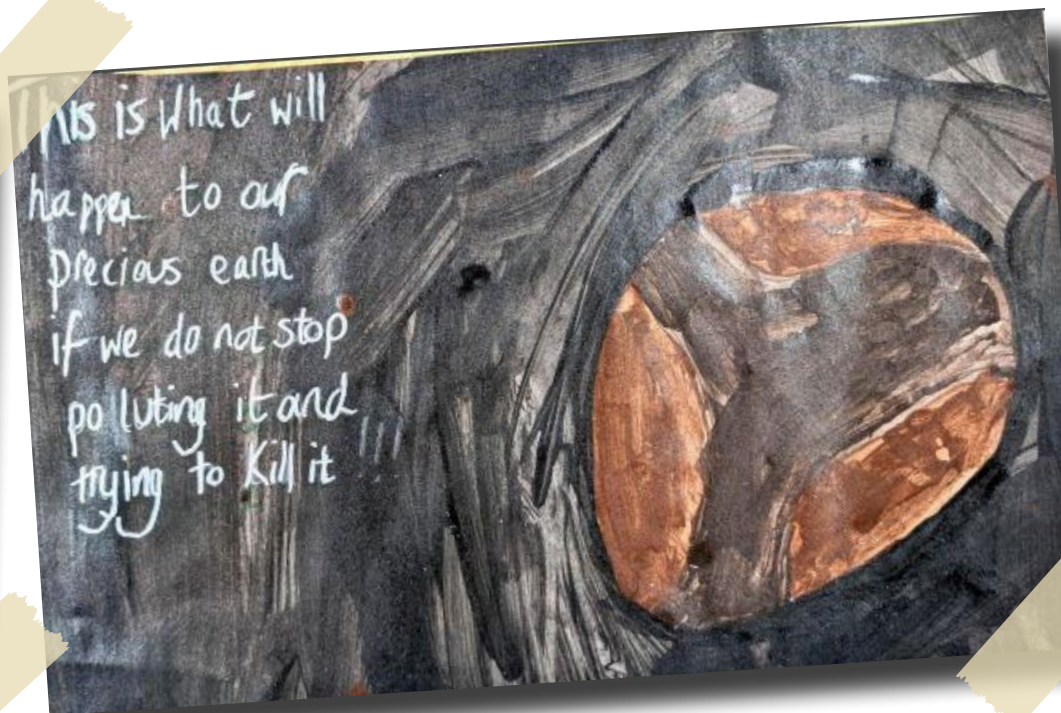
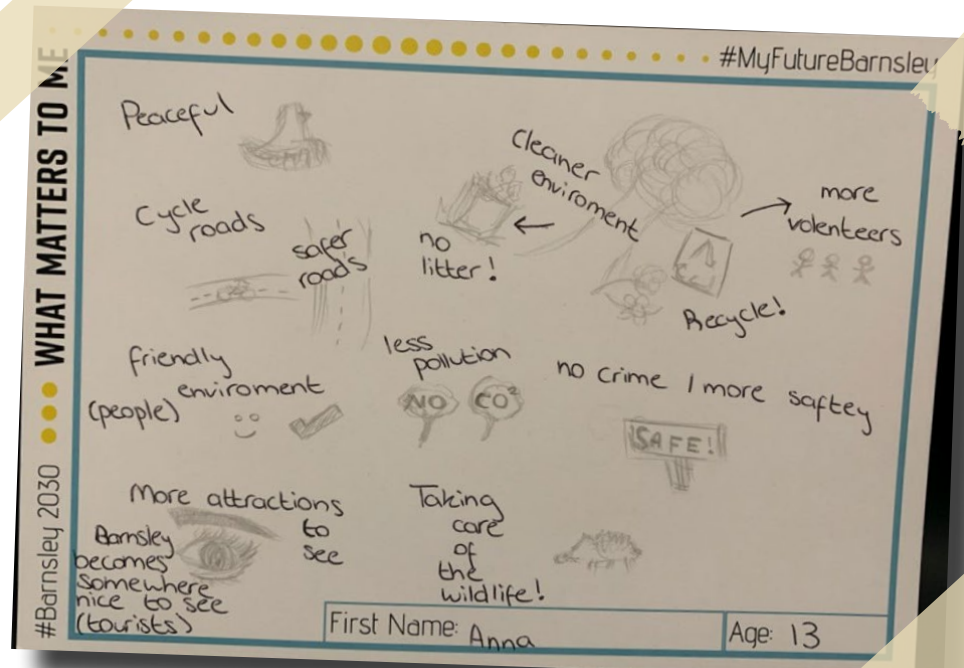
What matters is nature and protecting our environment - tackling climate change, reducing plastic, recycling, saving our wildlife and green spaces both locally and globally.

Children and young people would like more recycling bins, especially in the town centre, less litter and dog poo on their streets and more flowers and trees. Some were anti-pollution and suggested renewable energy, electric cars and modernised environmentally friendly public transport. Wildlife also matters to children and young people, and ensuring that animals too are happy and have a safe, clean environment to thrive in.





**'I would love Barnsley to be a clean and lovely place for people to be because right now it is not. Barnsley is a lovely place but people are ruining it by throwing litter on the floor when there are plenty of bins around. I also think cigarettes should be banned because that is becoming a big thing a lot more people are smoking and it's polluting the air and making Barnsley an unsafe place to be, especially for younger ones.'** Rae (age 12)



**'One major thing I would like to change is pollution. This could be changed by doing fundraising to pay for more recycle bins, which will not only benefit the planet but will bring the town together and save our future.'** Summer (age 11)



## Education and learning

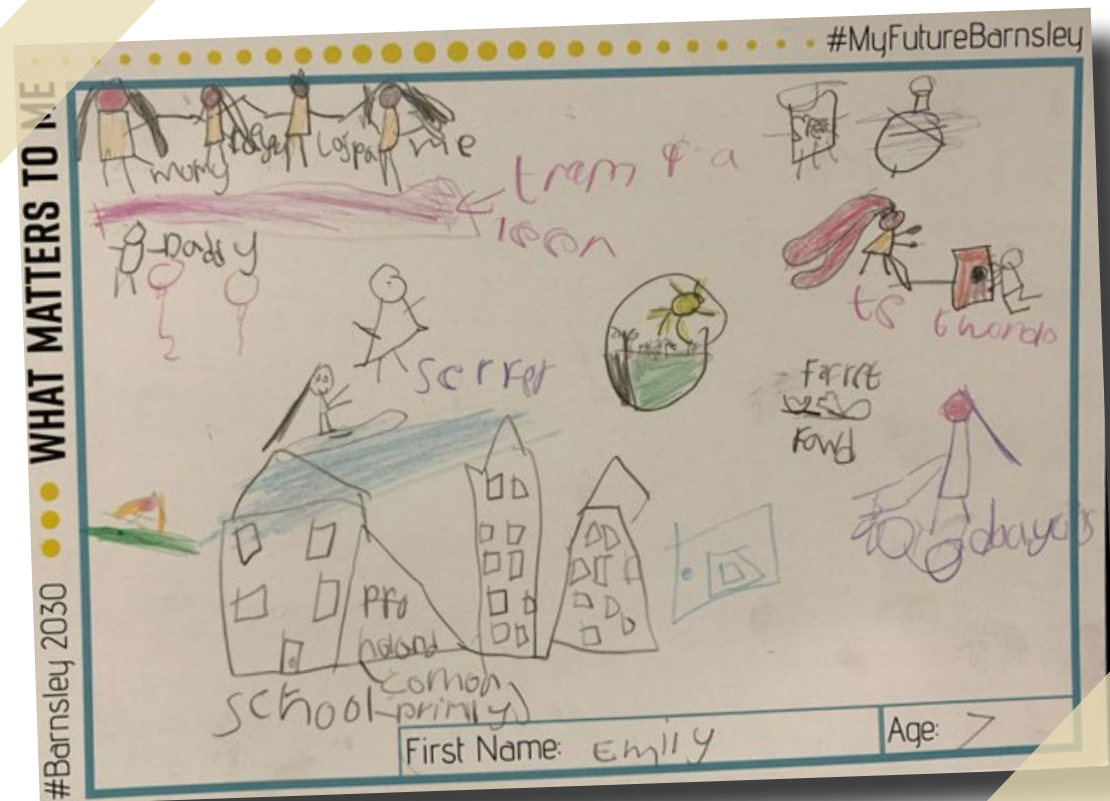
What matters is going to school and college - maths, art, science - but not just for learning, for the sense of community too. They love their teachers and spending time with their friends and for younger children their nursery staff and setting matter too. Especially during the pandemic, the staff in education settings provided a safe place and invaluable sense of normalcy.

