

How do you feel about Huddersfield Town Centre?

An illustration of Huddersfield Town Centre. In the center is the Huddersfield Town Hall, a large, light-colored building with a classical portico supported by columns. To the left is the modern Glass Pavilion, a curved building with a glass facade and a distinctive wooden structure on top. To the right is the Huddersfield Town Hall, a large, light-colored building with a classical portico supported by columns. On top of the Town Hall is a statue of a lion. The sky is blue with white clouds, and there are green trees on the left and right sides of the image.

Huddersfield Town Centre - 9th July to 18th August 2019

What we did

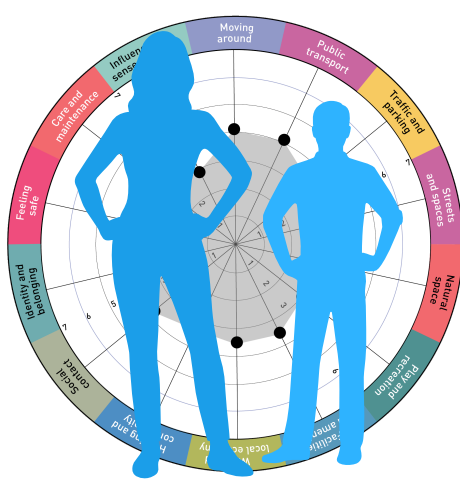
Staff from Kirklees Council talked to people about their experiences of Huddersfield town centre. We used a tool called the “Place Standard”. This is a way of helping to get conversations going about any place (it could be your street, neighbourhood or town), by using some simple questions. Kirklees Council will use the results to help inform the Huddersfield Blueprint plan, and will share the results with everyone who has an interest.

Who participated?

Our team of 28 Kirklees Council colleagues talked with people in many different places in the town centre, including Huddersfield Leisure Centre, Huddersfield Library, S2R (Support to Recovery), Auntie Pam's and Age UK. We talked with local groups such as Kirklees Visual Impairment Network, people who are living with dementia, the Caribbean community, the Huddersfield Professionals Network and young people taking part in NCS (National Citizen Service). We also had conversations in town centre streets, on the Piazza, at the Packhorse Centre and in the Market Square.

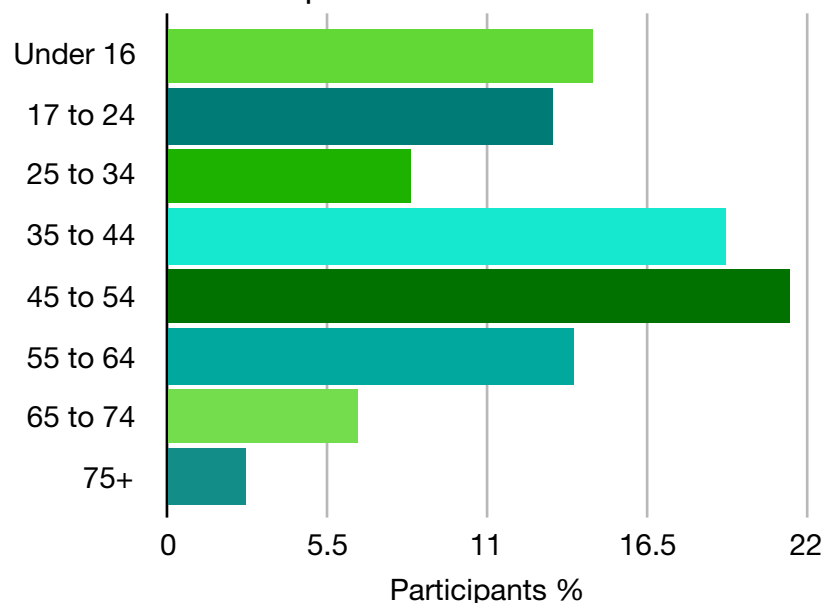
978 citizens took part in the conversations

