

What sort of youth centers do young people really want?

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Fifty secondary school children will debate the question 'If young people had more choice and control over the money spent on youth services, would they set up traditional youth centres?' Recent research at the University of Lincoln found that providing youth services helps prevent youth crime and by engaging young people in shaping their future it has a positive impact on their behaviour.

This event aims to discover what types of youth services young people really want. The group, aged between 12 and 14, will first see the activities offered by a traditional youth centre, a multi-million pound [lottery](#) funded facility called 'Myplace', as well as a sports outreach service which makes use of local venues. On returning to the university they will debate what they liked best, and which activities they would purchase if they were provided with a personalized youth budget.

"It will be fascinating to see which youth activities the young people decide to buy," says Sue Bond-Taylor, the lead researcher of the study. "Will the smart building of the 'Myplace' youth centre be intimidating to them or will the traditional youth centre be seen as old-fashioned or not cool enough? Perhaps they don't need a building at all and would prefer an outreach service?"

Their research shows there is no single factor or activity that can stop young people turning to crime. Instead, there are a wide range of interventions, from the availability of youth mentors to building young people's [self esteem](#), that help keep young people out of trouble with the

authorities.

The event aims to empower young people in Lincoln. Participants will have to decide which services should be prioritised and how to distribute the [limited resources](#) in support of Lincoln youth. The choices will inform the participating youth centres and be presented to a member of Lincolnshire Youth Parliament, which helps set the city's [strategic plan](#) for services for young people.

"Young people are the most intensely managed age group in the country, yet they are the least consulted," points out John Bustin, co-organiser and former manager of Lincolnshire's Youth Crime Prevention Team. "The event will give us a snap shot of what [young people](#) think about the [youth](#) services that adults provide for them and about the value for money of these services. We may well be surprised!"

Provided by Economic & Social Research Council

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