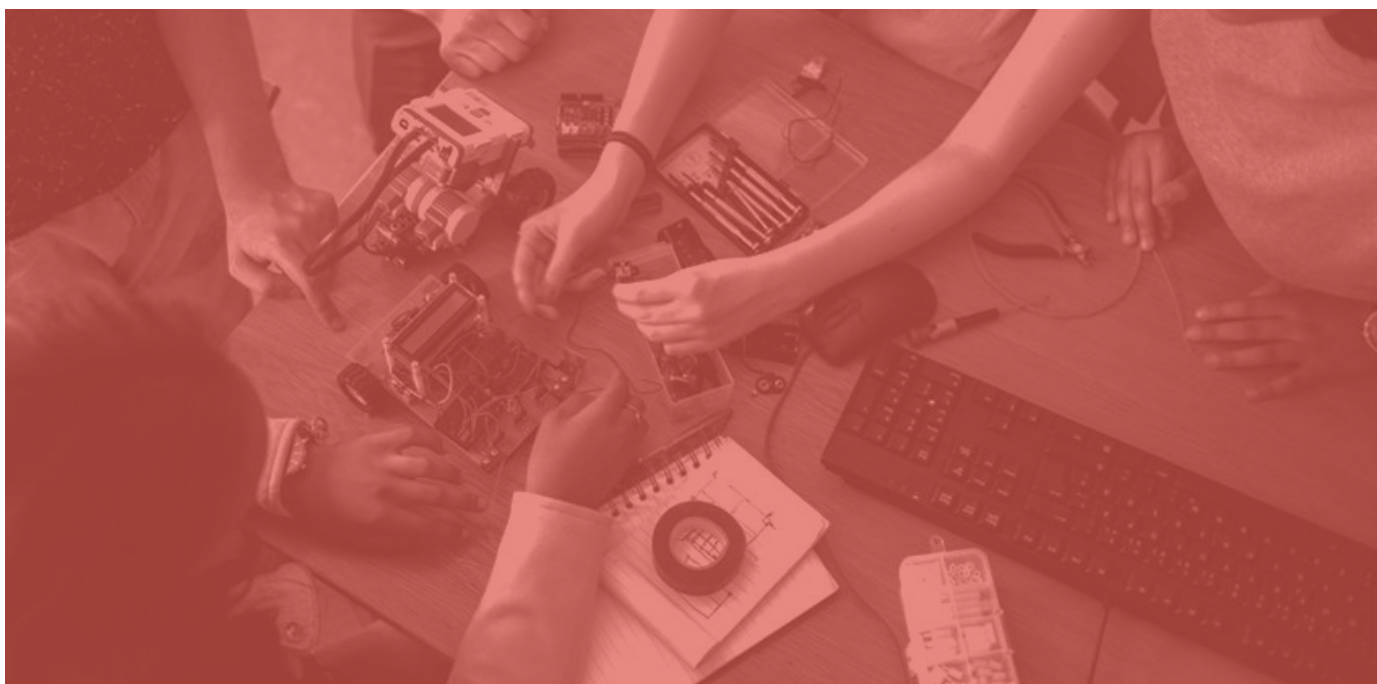


# **Learning beyond the classroom: Provision and Participation**



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## **The State of The Nation 2023**

**A series of evidence-based reports examining the impact and importance of learning beyond the classroom in modern Britain**

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An annual research project from Children's University Trust

Written by Liam Nolan and Cordelia Howard with data analysis by Sukie Duhra

## Learning beyond the classroom: Provision and Participation



### The State of The Nation 2023

A series of evidence-based reports examining the impact and importance of learning beyond the classroom in modern Britain

An annual research project from Children's University Trust  
Written by Liam Nolan and Cordelia Howard with data analysis by Sukie Duhra



**This report is one of a series of evidence-based reports examining the impact of what goes on beyond the classroom on the lives of children and young people.**

Based on extensive data collated from a bespoke digital platform, Children's University Online, the aim of the reports is to inform and improve provision by providing educators, policy makers and stakeholders of all kinds with a broad set of insights about the current state of learning beyond the classroom in contemporary Britain.