845 Place Standard assessments were completed



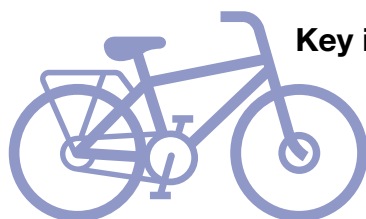
Female 58.1% Male 36.6%

Other / unknown 5.3%

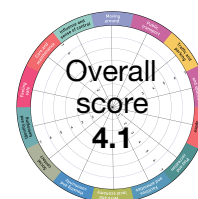


What participants said

Moving around



Key issues: Participants said that key issues are cycling, pavements, pedestrian areas, accessibility, signage, street furniture and safety. Although some participants said cycle routes are good, the vast majority feel that Huddersfield town centre is not cycle friendly. Reasons given include the lack of



clearly identified routes, cycle lanes being poorly laid out, conflict with pedestrian areas, lack of safe cycle storage, traffic and the ring road. Participants said that cycling infrastructure is lacking, cycle routes are confusing and the cycle network in the town centre is very bitty.

Some people commented about cyclists having little respect for pedestrians and cycling on pavements, which causes some conflict when cyclists weave in and out of shoppers in pedestrianised areas (for example, near Argos and the pound shops). Others commented about safety for cyclists, with narrow roads, larger vehicles such as SUVs, busy roads, parked vans making deliveries, cycle lanes being obstructed by parked cars and the “threat of doors being opened on you” all contributing to cyclists feeling unsafe and unprotected.

Many participants commented about Huddersfield town centre having very few dedicated cycling routes and said that where they do exist, they are not continuous. Lots of people commented about the lack of safe and secure cycle parking.


Safety on the ring road was mentioned frequently. Not only does it create a barrier to cycling but people feel it’s difficult to cycle on the ring road. Comments include that it’s dangerous as there aren’t any clear routes, it’s difficult to navigate across, that it’s dangerous and off putting for experienced and inexperienced cyclists. Routes in and around Huddersfield town centre are limited for cyclists due to the road layout and the ring road.

There were lots of positive comments that the town centre is very accessible for walking, with plenty of routes, good pedestrian areas and lots of space. A large number of participants commented about the poor state of pavements and paving stones not being level, which represent a trip hazard, especially when it’s dark and wet. This means that people with mobility problems need to take extra care. The corner of Albion Street and High Street was mentioned as a particular hazard, with raised paving around the cycle lane which is a serious hazard for people who have sight issues.

“Huddersfield has next to no cycling infrastructure - some paint on the side of a road does not constitute infrastructure.”

“Cycle lanes seem to be quite poorly planned, appearing in some parts then suddenly stopping.”

“I have witnessed a few near misses between cyclists and pedestrians.”



"My main concern is that there is not enough seating areas for people that are disabled or frail with age, and there seem to be a lot of people in town in this category."

"Not everyone can walk very far, even for those who do not qualify for a blue badge."

"The High Street can be like running the gauntlet with all the charity collector people."

For people who are visually impaired, the town centre is difficult to access. For example, there are no identified steps at the LBT and the train station overhead information boards are too high and small. The paving outside the bus station near the Plumbers Arms has concentric circles that have subtly different levels, which are very difficult for people with visual impairments to see. Clutter on pavements and obstacles such as A boards outside shops or street furniture right against the kerb can cause problems, especially for those who are using white sticks, who use the kerb or shop fronts and walls to help them navigate. The fountains outside the train station need to be better signposted, "as visually impaired people can't see them and sometimes they get soaked".

Participants raised a number of other issues about access for people with disabilities and mobility difficulties. The layout of the town, with the stretch from Primark to Kingsgate, is a distance for people with disabilities. Whilst there is seating to break up routes, it does look rather shabby, and there's a lack of seating for people with more limited mobility.

Dropped kerbs and uneven pavements "results in a lot of jarring and jolting when in a wheelchair" and cars parking on pavements block access. The route from the bus station to the train station was specifically mentioned as a route that is challenging because of the number of kerbs and uneven pavements. The route from the market to the university is difficult to negotiate and quite a detour if you want to avoid the stairs. The colour scheme and type or size of paving or tarmac is varied across the town, which does not work for people who have a visual impairment or who are living with dementia.

