**The views of children and young people in Medway**

To better understand children and young people’s views about growing up and living in Medway, TONIC was asked by Medway Council and partner agencies to consult local people aged 0 – 25.

Over 3,000 children, young people and guardians from Medway participated in a research study. Participants shared their thoughts and feelings about the positive and negative aspects of life in Medway and their hopes for the future.

**How does it feel growing up & living in Medway?**

**What's most important to you?**

Family and friends matter most to children and young people in Medway

Education, a good career, the environment, and health and wellbeing becoming increasingly important as children got older

**Enjoying parks & green spaces**

1 in 5 said that parks and green spaces were what they liked most about Medway

**Happy with life**

Most (64%) children and young people are happy with their lives

**Keen to be more involved**

Children & young people expressed a desire to engage with decisionmakers, share their insights and help others understand what they want and need

Nearly all (94%) would like to be involved in further consultation about creating a Child Friendly Medway

**Feeling part of a community**

Half (49%) liked the location where they lived the most, specifically how close it was to spaces and places that were important to them, such as their school, college, parks, and green spaces

Children expressed a strong sense of local community, which they described as being their family, friends, neighbours, and the streets surrounding their homes

1 in 4 described their local community as close-knit, friendly, and safe

**What makes you feel unsafe?**

However, they told us they felt less safe in the wider community. This extended into town centres, shopping areas and other public spaces

These spaces, particularly high streets, could often feel intimidating and scary with anti-social behaviour, drugs, alcohol, and litter being reasons people gave for avoiding these areas

1 in 3 children and young people worry about anti-social behaviour

Girls were twice as likely as boys to report feeling unsafe in Medway

1 in 3 young adults (aged 16–25) are worried about the environment and the future of the planet

1 in 4 under 11’s told us they worried about their future, getting a good job, and being happy when they grew up

1 in 5 children and young people worried about their mental health and wellbeing

**In their own words...**

*"It’s home. I’ll always want Medway to be better, but I can’t help but feel close to the place I’ve spent my whole life in"*

16-18 year old

*“I think Medway has the potential to be so much more than it is. My family grew up here, I grew up here, Medway made me who I am. I moved to London to study and to work but have subsequently moved back. I’d love to now be able to serve my community and give something back”*

22-25 year old

 *“I would like to be involved I think young people have a lot of good ideas - we know what young people need and we know where the problems are”*

12-15 year old

**Children & young people's hopes for the future**

Children and young people's aspirations for the future and their careers were broad, wide-ranging, and ambitious

**Staying in Medway**

There was a mixed picture about whether people saw their future being in Medway, with 20% saying they wanted to live here in the future, with 50% not sure, and 30% that did not want to stay in Medway

**A sense of belonging**

Those who wanted to stay in Medway felt this because of a strong sense of belonging, of family history in the area, and of want to give back to the community

**Choice of careers**

41% across all ages felt that a lack of good jobs and few opportunities to pursue their dreams were the main reasons for not wanting to live in Medway in the future

**More opportunities**

1 in 2 wanted to see improved local opportunities for living a good life, including more career pathways, clubs, arts, and youth centres

**Realising your dreams**

We noticed a tension between young people having high hopes for a good job and career pathway, and a sense that they believed Medway could not offer this to them

**Less anti-social behaviour**

1 in 3 wanted less anti-social behaviour, so the area was a better place for children and young people to grow up

**What does a child-friendly Medway look like?**

**SAFE**

Where everyone can live without fear of anti-social behaviour, crime, or intimidation

**CLEAN**

A well-maintained place, free of litter and dirt, with modern play spaces

**GREEN**

Greater awareness of, and action to protect, the environment, and our future

**ASPIRATIONAL**

Offering children and young people opportunities to pursue their dreams and careers

**ENGAGING**

Actively involving children and young people in decisions that affect their lives

**WELCOMING**

Inclusive regardless of race, gender, sexuality, or other characteristics

**How you can help make Medway more child-friendly**

**Listen**

to the voice of Medway’s children and young people and reflect on the insight they have shared about their hopes, fears, and dreams

**Consult and involve**

children, young people, and their families in the decisions that affect lives and their communities

**Work in partnership**

with children and young people to create the spaces, activities and programmes that will make Medway more child-friendly