Our 2023 reports are informed by data from:

- 70,000 children
- 19,400 activities
- 704,000 hours of recorded participation.

**Since 2021 our State of the Nation Reports have offered up an analysis of over 1 million hours of participation in learning beyond the classroom.**

To download the rest of our reports, visit:

[childrensuniversity.co.uk/stateofthenation](https://childrensuniversity.co.uk/stateofthenation)

### The role that learning beyond the classroom plays in skills development



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### The impact of learning beyond the classroom



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### Children's University: Our reach



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### Learning beyond the classroom: links and recommendations for policy makers



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## Thank you for reading

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### Now join the conversation online



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# Learning beyond the classroom: Provision and Participation

## Introduction

**“Essentially there is less time and money for schools, parents and partners to focus on learning beyond the classroom, despite its evidenced impact.”**

Learning beyond the classroom makes a proven positive impact on the lives of participants. There is robust evidence elsewhere in this report and this impact is well documented by multiple agencies<sup>1</sup>. What children do outside of the core curriculum holds huge potential for good and time spent wisely can impact on life chances, social mobility, attainment in the classroom and skills development. This is why Ofsted makes wellbeing and personal development a part of their framework and evaluates the extent to which the curriculum extends beyond the academic. Schools are expected to provide for learners’ broader development, “*enabling them to develop and discover their interests and talents.*”<sup>2</sup>

Despite this, times have never been harder for schools to cater for pupils’ needs beyond the core curriculum. 50% of primary school leaders have reported cutting trips and outings, with 26% cutting sports and extra-curricular spend. At the same time 67% have reported the need to cut teaching assistants and 41% are having to use pupil premium to plug funding gaps<sup>3</sup>. What this boils down to is that there are fewer staff to run fewer clubs, with less funding and support.

Outside of school things are no brighter. The cost of living rose 7.9% during the 12-month period covered by this report<sup>4</sup>. Fuel prices reached such heights that 30.3% of all households are technically living in fuel poverty<sup>5</sup> while 29% of all children are living in poverty<sup>6</sup>. The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) annual survey found that the impact of this was huge. 79% of school staff say they and their colleagues increasingly have less time and capacity for other parts of their roles because of the effects of child poverty<sup>7</sup>.

On the following pages you will find our data highlighting national provision and participation with regard to learning beyond the classroom. While things are at their lowest, tightest and hardest for so many people, the value of the insights below is at its greatest. Essentially there is less time and money for schools, parents and partners to focus on learning beyond the classroom, despite its evidenced impact. The data provided below should act as a means to drive efficiency.

With actionable data at their fingertips, and a tool to reward a common value to disparate learning, Children’s University Online (CUO) can be used by schools to make the very most of the very little they have during these challenging times.

