FINAL REFLECTIONS

The research offers a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at improving the design, accessibility, and functionality of youth facilities, with a strong focus on inclusivity and creating supportive environments for young people.
Key observations from the study include:

HEAR HER VOICE

1. Variety of Rooms: A diverse range of rooms was deemed essential for different activities, including relaxation spaces, educational areas, and wellness rooms. Notably, the absence of rooms specifically for educational purposes highlighted the need for spaces like study rooms or libraries to cater to young people, particularly those lacking access to quiet study environments at home.

2. Accessibility: Ensuring the building is accessible to individuals with disabilities was identified as a crucial consideration. This includes physical access via wheelchair ramps and other infrastructure, as well as ensuring the availability of sensory rooms accessible to all, regardless of formal diagnoses.

3. Food Options: Researchers recommended a wider variety of food choices, with a focus on clear allergen labeling, and expanding vegetarian and vegan options. The eating area was noted to feel cramped and overly exposed, suggesting a need for a more private and comfortable space.

4. Privacy and Comfort: Privacy was emphasized, particularly for sensitive spaces such as the climbing wall, which researchers recommended screening to protect users' privacy. Similarly, gym areas should offer girls-only sessions and include window coverings to create a comfortable and private environment.

5. Health and Wellbeing: The presence of a sensory and wellbeing room was positively received, with suggestions for integrating counseling and wellbeing services in a dedicated space. Moreover, there was a call for healthier food options to encourage balanced diets and promote healthy lifestyle choices among young people.

6. Security and Safety: While the presence of security staff at the entrance provided a sense of safety, some participants noted that it could give an impression of the facility being unsafe. Researchers suggested alternative security measures, such as metal detectors, to address privacy concerns, especially related to bag checks.

7. Supportive Staff: Approachable and easily identifiable staff were crucial for creating a welcoming environment. This included ensuring that staff members were readily available for guidance or to address issues like bullying.

8. Gender-Specific Activities: Researchers observed that there should be a balance of gender-specific and mixed-gender activities, with particular emphasis on creating spaces where girls can feel more comfortable, such as girls-only gym times or workshops.

9. Transport and Accessibility: The research highlighted concerns regarding the accessibility of the Youth Zone, particularly for those without parental transport. Proposals included exploring options like a dedicated Youth Zone bus or shuttle service and the creation of walking bus initiatives to improve access, especially for young girls. The addition of street signage with QR codes was also suggested to enhance wayfinding and provide detailed information about the services.

10. Private Eating Spaces: The café, as a private and comfortable eating area, was seen as a positive feature. There was a need for privacy during meals, particularly for girls, and suggestions were made to improve the eating spaces to make them feel less exposed.

11. Environmental Design: Vibrant artwork and décor showcasing diversity, including pride flags and civil rights themes, were noted as enhancing inclusivity and creating a sense of belonging for all young people.

12. Sports and Active Engagement: Strong support was found for a wide range of sports and physical activities, with a focus on ensuring that facilities were accessible and comfortable, particularly for girls. This includes ensuring privacy in gym areas and making activities accessible to all genders.

13. Parental Concerns and Communication: Some participants noted that parents might be hesitant to allow their children to attend the Youth Zone without assurance of appropriate support. Researchers suggested creating communication channels to address parental concerns, including a clear anti-bullying policy.

14. Community Integration: The concept of pocket parks and improved street signage was explored as a means to encourage young people to visit the Youth Zone instead of spending time in less secure environments like parks. This initiative could promote a safer community engagement.

In summary, the study advocates for creating a youth space that is diverse, accessible, and supportive, with particular attention to privacy, safety, and inclusivity. The recommendations emphasize the importance of providing a wide range of activities, creating comfortable environments, and improving transportation access to ensure that the Youth Zone is a welcoming and equitable space for all young people.

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This is just the beginning. We'll publish our full report in the next few months. But our research continues... We want to hear more opinions. If you know a girl or young woman who lives in or around Cheshire aged 8-19 (up to 25 with additional needs) then ask them to complete our survey.

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