**'Some said at the beginning of the first lockdown they were quite excited about not being able to go to school but after a while they began to miss going and hope that the schools don't close again.'** Marie (Outreach Worker, Dearne Family Centres)

**'School is important to me in this town so I can experience education'** Stannerz (age 11)

**'Who would have thought that we would be fighting over toilet rolls and feeling claustrophobic confined to our homes and not being able to go out. Our dreams and aspirations were the little things that we take for granted in life. Our education put on halt and as young people with dreams to follow this was one of the most difficult aspects of Covid for us.'**

YMCA Barnsley member (age 13)





Education was a theme in both years but post-pandemic, attending a physical setting seemed even more important. Some children and young people highlighted that they took school for granted before the pandemic and when it was taken away, they realised they needed that physical space to learn and grow. On the other hand, for some, online learning was a blessing as it meant they didn't have to face their peers. Returning to school therefore caused anxiety for some, as demonstrated in the poem below.

**"Lockdown is over,  
But isolation is not.  
Covid won't end,  
But I might.**

**Self-isolation came to me as a miracle.  
Online school was a blessing.  
But now it is over,  
And school is back.  
I'm not sure I will last."**

YMCA Barnsley member (age 13)

Some children and young people also referenced libraries and books as important, highlighting their desire to learn outside of school and college. They also think about their future, and their education is a pathway to success in adulthood. They want to get a good job, to be able to provide a nice, stable home and car for their future families.





## Health and healthcare

What matters is having the things that they need to be healthy - such as sleep, clean air, and access to clean water, with some suggesting drinking water fountains in the town centre. They want to be fit and healthy and reduce risks to their health, notably cigarettes and, unsurprisingly in the 2021 artwork, COVID-19. They also want to help people who are affected by drug and alcohol addiction.

**'I want Covid and cigarettes to not exist'** Oliver (age 6)

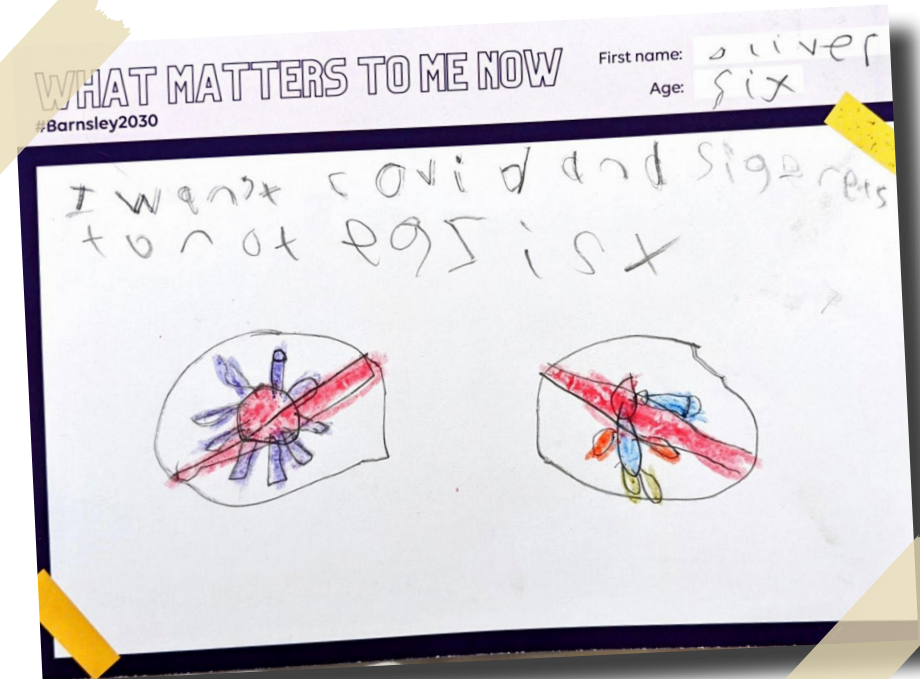
**'More sport places for people to get more into things. And for more people to get fit and healthy'** John (age 12)

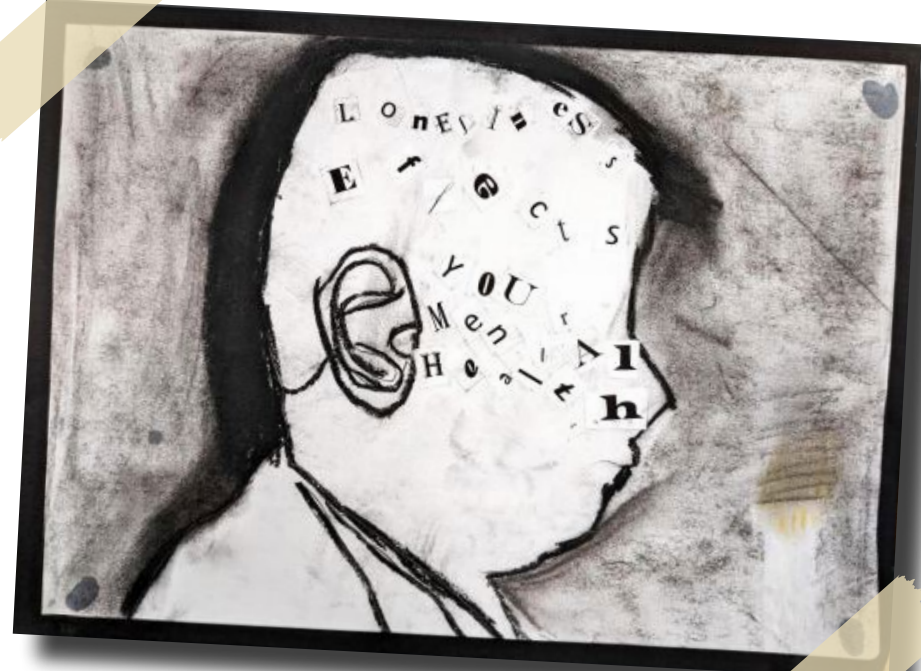
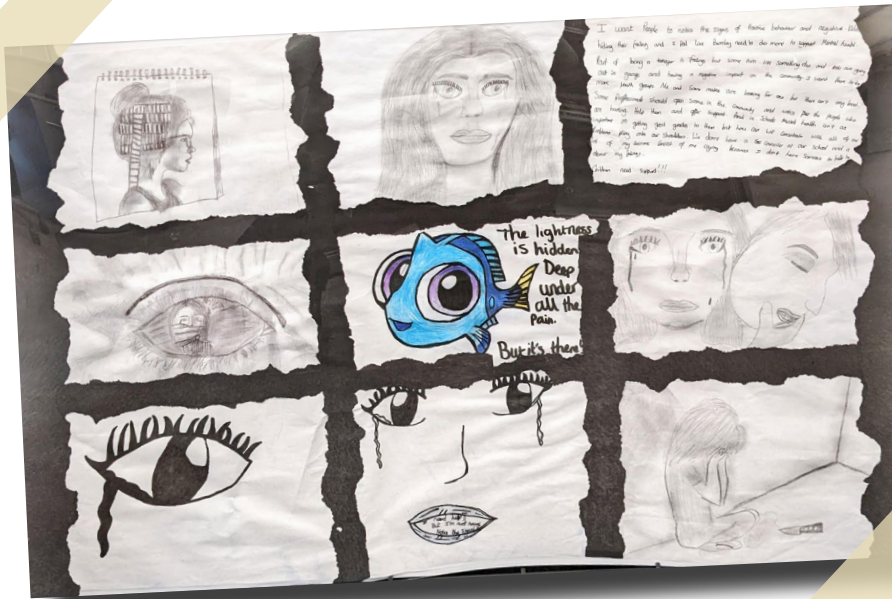
**'I would want to make places with children in it, illegal for people to smoke. So then small children don't get affected by the smoke'**

Ibrahim (age 11)

**'In my opinion, the thing that matters to me most in this town is keeping the environment safe and for Covid to disappear'** Georgie (age 10)

Having good mental health matters massively to children and young people. The submissions across both 2019 and 2021 highlighted some of the emotional health and wellbeing issues that affect children and young people both pre- and post-pandemic - anxiety, depression, loneliness, and self-harm were all referenced. Children and young people told us that it's important that they have someone to talk to about their feelings and help with managing these when they become overwhelming, through peer support and one-to-ones with professionals, specifically for young carers. It's also important that people can notice the signs of poor mental health and can provide support early. To protect their mental health, they recognised that they need help to build their resilience and ability to deal with the pressures of everyday life and with media pressure, for example, feeling like they must look a certain way.