### Footnotes:

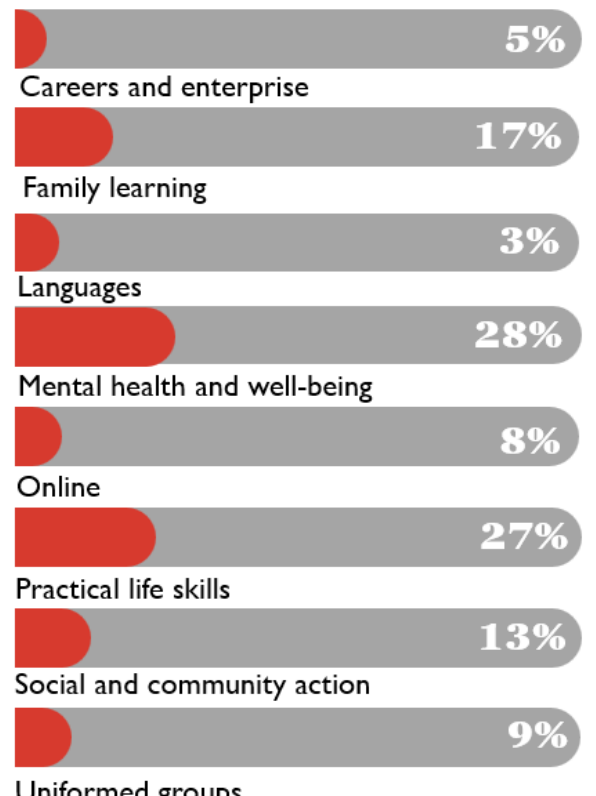
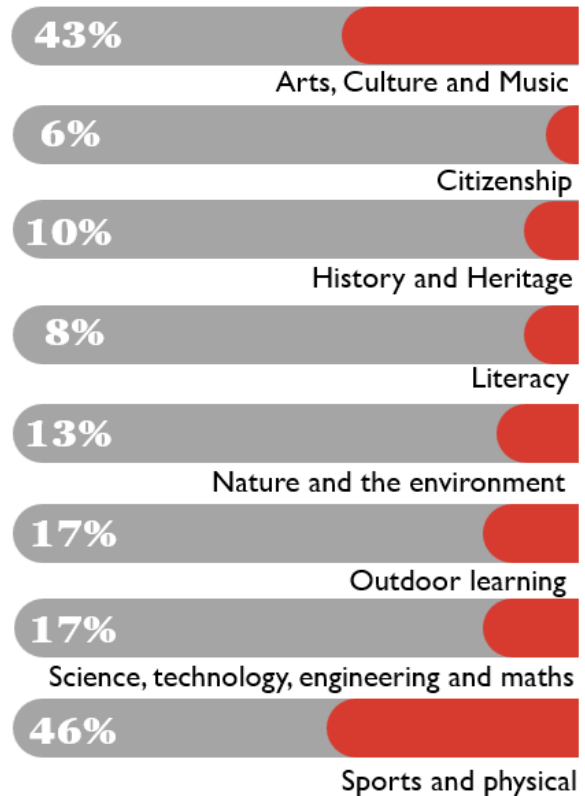
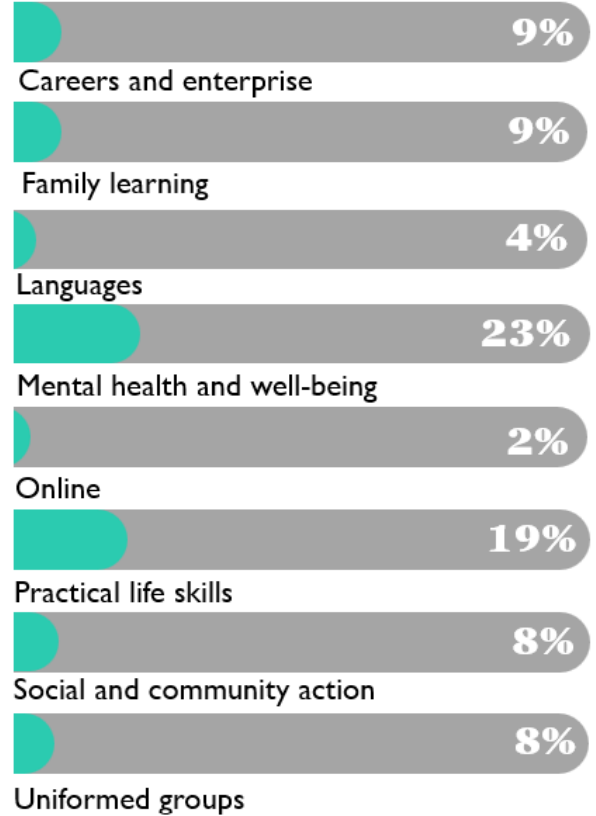
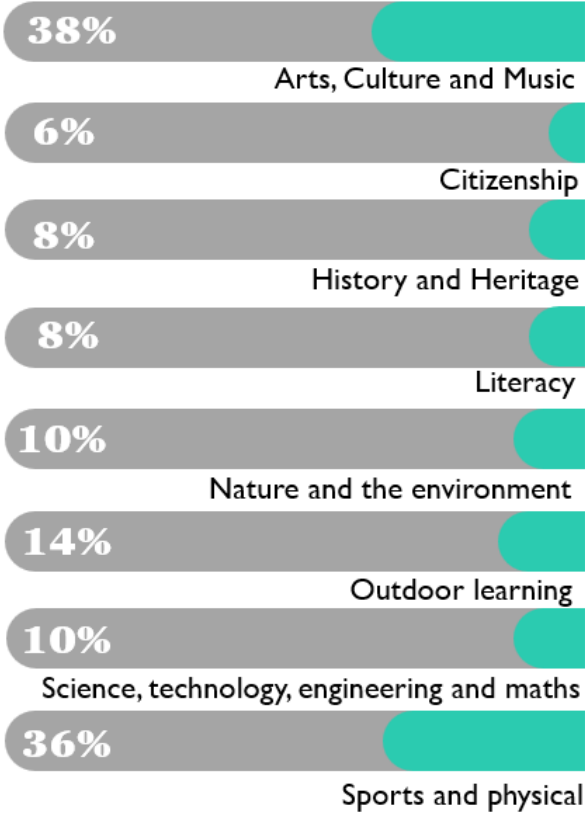
1. For starters and to be signposted to more view [www.childrensuniversity.co.uk/evidence](http://www.childrensuniversity.co.uk/evidence)
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework/education-inspection-framework-for-september-2023#what-inspectors-will-consider-when-making-judgements>
3. <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/school-funding-and-pupil-premium-2023/>
4. September 2022- August 2023, calculated via <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>
5. <https://www.endfuelpoverty.org.uk/about-fuel-poverty/>
6. <https://cpag.org.uk/child-poverty/child-poverty-facts-and-figures>
7. <https://cpag.org.uk/schoolsurvey>