Participants said there's a need for better signposting in the town centre and the number of charity organisations with people out on the high street, especially near Boots and the Packhorse Centre, can make getting around difficult. Participants also commented about homeless people in the town centre, safety and landscaping.

Suggestions from participants: Cycling routes needed from university to the town centre and up towards Greenhead, also through town to the Stadium. A cycle lending scheme in the town centre. Better links to the town centre from existing infrastructure like the canal and greenways. Cycling lanes where cars can't park. Separate cycle routes and pedestrian walk ways. More secure cycle storage areas. Improve the style and design of pavements (for example, by the bus station) and have continuity and consistency of the style, type and colour of paving. Better and more seating, with more attractive surroundings that make you want to sit, including for people with disabilities. Improved pedestrian areas (for example, all of New Street up to Primark and the Wilko's end of town) and new ones. Lower train station overhead boards. Repairs to broken and uneven pavements throughout the town centre. Having zones of culture would be good. Better signposting - not random styles, but more uniform. Signposting for fountains outside the train station. Remove or limit A boards.

506 people commented on this theme.

Public transport



Key issues: Participants told us about the frequency of buses and trains, the cost of public transport, access, parking and safety issues. Views about the frequency and reliability of buses was fairly mixed. In some



areas, getting to and from the town centre is fairly good and meets everyday needs, but in other areas it's very unreliable. People said that using the Golcar bus service is a positive experience, whilst people traveling from more rural areas and north Kirklees commented negatively about the frequency and reliability of their local service. The main issues for people travelling from north Kirklees to Huddersfield are the lack of direct bus links and journey length. For example, the journey from Mirfield is 5 or 6 miles and takes 45 minutes as it "goes round the houses".

The high cost of travel by bus was mentioned by many participants. Coupled with an infrequent and unreliable service, this means it's easier for some people to take a taxi, especially for short journeys where the bus fare is £2.50 and a taxi £3. There were also mixed comments about the train service - good in some places and not in others, depending on where you are traveling to. Whilst the cost of train travel was mentioned, over-crowded carriages at peak times was a more common issue for participants. Other comments about train travel included delays, cancelled trains, antisocial behaviour, lack of cleanliness and lack of long term parking.

Quite a few participants commented negatively about safety and security at the bus station. The entrance is unappealing, there are gangs of young people that loiter outside making the entrance intimidating, the stairs smell of urine, there is evidence of drug taking and smokers stand right outside the entrance in large groups, obstructing the entrance. Some people commented about access on buses for people with prams and in wheelchairs, saying that only two prams and one wheelchair user are permitted on buses at any one time. More priority seating is also needed on buses. Some bus drivers are excellent in their assistance to people who have a visual disability, who need to know when they get to their stop, whilst others set off before they've had a chance to sit down and don't help them find a seat. Ramps are not always available to help with access on trains, and aisles are blocked by luggage.

Suggestions from participants: Introduce an oyster type card that can be used on all buses, not just limited to one provider. Promote the Free Town Bus. Connect the bus and train stations, and have coaches and taxis nearby. More long term parking for commuters, near the train station - it needs to be affordable so people are willing to park their car for the day. More off peak bus services connecting the town centre to outlying areas, especially to support the night time economy. Live bus journey times at bus stops. One transport provider operating all routes across Kirklees (like Transport for London).

555 people commented on this theme.

"It's utterly dreadful - in Outlane there is one bus an hour, it's never on time and often misses."

"The person that keeps the bus station car park tidy deserves a medal, he does a fantastic job."

"I live in Skelmanthorpe and there are just two buses per hour into Huddersfield and only one after 8pm... getting into Huddersfield town centre is not easy."

"It would be nice to have traffic free towns but that cannot happen unless you provide suitable alternatives such as reliable and frequent public transport."

"Bus gates don't make sense... just annoying pointless hindrance to deter people getting around."

"Why is the free town bus diesel?"

Traffic and parking



Key issues: Participants highlighted issues including the availability and cost of parking, congestion, safety, access, bus gates and air quality. Lots of people commented about a lack of parking, especially after 9am, which makes it difficult for

people visiting the town centre during office hours to find long stay parking. The loss of car parking as a result of the new leisure centre hasn't helped.