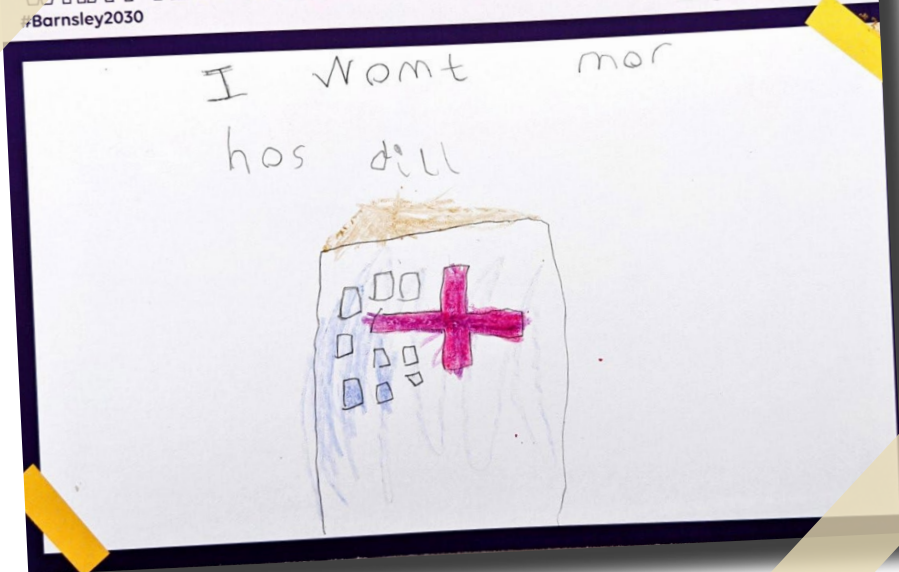




**'After being given the criteria of 'What Matters to Me Now' I decided the best thing for me to produce was a poem around mental health as it is something I consider very important and illustrates my feelings.'** (YMCA Barnsley member, age 13)

Healthcare matters to children and young people, notably access to doctors, hospitals and medicine, and this did not change pre- and post-pandemic. Some children and young people highlighted the need to reduce waiting times, which may have been exacerbated by the lockdown restrictions.

WHAT MATTERS TO ME NOW  
#Barnsley2030  
First name: column  
Age: 8





## Help and support for those who need it

What matters is helping others and access to support for those who are more vulnerable. It's important that this support is available specifically in school, including mental health support, support for those with additional needs, and support for young carers. What also matters to young carers specifically is having respite, free time away from their caring responsibilities.

For many children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), what really matters to them is being able to do activities and see their friends during holidays and weekends. This would help to tackle loneliness as they reported spending a lot of time feeling alone in their homes, when they weren't in their setting. The older children and young people with SEND said they would also like more support with independent living.

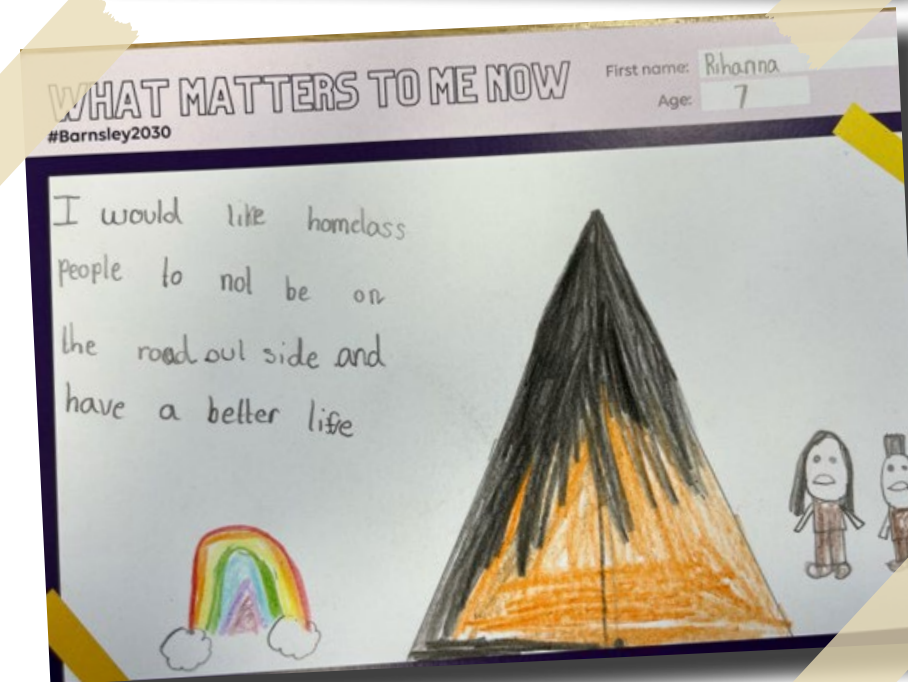
**'A wider understanding of mental disabilities in the community... and better understanding of SEND throughout schools'** Kai (age 14)

Caring for others and making sure they had a 'good life' was also important to some children and young people. They want to do fundraising and charitable work so that those less fortunate could be happy too. The presence of homeless people in the town centre was a concern for lots of children and young people. They expressed that they want homeless people to have accommodation and support with their problems, for example, with drug and alcohol use.

**'I would like the homeless people's lives to be better. For example, on rainy, snowing and cold nights, offer showers and shelter... I think more people and organisations should offer food to the homeless and poor, like at food banks.'** Georgia (age 11)

**'I would like homeless people to not be on the road outside and have a better life'** Rihanna (age 7)

Some highlighted the need for more support in their communities for LGBTQ+ young people (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer or questioning, and others).



# Themes more common in 2019 (before COVID-19)

## Inclusivity and diversity

What matters is equality and respecting diversity - people being treated fairly regardless of their race, gender or ability. They want more food and clothes shops for families of different nationalities. They want to put an end to discrimination and bullying. Some suggested adapted play parks for children and young people with physical disabilities.

Celebrating diversity matters, with some young people highlighting that a Barnsley Pride event is important to them.





## Being and feeling safe

What matters is feeling safe, both in their homes and communities. They want vulnerable children and young people to be protected from abuse. They want more to be done to tackle antisocial behaviour, crime, knife crime and homelessness.



**'Eradicate all anti-social behaviour from the town centre. I don't feel safe when I walk through the town centre.'** Joseph (age 12)

A few children and young people also mentioned that road safety was important so that they are safe when walking to school and out playing.





## Public transport

What matters is accessible and reliable public transport - lower travel fares, improved buses, and bus routes to take them around the borough so that they can connect with family and friends and do the activities that are important to them. Better communication about public transport was highlighted by some young people, as well as more information about travelling to areas outside of Barnsley too.

**'Improve communication and state of trains because they're not amazing and I never take the train or buses because they don't make sense and people miss them.'** Georgia (age 11)

**'I think that to improve Barnsley we could make transport more convenient and completely redo Barnsley Interchange because it's generally not a nice place. Also there's no buses that go to the most common places and the trains/train tracks are really small'** Imogen (age 12)

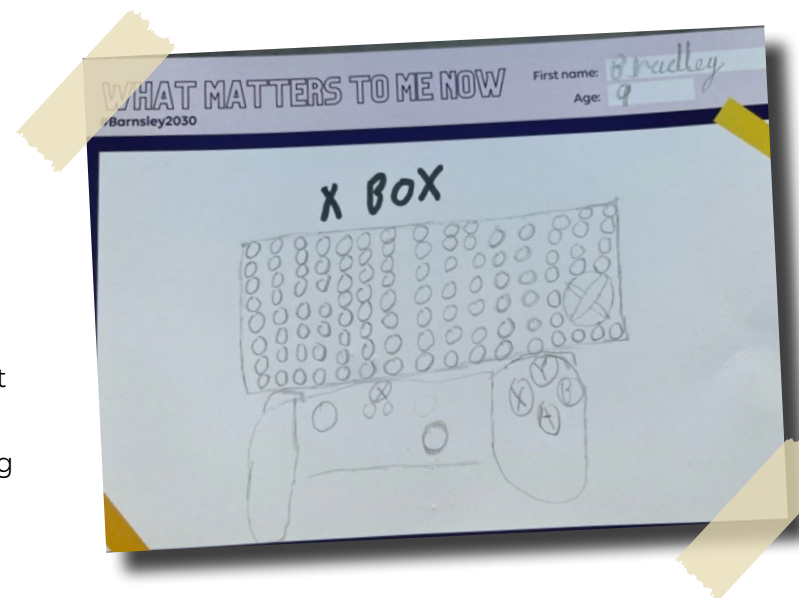
## Themes more common in 2021 (After COVID-19)

### Having fun and being creative

What matters is being entertained. Film and television programmes are important to children and young people, with many referencing their favourite movies and movie franchises. Many children also referenced their favourite toys and computer games. Technology in particular plays a big part in providing children and young people with entertainment, and it especially did during lockdown when they were stuck inside their homes. Their digital devices - phones, laptops, and tablets - along with photo and video-sharing platforms, such as Snapchat and TikTok, allow them to connect remotely with friends and family and have fun in a virtual world.

**'What matters to me is... my phone because I can watch things when I am bored and I can keep in contact with my mum. Tik Tok matters to me because I love to watch it and Snapchat. And so I can call/text friends and family'** Lexy (age 11)

Children and young people also said that engaging in the arts is important, they like playing and listening to music, singing, and dancing. They want more opportunities to see and do some of this in their communities.