# Categorisation of activities

All validated activities on CUO are tagged with up to four thematic categories of learning. Using this data we can provide a side-by-side look at what activities are available to children (Provision) and how that compares to the activities that children have actually done in the past year (Participation). This data covers the period Sept 2022 – Aug 2023. Here we can see the percentage of activities tagged in each category.

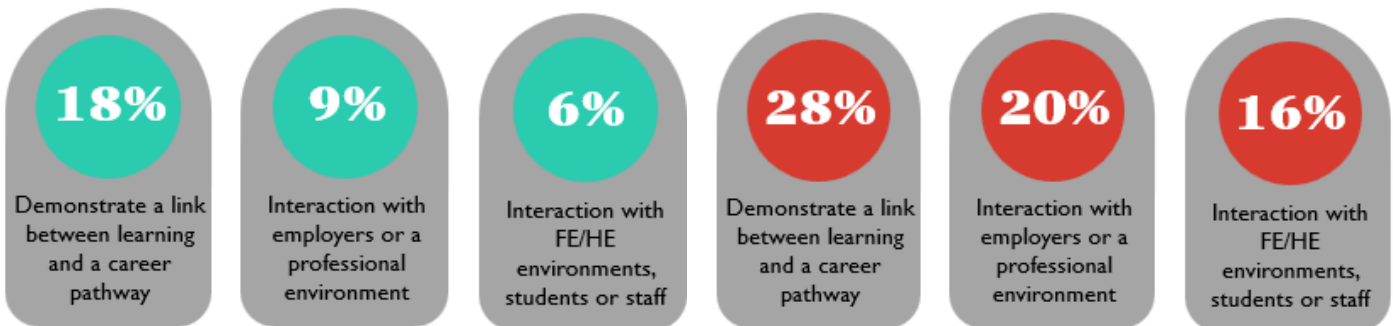
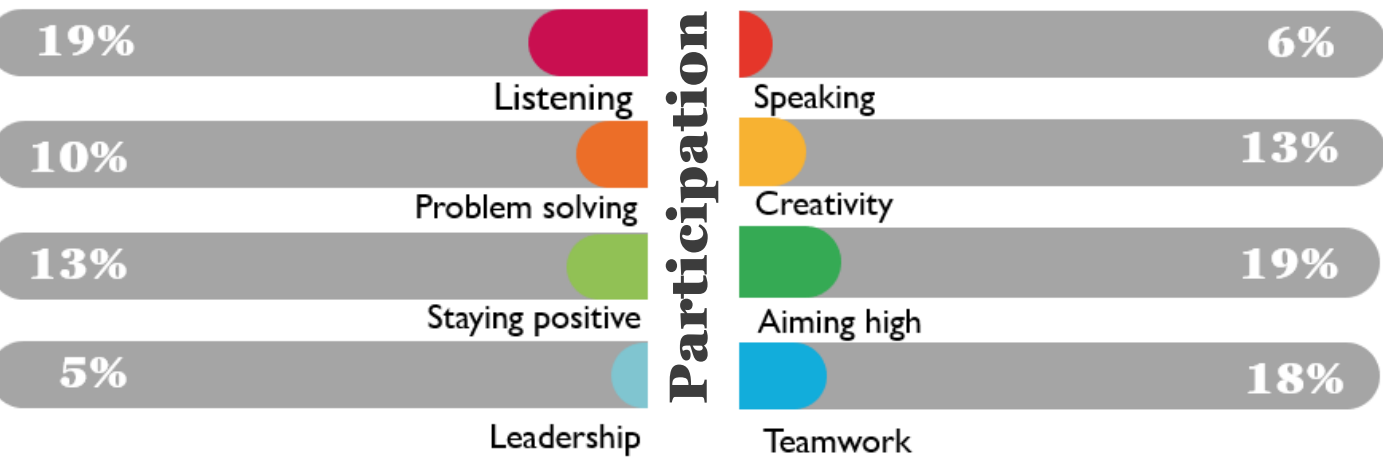
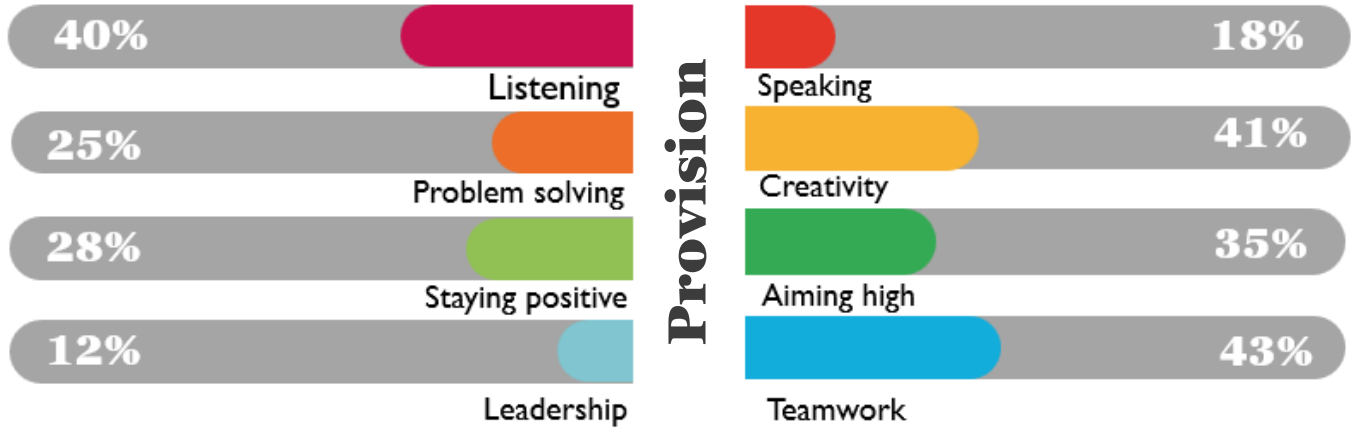
## Provision

## Participation



# Activities tagged by skills

Just as all activities are tagged with relevant learning categories, so too are they tagged with up to three skills, in line with the 8 essential skills of the Skills Builder framework. These tags reflect the skills that the activity providers believe best link to those that children will use and develop through participation.



## Provision

## Participation

Our activities are also tagged with engagement information in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks 4, 5, and 6 to support best practice careers guidance.

# Location and cost

Children's University validates activities from all manner of providers; from major national partners to local one-person trainers. As well as tagging with learning categories, skills, and Gatsby links, we also record whether activities are free-of-charge or costed, and whether they take place in schools or elsewhere.

## Location of activities

### Provision



53%

47%



29%

71%



### Participation

#### Our data shows that children are reliant on schools in order to engage with learning beyond the classroom

A wide variety of organisations run activities and opportunities for children beyond the classroom (53% of our validated activities take place outside of schools) yet the majority of participation (71% of it) still happens within schools.