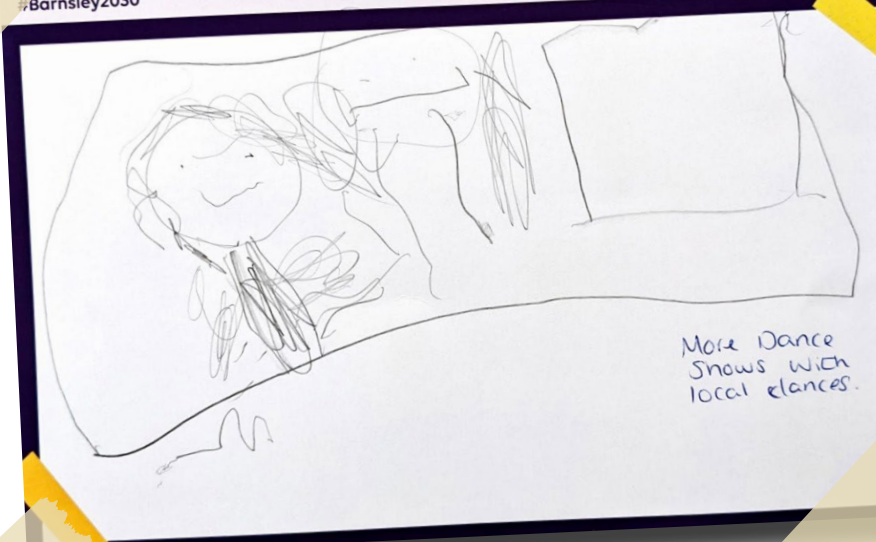


# WHAT MATTERS TO ME NOW

#Barnsley2030

First name: Evelyn

Age: 4



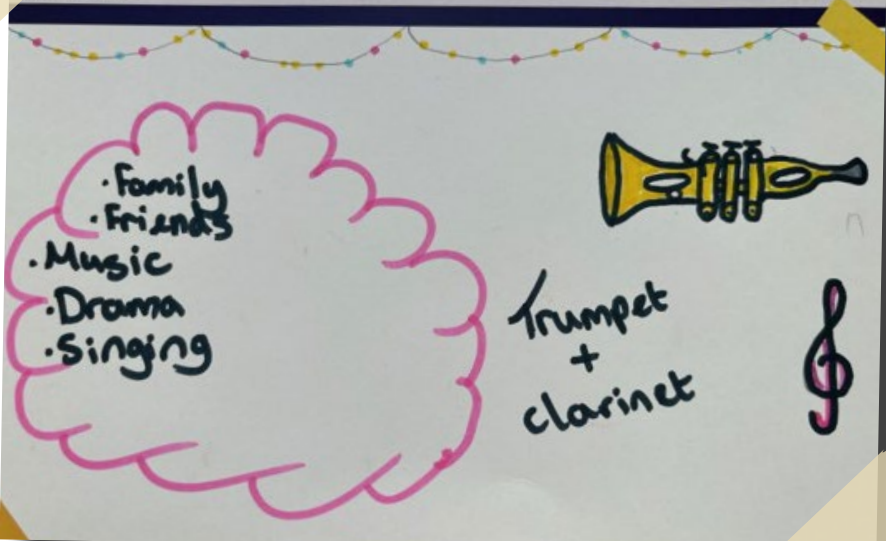
More Dance Shows with local places.

# WHAT MATTERS TO ME NOW

#Barnsley2030

First name: Grace

Age: 13



They also like being creative through drawing and painting, hobbies that some children took up during lockdown and which provided comfort in a scary world.

**"During COVID I found myself doing more artwork which made me feel relaxed. COVID really affected the way I looked and thought about things and people, it sort of numbed my emotions. What I may have had concerns about or worried about before, I found myself laughing at. Focusing my mind on artwork improved my mental wellbeing which is why I chose to create a piece which are just a few of the things I used to draw during the pandemic to ground me."** YMCA Barnsley ACE Club member (age 13)



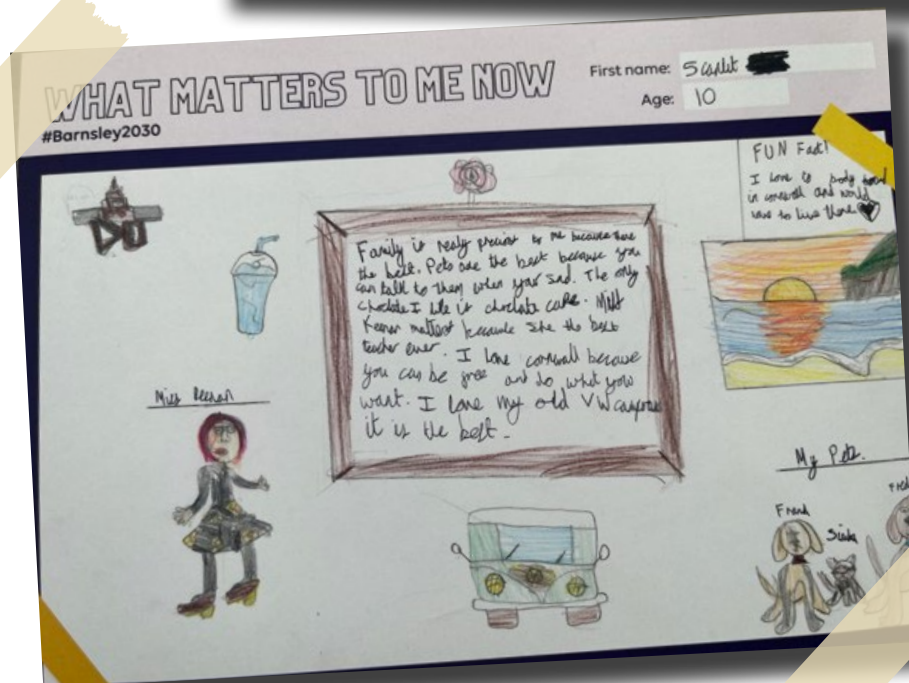
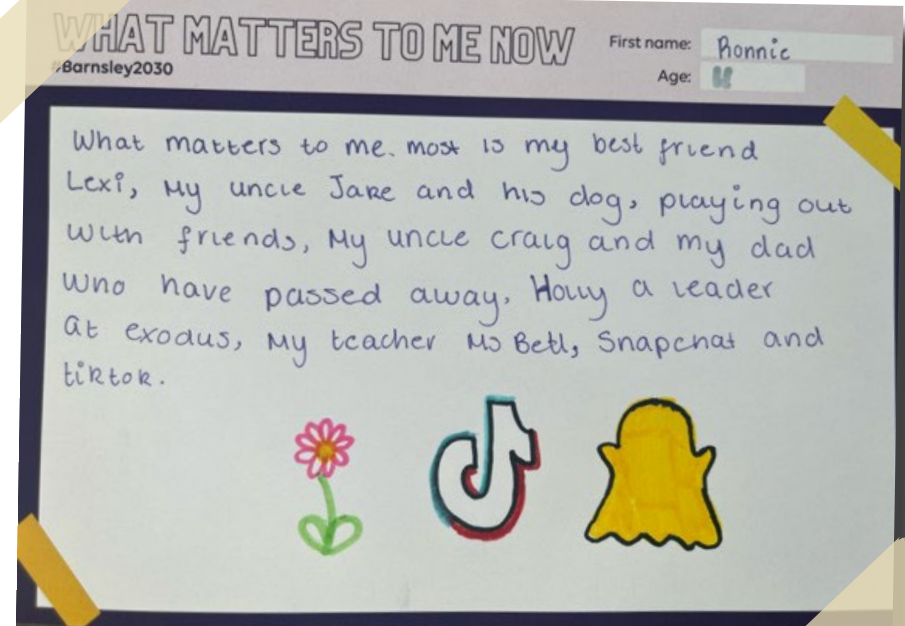
We know that 'doing things with friends and family' is important, as described earlier, so it's no surprise that shopping, cinema, bowling, ice-skating, eating out, arcades, trampoline parks and so on were referenced by the children and young people. Simply, they want to go out and have fun again.

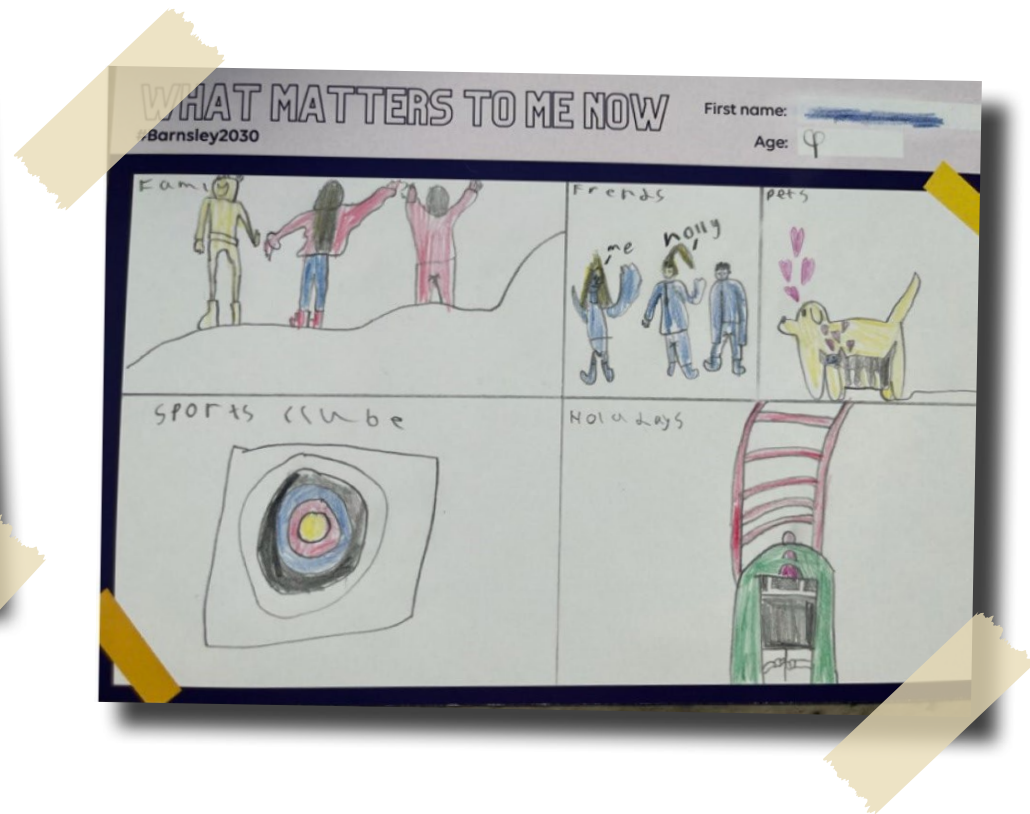
**'Spending time with my friends and family. Going out to places like bowling and the cinema.'** Eva (age 14)

**'What matters to me most is my best friend Lexi, my Uncle Jake and his dog, playing out with friends, my Uncle Craig and my dad who have passed away. Holly a leader at Exodus, my teacher Ms Bett, Snapchat and Tik Tok.'** Ronnie (age 11)

## Holidays and celebrations

What matters is making memories. Children and young people said it's important to celebrate special occasions with loved ones - Christmas, Easter, Halloween and Birthdays - and they want to go on holidays with their families. They want to travel, both in the UK and abroad, they want to see the beach again and visit places they haven't been to before, like London. This is no surprise, given they have spent the last two years under some variation of lockdown restrictions. Children and young people's freedoms were taken away from them due to COVID-19 and some of the best years of their childhood were spent confined to their homes, worrying about what their future would look like. Now they see a time to celebrate and enjoy their new-found freedom.





**'Family is really precious to me because they're the best. Pets are the best because you can talk to them when you are sad. The only chocolate I like is chocolate cake. Miss Keener matters because she is the best teacher ever. I love Cornwall because you can be free and do what you want. I love my old VW campervan'** Scarlett (age 10)

## Other references

As well as the more common references amongst the artwork, what mattered but less so, in both timepoints, was food (notably takeaways) and their appearance. With only a few children and young people choosing to reference clothes, jewellery, and make-up as things that are important to them.

Many of the themes identified in the artwork align with the priorities and work of Barnsley Council together with key partners. Themes such as education and learning, protecting our environment, and supporting our residents' health and wellbeing, are consistent with Barnsley 2030 and our Council Plan.



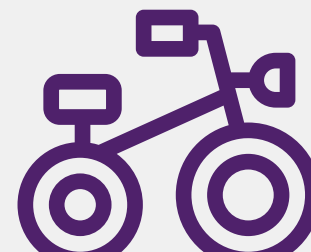
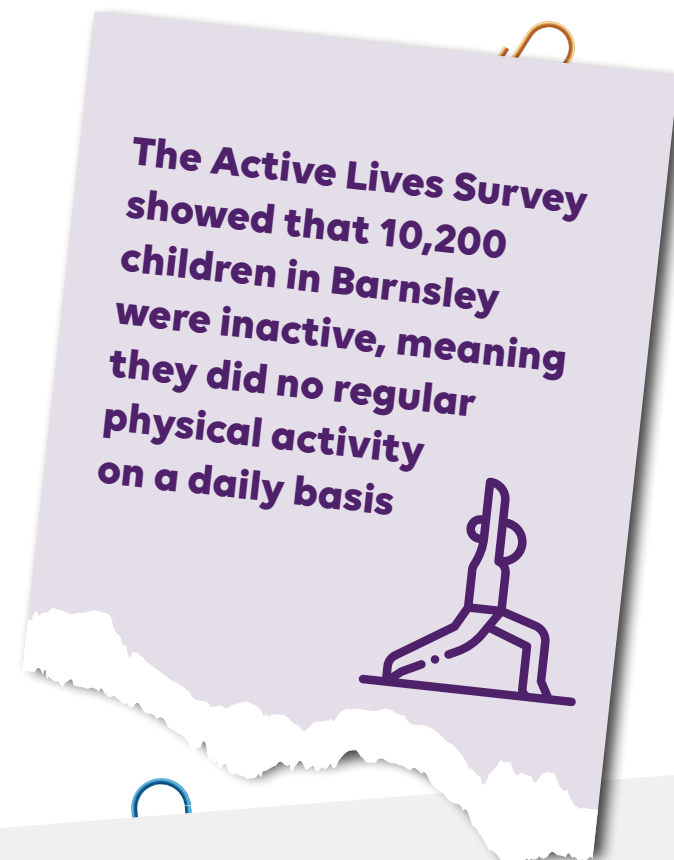
# What we know about children and young people's health in Barnsley

**In both 2019 and 2021, Barnsley children and young people told us that health mattered to them. Children and young people in the borough want themselves, and others, to be fit and healthy and have access to the things that will help them to live healthy lifestyles. In line with the themes from the artwork, below are some of the most recent local data that illustrate part of the picture of child health in our borough.**

## Healthy Weight

Nationally, obesity rates in both Reception-aged and Year 6 primary school children increased by around 4.5% between 2019-20 and 2020-21. This is the highest annual rise since the National Child Measurement Programme began. In contrast, the Barnsley data shows a 2% improvement in the prevalence of obesity at both Reception and Year 6, in the same period<sup>4</sup>. However, it is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted the National Child Measurement Programme and, as such, the volume of data collected was much lower than usual and may have affected the findings.

The children and young people told us in their artwork that being active is important to them, they want access to parks and green spaces and affordable leisure activities to enjoy with family and friends. The Active Lives Children and Young People's Survey<sup>5</sup> is published annually and collects data on the engagement in, and attitudes to, sport and physical activity. The Active Lives Survey also showed that 10,200 children in Barnsley were inactive, meaning that they participated in no regular physical activity on a daily basis. In terms of health inequalities, around 39% of children in the most deprived communities in Barnsley were inactive. Additional information gathered through the Active Lives Survey shows that the more active children have higher levels of mental wellbeing. This illustrates the importance of physical activity in maintaining positive health and wellbeing, areas that children and young people have told us matter to them.






## Smoking



What matters to young people is having the things they need to stay healthy and help to remove risks to their health and wellbeing, such as cigarettes and substances. Extensive research has demonstrated the harmful effects that smoking has on health. Smoking contributes to a variety of health conditions, including cancers and respiratory, digestive and circulatory diseases, whilst also impairing the development of teenage lungs. Moreover, smoking causes more preventable deaths than any other single cause; the latest available national data suggests that 77,800 preventable deaths in England were estimated to be attributed to smoking in a single year<sup>6</sup>. At present, local data on under-18's smoking is not available. However, the Let's Hear Your Voice children's health and wellbeing survey for Barnsley has just been launched, which will provide this information in future along with a wealth of other data on children and young people's lifestyle factors.

Children and young people are influenced by adult behaviour and are less likely to start smoking if they do not view it as a normal part of everyday life. Over the last five years, our Public Health team have worked hard to create voluntary 'smokefree zones' in Barnsley. At present, all Barnsley Primary Schools, Pals Square (outside the Town Hall), Hoyland High Street and Barnsley Hospital (including the roads surrounding the hospital grounds) are all 'smokefree'. In addition, twenty of our Barnsley playparks are smokefree, with a review taking place this year of the signage to ensure clear 'no smoking' messages are communicated to the smokers who use these areas, so that smoking becomes almost invisible to protect children's health. As smoking becomes less visible and less of a social norm it will reduce smoking uptake by children and young people.



**In the older generations, public health data suggests that 18% of the adult population in Barnsley are current smokers, and this is higher than the national and regional data (14% and 16% respectively)<sup>7</sup>**

## Drugs and alcohol

The latest available public health data (2019) estimated that 1,317 children in Barnsley lived with an adult (over 18) who is dependent on alcohol and 1,324 children lived with an adult who is dependent on opiates, this is the highest in South Yorkshire<sup>8</sup>. This therefore presents the risk of 'hidden harm', that is, abuse or harm due to parental drug or alcohol misuse, which is usually hidden from public view, occurring behind closed doors, often not recognised, or reported.