There is huge scope to improve access to the myriad of opportunities that exist in communities and beyond schools for our children, and for external organisations to support schools in providing learning activities outside the classroom, lessening the burden on schools to provide extra-curricular enrichment led by teachers.

Since last year's report the reliance on activities taking place in schools has increased from 69% to 71%, a sign that despite the cuts to schools and the increased challenges they face, they are more relied on than ever.

There is clear evidence that schools, outside agencies, and other youth provision could do far more to support children and young people if a more joined-up approach were to be taken. Looking at the data above, for example, alongside the findings of the youth organisation, OnSide, in their recent report, *Generation Isolation: OnSide Youth Research 2023*<sup>1</sup>, we see similar stories directly from young people. Despite 89% of young people that attend a youth centre reporting that it makes a positive difference to their lives, only 9% of young people actually attend a youth centre<sup>2</sup>.

#### Footnotes:

- <https://www.onsideyouthzones.org/generationisolation/>
- [https://www.onsideyouthzones.org/content/uploads/2023/10/Generation-Isolation\\_Key-Findings.png](https://www.onsideyouthzones.org/content/uploads/2023/10/Generation-Isolation_Key-Findings.png)

# Cost of activities

## Provision



## Participation

**Our data shows that children are heavily reliant on free activities in order to engage with learning beyond the classroom**

Even though a significant percentage of activities available for children (61%) are free-of-charge, the cost of some activities is still a barrier. The majority of participation (77%) in learning beyond the classroom is only possible when there is no associated cost to take part. Since last year's report, we have seen free activities reduced from 68% to 61%, despite the fact that this has become a key performance indicator for Children's University Trust and extensive work has gone into new partnerships focussed on free activities with the likes of ootiboo, Twinkl, and more. We are committed to doing more.

## Parent feedback – barriers to engagement

The data above shows that the gap between participation and what is provided hinges largely on location of activities as well as the cost. To ensure a fuller picture that extends beyond simple stats, Children's University surveyed children and families about the challenges they faced in taking part in learning beyond the classroom. When asked: what are the challenges or barriers that have stopped you from taking part in some of the activities you wanted to do? the responses reinforced the findings above.



“

*I love searching the amazing activities but quite a lot of them have a cost to take part and this just isn't doable all the time, especially with two children.*

”



# Summary of findings

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- 1. If parents are to play a larger part in engaging their children in learning beyond the classroom, greater support is needed in the form of funding, subsidies, or vouchers to ensure that cost is not a barrier.**
- 2. There is huge potential for businesses and local employers to engage with schools and families by providing learning opportunities for children and young people.**
- 3. Schools need greater recognition for the role they play in enabling learning beyond the classroom. This should also translate into ringfenced funding to ensure other educational and economic challenges do not detract from their offer for pupils beyond the classroom.**
- 4. Further and Higher Education Institutions are best placed to engage with younger learners, yet engagement levels are relatively low. If life-long learning is to be encouraged, more engagement with children is needed beyond simply FE/HE recruitment programmes aimed at those post-16.**
- 5. Youth organisations need to be better supported to engage with schools and communities to ensure their impact is felt by more children and young people.**

# Want to take action or learn more?

## **Validate your activities**

If you run activities for children and young people, or you know someone who does, you can get these activities validated and added to those that Children's University signposts participants to. This is a great way to add value to your activities and reward participation. Find out more and fill out a basic online form [here](#)

## **Contact your nearest Children's University**

You can find your nearest Children's University online and contact them to find out more about the work they do locally. All Children's Universities are managed by socially-minded and community-based institutions who partner with local businesses, education providers and stakeholders of all kinds. Talk about how you could get involved and find your local contact [here](#)

## **Be a vocal ambassador for our work**

Learning beyond the classroom is key to making a life-changing difference to children and young people. Do share this report and the recommendations it contains. Children's University Trust is keen to ensure that the data we collate is shared with those who can use it to inform and improve provision for all children and young people.

## **Read more**

- To read more about provision and what is available for children and young people, you can read the National Youth Agency's (NYA) National Youth Sector Census results [here](#)
- To read more about the cost-of-living crisis and its impact on education, you can read the Child Poverty Action Group's research [here](#)