Of the young people in treatment at Barnsley's Young Person's Substance Misuse Service (2020-21), the data shows that early onset of drug use was seen in all cases. In addition, many of these young people are shown to have other vulnerabilities, including history of domestic abuse, poor mental health, self-harm and having been affected by another person's drug use<sup>9</sup>.



The hospital admissions rate for alcohol-specific conditions in under-18s in Barnsley is **55.4 per 100,000, which is 50% higher than in Yorkshire and the Humber<sup>10</sup>**



The rate of hospital admissions due to substance misuse in **15-24-year-olds is significantly higher in Barnsley than in England, and Yorkshire and the Humber (144.3 per 100,000)<sup>11</sup>**

## Covid Vaccination and Immunity

In the 2021 artwork, children and young people said they wanted to remove the threat of the COVID-19. Getting the COVID-19 vaccination is one of the best things we can do to prevent the virus impacting on our children and young people's health and the health of the people they love. There continues to be a variety of opportunities for all our residents to take up the COVID-19 vaccine [offer](#).

New research also suggests that COVID-19 antibodies are present in the breastmilk of mothers who have had the virus and / or have been vaccinated, thus giving even more value to breastfeeding in the first years of a child's life<sup>12</sup>. As well as providing protection from certain infections, breastfeeding is known to reduce the risk of childhood diabetes and leukaemia and it helps to improve children's long-term health<sup>13</sup>. Other vaccinations that protect against viruses, such as, Meningitis, Mumps, Measles and Rubella (MMR), are given routinely to children as part of the childhood immunisation programme. National data pointed towards a sustained decrease in children receiving routine childhood immunisations in 2020 and 2021 compared to 2019, impacted by the 'stay at home' messaging during the pandemic<sup>14</sup>. However, in Barnsley, coverage remains fairly static and meets, if not exceeds, national targets<sup>15</sup>. Eligible children who missed a vaccine can still receive them, and parents should contact their GP.

## Mental Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people in Barnsley and across the UK. During the pandemic, Barnsley's Public Health Team completed three waves of a Children's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Survey and the impact on mental health was stark. The final wave of the survey, completed in January 2021, found that 69% of respondents described their mental health as poor. In addition, public health data from 2021 shows that 3% of school students in Barnsley have social, emotional and mental health needs and there has been a worsening trend in this data since 2015<sup>17</sup>.

As of April 2022,  
**57% of 12 to  
15-year-olds  
and 67% of 16  
to 17-year-olds  
in Barnsley  
had received their first dose  
of the COVID-19 vaccination<sup>16</sup>**



Whilst self-harm in Barnsley is higher than other areas in the Yorkshire and Humber region, there has been some improvement over the past two years. In contrast, the rate of hospital admissions for self-harm in 15-19-year-olds remains significantly higher in Barnsley (1,193.6 per 100,000) than both regionally and nationally<sup>18</sup>. Preventing self-harm is an area of priority for emotional health and wellbeing services in Barnsley and there has been significant investment to understand the level of need and provide effective services and support for children and young people who are displaying self-harm behaviours.

In both the 2019 and 2021 artwork the children and young people told us that it is important that people can access the support they need, when they need it, and particularly in school. Findings from the 2021 Emotional Health and Wellbeing Survey found that only 25% of respondents had accessed support for their mental health. Of these, 73% had accessed support from their friends and family, and 28% had accessed support from services, websites and/or apps. Of the children and young people who had not accessed support, 72% didn't feel that they needed support, 14% didn't know where to go to access support and 9% were too embarrassed to ask for support. Demand for mental health services in Barnsley has significantly increased through 2020 and 2021, although this is worrying, it suggests that more children and young people are seeking help with their emotional health and wellbeing. Across the borough, there has been significant investment in additional services and interventions to support children and young people with their emotional health and wellbeing.



**The rate of hospital admissions for self-harm in 10-14 year olds locally is 206.5 per 100,000<sup>19</sup>**



## **Wider determinants**

As well as the typical health factors, there are also other wider factors (social, economic, and environmental) that can affect health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people.

**1 in 4 children  
in our borough  
live in relative  
low-income  
families<sup>23</sup>**



**81% of Barnsley children  
achieve the expected  
level of development  
in communication and  
language skills at the end  
of Reception, similar to the  
rest of our region.<sup>24</sup>**

## Poverty

The number of children living in relative low-income families in Barnsley is increasing, this is a trend that is being seen both regionally and nationally. Poverty can affect the health of people at all ages and families from areas of increased deprivation are more likely to suffer from poorer health outcomes, due to factors including limited access to health care and practicing more unhealthy behaviours<sup>20</sup>. Children living in poverty are also more likely to suffer from chronic diseases and diet-related problems, which extend into adulthood.

Many of the children and young people, in their 2019 and 2021 artwork, said that tackling homelessness and helping homeless people was important to them. Homelessness is associated with severe poverty and is a social determinant of health. It often results from a combination of events such as relationship breakdown, debt, adverse experiences in childhood and through ill-health<sup>21</sup>. However, the public health data shows that homelessness in Barnsley is much lower than it is in the rest of our region and nationally. Around 5.5 per 1,000 families in Barnsley live in households including one or more dependent children owed a prevention or relief duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act, compared to 12.4 per 1,000 in Yorkshire and Humber and 11.6 per 1,000 in England<sup>22</sup>.

## School readiness

Education and the importance of learning emerged as a theme in both the 2019 and 2021 artwork and children and young people told us that education is important for their futures. Early child development sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour, and health. The experiences children have in early childhood shape the brain and the child's capacity to learn, to get along with others, and to respond to daily stresses and challenges. Educational attainment is one of the main markers for wellbeing through the life course and children who have not achieved a good level of development at age five have been shown to struggle with social skills, reading, maths and physical skills. This negatively impacts on their educational attainment, which in turn has been shown to impact on health, future earnings, involvement in crime, and even death<sup>25</sup>. The most recent public health data shows that 70% of children in Barnsley achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception stage, this is improving and is in line with the regional and national data<sup>26</sup>.



The background is a solid purple color. In the upper center, there is a graphic of a lined notepad with a blue paperclip at the top left corner. The notepad is tilted slightly to the right. The text is written in a large, bold, white font across the middle of the notepad.

# Examples of improving children and young people's health and wellbeing in Barnsley

**Although half of 2021 was spent in lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was some fantastic work delivered across Barnsley to support children, young people and their families and improve their health and wellbeing. Just some of this work is described below...**

## Look Say Sing Play

In March 2021, Barnsley Council teamed up with NSPCC to launch Look Say Sing Play. Research previously found that parents were interacting with their babies and young children, but it could be more purposeful, deliberate and rewarding. The evidence highlighted that that many parents did not know why interaction is so important; and some struggle with ideas about how to interact in the everyday moments, beyond eye contact and cuddling, especially in the early months when they do not receive obvious feedback from their babies. Look Say Sing Play therefore aimed to support parents to have more, positive interactions with their babies; building a bond between them, which is crucial to a child's healthy development. It did this by giving new parents the tools and confidence to talk, sing and play games with their babies and young children, backed by the science of child development.

Emily, Mum to Edward (6 months) said **'When we go to the supermarket I talk to (my baby) all the time now, people might look at me like I'm a nutter, but he absolutely loves it. Whatever I pick up, he's trying to investigate, and I'd never have thought to do anything like that. Usually, I'd just put him in the trolley and I'd be getting stressed out if he wasn't asleep. But now I interact with him through the whole shop'.**

Plans are in place to evaluate the campaign and parents can still sign up to the weekly Look Say Sing Play newsletter - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/look-say-sing-play/sign-up/>



## Barnsley Museums Makes

The Barnsley Museums Makes initiative was created in direct response to the team's desire to improve the wellbeing of children and families across the Borough, ensuring they reached those who might need inspiration with skills, confidence, and ideas to learn and play whilst stuck at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Barnsley Museum's Family Learning Team worked hard to curate packs to encourage creativity, play and language development, as well as enhancing and increasing access to arts and cultural experiences. Each learning pack included up to six highly visual, printed activity sheets designed to encourage creativity, play and language development through the chance to try a range of simple art and craft techniques. Plus, the materials required to complete the activities and suggestions of simple household objects that could also be used.

Between July 2020 and July 2021, 14,800 children received Barnsley Museum Makes packs, distributed in every school holiday through all Barnsley primary schools, eight family centres and two libraries. The packs provided families with the opportunity to access arts activities and try different artforms and gave parents the resources to help support child development and provide stimulation to develop intergenerational family learning.

One parent said: **'These will keep my children occupied over the holidays. Thank you so much.'**  
A staff member at a local primary school said: **'The children felt so special to receive the packs. They're beautiful. Thank you so much, at times like these, gestures like this have a real impact'.**





## Beat the Street

Beat the Street challenged communities to see how far they could walk, cycle, run, and scoot in six weeks, by turning the whole of Barnsley into a giant game. Everyone who took part was given a Beat the Street card or fob, which they could scan on 260 Beat Boxes around the borough to log how far they had travelled.

During the six weeks of the game, 22,000 people took part; walking, cycling, running, and scootering over 160,000 miles in total. Following Beat the Street, 63% of adults and 71% of children who said they were previously inactive, became active.

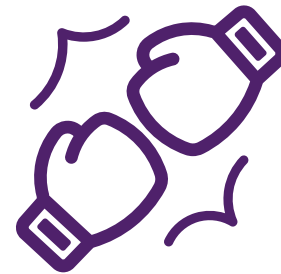
Barnsley children and young people really enjoyed the challenge: **'Beat the Street helped me by encouraging me to exercise in many different ways e.g., scooter, cycling, walking, and more, but most of all it built my trust of going out on roads while riding my bike. I really enjoyed getting around on other things rather than a car, and it also helped me to gain a better relationship with my family as they also took part with me. Thank you!'** (Female, Aged 12-18)



## Community Sport in The Dearne

The Dearne Area Team wanted to provide opportunities for residents of all ages to get outside, meet new people and get active. The team spoke to community groups and families on the Goldthorpe Railway Embankment and decided to put on boxing sessions for children and young people and crown green bowls for the whole family.

The team put on weekly sessions in amateur boxing and bowling with the support of Stefy Bulls Fitness and Circuit Training, and Hickleton Main Bowling Club. In total, three boxing sessions were held in both Thurnscoe and Bolton-upon-Deerne, with 40 children attending, 26 of which had never tried boxing before. At Hickleton Main Bowling Club, six crown green bowls sessions were held with 70 individuals attending and playing bowls.



## The Dell Project

The Dell Project is a collaboration that aims to develop and bring a series of improvements to The Dell, a green space in Grimethorpe. The project emerged a survey conducted by Grimethorpe Residents Group in 2020, which highlighted concerns about the misuse of the green space, antisocial behaviour, lack of youth provision and a sense of not having a stake in local decision-making processes. Through collaboration with the Dell Steering Group, the North East Area Team and The University of Sheffield, the project represented a collaborative approach to place-making that emphasised the importance of mobilising children and young people's experiences and knowledge to generate proposals for local improvement to green spaces.

Over a six-week period in 2021, a series of weekly public engagement and co-design workshops were held at a local community building, with all residents welcome to attend to share their experiences, preferences, ideas, and priorities for The Dell. Children and young people were actively engaged in the process through frequent conversations in partnership with Early Intervention and Prevention Workers from the Targeted Youth

Support (TYS) service. These conversations brought into view the lack of green space that young people had a sense of ownership over and their feelings around being treated as a nuisance in the area. The process resulted in a youth engagement day that took place during half term and provided a final opportunity to engage residents with the proposals that had been developed. The day involved various free activities aimed at children, young people and families, including crafts, such as, clay totem pole making and tile making; and sporting activities, including a climbing wall.

The project created a sense of ownership and responsibility amongst children and young people in the community and enriched the design proposals for The Dell that were then developed. This includes a community-built amphitheatre, a space for community workshops, and community orchards.



**By the end of the process, 230 residents had been engaged with including 65 children (under 16).**



## School Streets Project

Barnsley Council has a duty to monitor and improve air quality and, due to high levels of Nitrogen Dioxide in some parts of the borough, there are high number of Air Quality Management Areas. The School Streets Project was therefore designed to reduce air pollution, particularly around schools, by increasing the number of children and families walking, cycling and scootering to school, increasing awareness of the associated health risks of transport emissions and the actions that can reduce these.

The project delivered ten School Street trials, which involved 11 roads being closed for the duration of the school day in 2021. During the road closures, children and their families were encouraged to leave the car at home and get to school by walking, cycling or travelling by scooter; helping to reduce congestion and emissions outside school.

Overall, 12 schools, 950 staff and 3,600 pupils and their families were engaged in the School Streets Project, in addition to countless residents. Over 70% of pupils said they felt safer due to the school street closures and more than three quarters of pupils said they had more fun on the day of the school street closures. The project also saw car usage drop, with 575 more pupils travelling actively to school on the day of the school street closures. As a result of the School Streets Project there is a high level of support for the implementation of permanent School Streets amongst parents, residents, and staff. Permanent School Streets would reduce emissions and traffic congestion outside schools, ensuring a healthier and more enjoyable space for pupils and families outside the school gates.



**The project also promoted 'playing out' sessions outside the school gates, offering alternative opportunities for physical activity, such as skipping and hula-hooping.**

## 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service Drop-ins

Once the COVID-19 lockdown eased, Penistone 0-19 Public Health Nursing Team (part of the 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service) felt it was important to have a presence within Penistone Grammar School, to promote the service and support improvements to pupil health and wellbeing. Planning therefore began in October 2021 on setting up a weekly Public Health Nursing Drop-in on-site, to raise awareness around public health topics and provide children and young people with access to School Nurses and Public Health Nurses, who they can talk to for more information and advice around a range of health issues.

Drop-ins are now running on Mondays 12-2pm and further sessions have been themed around the curriculum, fostering a whole-school approach, and targeting identified needs in the community. The Service also reinstated the C-Card scheme at Penistone Grammar in partnership with Spectrum Sexual Health Service (SHS), to ensure the pupils who need it have access to confidential sexual health support and free condoms in school. These sessions have been delivered jointly with staff from Spectrum SHS.

Engagement at the drop-ins has been good. Discussions are currently taking place with Spectrum SHS about replicating this model across Barnsley secondary schools.

**The team is continuously seeking feedback from the children and young people about the topics they would like to see and suggested improvements.**

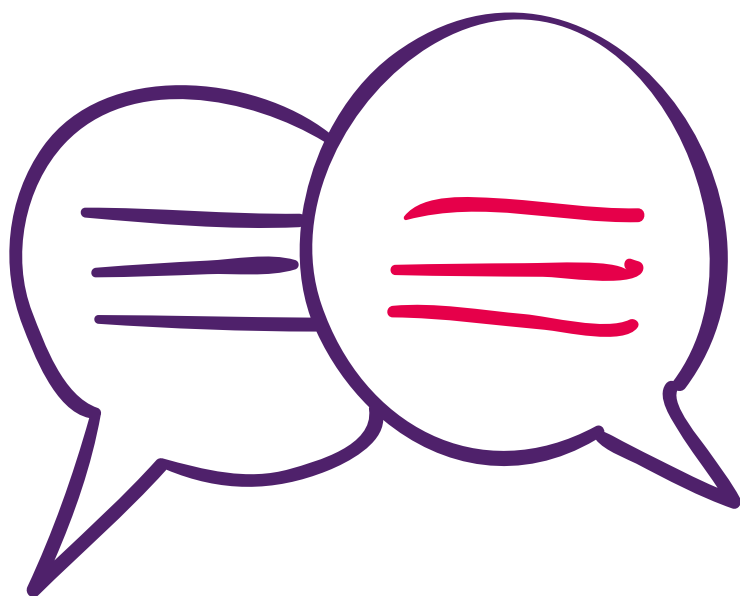


## Peer Mentoring at H.O.M.E (Barnsley's Young People's Wellbeing Hub)

Chilypep is a young people's empowerment project, dedicated to raising the voices of young people and giving them the confidence, influence and platform to shape their world and stay connected. Peer Mentoring is something that young people have repeatedly said is a helpful way for them to talk to someone about their mental health or difficulties they may be facing.

Chilypep accessed funding from Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group to support 16 to 18-year-olds with their mental health and the transitions between school and college. Since April 2021, ten young people have been trained as Peer Mentors, to be based at the Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing Hub in Barnsley town centre, which young people have named H.O.M.E ('Help with Our Mental 'Ealth!). In addition, twelve Mental Health Ambassadors have been trained at Barnsley College.

The Peer Mentors have been able to regularly support weekly sessions at H.O.M.E. This has helped young people attending those sessions to feel supported and able to engage. In addition to the benefits the Mentors brings others, the programme also benefits the Mentors by giving them opportunities for personal development, access to volunteering opportunities and training, all the while helping to improve their confidence.





## The Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Engagement Charter

Chilypep and the Youth Voice and Participation team (part of TYS) worked together to involve 14 to 25-year-olds in the development of the Barnsley Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Engagement Charter; to set out the key principles that CYP expect all services to 'sign up to' with regards to engagement and co-production of emotional health and wellbeing services in Barnsley.

In September 2021, work began with 105 young people across the borough, through creative consultation, focus groups and one-to-ones, to find out how they want to be involved and engaged in the development, delivery and evaluation of mental health and emotional wellbeing services in Barnsley. Following this, they consulted an additional 16 young people in October 2021 through another creative consultation session, with the aim of ensuring they got it right for the Charter, reviewing and summarising the findings and using words suggested by young people (e.g., 'Values' were preferred over 'Standards') and getting feedback over the design and layout. Draft participation charters were then produced during November and December 2021 and young people were able to vote for their preferred one and provide feedback. The Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Engagement Strategy has consequently been developed and outlines how the key values, set out in the Charter, will be delivered.

One young person said **"We have enjoyed being able to collaborate with other young people about one of the main issues affecting everyone. The best bit about making this is having a say and including our views. We are proud to be able to see what young people have been involved in and the outcomes of that"**.





**All the children and young people who attended the session gave positive feedback and staff were able to consult with them about what activities they would like to attend in the summer holidays.**

## The Unity Project

YMCA Barnsley's Unity Project aims to build the emotional resilience and wellbeing of children and young people aged 8 to 14.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the YMCA had to adapt its delivery of the Unity Project in line with government guidance but continued to offer the consistent, positive relationships and support to the children, young people and their families throughout 2021. To provide this support, the YMCA provided activities for children and young people across the Central area.

At Queens Road Academy, an after-school club helped to support and prepare Year 6 pupils for the transition up to Year 7. In secondary schools, the team delivered 'All About Me' workshops to support with young people's self-awareness, confidence building, aspirations, building emotional resilience and positive wellbeing. Over the Spring Bank Holiday in 2021 the team also delivered activities across the borough, shaped by what children and young people said they wanted to see, which included music at YMCA Barnsley, problem solving and team games at Ardsley Park.

Staff and parents witnessed positive changes in children and young people taking part in the Unity Project, increasing their confidence, people skills and problem-solving ability.



## Astrea Academy Dearne Transition Day

Transitioning to secondary school can be a difficult, worrying and anxious time for many Year 6 pupils. For the 2021 transition, Astrea Academy Dearne asked to use the Railway Embankment site in Goldthorpe to engage the students in getting to know each other, team building and environmental issues.

In July 2021, Astrea Academy Dearne welcomed approximately 240 Year 6 pupils from the local primary schools for a transition day to prepare them for starting at the academy in September. Eight stations were set up around the Embankment site and the students moved around them in their classes. The stations included: bug hunting, learning about reducing, reusing and recycling, making a bird feeder out of a plastic bottle and learning how to recognise common garden bird species, writing a poem about the Embankment or their thoughts on transitioning up to secondary school and seed planting. The day concluded with each student making a seed bomb and throwing it along the banks of the site so that wildflowers would grow there next year.

The transition day brought together volunteers from the Ward Alliances and Big Locals, members of the Dearne Area Team and partners from Twiggs, Berneslai Homes, Discover Dearne, a local youth group, the Salvation Army and Year 9 Students from the Academy. The transitioning pupils enjoyed their day at the Embankment and were able to make new friends. In addition to this, approximately 240 students gained five AQA Awards from the day.





## Children, Young People and Families Bereavement Counselling Service

A review of bereavement provision in Barnsley highlighted a lack of support for children and young people following the death of a parent or sibling, and parents following the death of a child. As such, in 2021, Barnsley Council awarded Compass a contract to pilot a Specialist Bereavement Counselling Service for Children, Young People and Families.

The service commenced in July 2021 to provide direct, individual counselling to parents bereaved of a child and children and young people under the age of 18 who have experienced the death of an important person in their life. The service also provides specialist advice, support and guidance to schools and professionals to help others support bereaved children and young people. This is provided through a Specialist Bereavement Counsellor working within and alongside the Mental Health Support Team (MHST) for schools and colleges in Barnsley.

In the first six months of the pilot, more than 70 children and young people were referred for specialist counselling. One young person recently wrote to the service to tell them: **'You've helped me realise that it is ok to be sad and hurt, you've allowed me to open up ... and helped me when I thought I could no longer do it ... I'm so thankful for you helping me.'**

The pilot of the service has been so successful that an additional Specialist Bereavement Counsellor has joined the team to increase the number of families that can be supported and reduce the length of time people wait to receive support.



## 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service's Domestic Abuse Pathway

The number of domestic incidents increased during the Covid-19 lockdown. The 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service therefore developed a Domestic Abuse Pathway to help identify low- and medium-level domestic abuse incidents that they could support with. The pathway, in addition to supporting social care, aimed to give families support to improve their home-life during the lockdown by providing them with current and relevant information on the support services available. The purpose of this support was to reduce the risk of more incidents, thus encouraging better outcomes for the children living in those households.

The pathway has been able to support practitioners in the 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service, who may have little experience in supporting families following domestic incidents, to approach the families and provide them with appropriate support. Families are happier knowing that there is support in place within the 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service to help keep them and their children safe.





# Summary and final thoughts





**Over the past decade, child poverty has increased, funding for education has reduced, there has been a housing crisis and a rise in homelessness, there are growing numbers of people with insufficient money to lead a healthy life, and there are more disadvantaged children and young people living in poor conditions with 'little reason for hope'<sup>27</sup>. Yet the children and young people living and learning in Barnsley have shown us that they do have hope.**

When we first started planning this project in 2019, there was some expectation that children and young people would say that what mattered to them were the material things in life – their toys, their phones, having the trendiest clothes – but what we found was that, although these things did matter to some, what mattered most pre-pandemic was their family and friends. Interestingly, research has shown that happiness with family relationships has the strongest influence on children's overall subjective well-being at age 14 (out of family, friends, appearance, school and schoolwork)<sup>28</sup>. Post-pandemic, family and friends was just as important, and having fun with loved ones became paramount.

Although lockdown was difficult for children and young people - learning time lost, cut off from their friends and outdoor play, and some in homes that may not have been safe - many enjoyed spending quality time with their families. The 'stay at home' orders meant many parents and carers had to work from home, allowing them to achieve a better work-life balance, which many children benefitted from.

**'Covid turned our lives upside down and the simplest items turned out to be the most precious ones.'**

YMCA Barnsley member (age 13)

**'A generation of children who are veterans of a global crisis. They have seen how colossally frightening life can be, far too young, and have made a lot of sacrifices. But they have endured and are emerging stronger and prematurely wise. Bruised, yes, and in many cases seriously vulnerable, but for the most part, happy, optimistic, and determined.'**

Dame Rachel De Souza (Children's Commissioner for England)

Back in 2019, Barnsley children and young people recognised the impact technology was having on their lives, referencing the increase in cyber bullying and sedentary behaviour. The digital world of the pandemic has been a blessing and a curse but now more than ever children and young people told us they want to be outside, in the real world.

As we have 'unlocked', we have seen a need for experiences - activities, holidays and entertainment. What matters to children and young people now more than ever is connection with others and making happy memories.

We also found that children and young people in Barnsley are conscious about the more serious issues. They hope for a healthy and successful future, they hope for fairness and kindness, and overall, a better world.

**'A lot of the children talked about how they had enjoyed doing things with their family like walking, exploring the outdoors and playing in the garden during the lockdowns and how they would like to continue doing these things more as everyday life returns to normal.'** Marie (Outreach Worker, Dearne Family Centres)

## As we begin to recover from the pandemic:

- We must make sure we continue to **work with families to strengthen and support them** and provide **greater help for the most disadvantaged in our communities**.
- We should ensure that **all** children and young people in Barnsley have **opportunities to get involved in activities in their community and build friendships with people who they can rely on**, both inside and outside of school.
- We need to **give children time to be children**, through **providing open, clean, safe spaces** where they can **play and be active**, free from the worries of the wider world. That said, we need to do more to ensure that children and young people's **views and concerns about issues, such as the environment and homelessness, are recognised** by local and national leaders.
- We need to enlist **a whole-family approach to enable more children and young people to engage in physical activity** in ways that are affordable.
- We need to **continue with the ambition to make Barnsley smokefree by 2030 and aim to promote an 'alcohol-free childhood'** with consistent messaging and school curricula, avoiding the use of industry-influenced resources, compromised by a consumer approach to alcohol.
- We must provide **vulnerable children and young people with relevant, appropriate and timely support when and where they need it**, including, young carers, children in care and care leavers, those who are at risk of or suffering from abuse, LGBTQ+ young people, children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and those with emotional health and wellbeing needs.

## I'd like to finish by saying some thank yous...

Thank you to the groups and organisations who supported children and young people to make their contributions to this project. In Barnsley we have a strong tradition of dedicated staff and services who put children and young people front and centre of everything they do, and I am very grateful to them for their support.

Thank you to the amazing public health team I am so lucky to work with. Under the skilled leadership of Amy Baxter, the project team has curated the contributions of children with care, thoughtfulness and integrity and I am very grateful to Amy and her colleagues for being the driving force behind this report.

Finally, thank you to every single child and young person who has shared their thoughts and creativity with us through this project. I am deeply conscious of the responsibility we have as a council, along with our partners, to listen carefully to what we have been told and to keep faith with all those who have entrusted us with their views and their creations.





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# Thank you

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