The high cost of parking makes "popping into shops to pick something up" unviable. Some people commented that they could go somewhere like White Rose and park for free. Others want to see consistency with costs and payment methods for parking. For example, there are varying parking fees on different multi storey parking levels, some Pay and Display machines don't give change so you end up over paying, some pay machines take card payments whilst others still take cash. The high cost of bus travel means that public transport isn't an affordable alternative to driving and parking in town. Some said that the town centre is dying because of car parking charges.

People have mixed feelings about having a ring road. Some feel that parking on the outskirts of town keeps traffic away from the town centre, which is great. Others feel the ring road cuts off easy access to the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists. The ring road is not easy to cross as there are so many lanes of traffic and the underpass does not feel safe at any time of the day.

Safety is an issue at some car parks, including at the bus station, at the Civic Centre where the car park is quite dark, Cambridge Road which attracts "undesirables that hang around nearby so who in their right mind would want to park there?" and the Market Hall car park which can be a hot spot for gangs of kids in the evening.

Access to street parking near to the town centre for people with mobility issues is a common theme. There are not enough disabled parking bays in town and people feel there is some abuse of disabled parking bays, which should be monitored more closely. One person commented on the introduction of silent electric vehicles, which could be problematic for people who have hearing difficulties. Some said there's not enough parking for parents with young children and larger parking bays are needed.

A few people feel very strongly about the bus gates, saying they are "killing the town", that people don't understand them, they're randomly designed, and people are worried they will accidentally fall foul of them so have stopped visiting town at all.

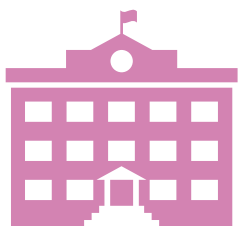
Some feel congestion is not too bad, apart from at peak times. Others highlighted areas where congestion is often bad. For example, the filter lane from the ring road to Halifax Road is congested because of parked cars around Greenhead Park at peak times, the junction at Westgate and Railway Street (buses are the main offenders), Market Street and High Street. Congestion is made worse when there's been an accident on the M62.

Air quality is a concern for some. Participants suggested including the use of electric vehicles in the town centre, encouraging taxis to convert to electric and all council vehicles being electric. Air quality is poor for some who work near to the town centre or who walk into work via the ring road, as a result of traffic congestion and exhaust fumes. The amount of pollution exacerbates asthma and can cause problems for the vulnerable in our society, such as young children and older people. Other traffic issues mentioned were roadworks (for example, on Wakefield Road), pot holes, poorly maintained roads, cars and buses running red lights, and taxis contravening traffic laws.

Suggestions from participants: Free parking for up to two hours within the ring road. All day free parking on Sundays. More pedestrian areas in the town (for example, near Lloyds bank). The whole of New Street should be pedestrianised, with no access to vehicles other than deliveries. Free parking scheme for electric and hybrid cars, to encourage more environmentally friendly transport along with public charging points. More parking (for example, multi storey). Clearer indication of long and short stay parking. Park and ride system - park cheaper outside of town with regular buses into and out of town (for example, at the old sports centre site, Lindley, Bradley bar, Waterloo and Fenay Bridge, Honley and Milnsbridge. Shuttle buses from car parks outside the centre for older and disabled visitors. Use the huge derelict building behind the train station for parking. Try a scheme where shoppers can get free parking if they spend a minimum amount within town centre shops – car parking loyalty card. Plant trees along the ring road to reduce noise. Larger parking bays in line with larger vehicles (SUVs). Traffic lights which say how long there's left to cross. Cameras at traffic lights to catch drivers who jump the lights. Better signage from the ring road into the town centre, with zoned areas with entry points. Improve air quality by moving parking outside of the town centre with designated walkways that are pleasing to the eye.

532 people commented on this theme.

Streets and spaces



Key issues: Participants commented about Huddersfield's historic buildings, empty shops, litter and signage. Lots of people commented about the beautiful historic buildings and architecture that make Huddersfield a wonderful place to live. The train station and buildings on John William Street and Byram Street were repeatedly mentioned, along with Huddersfield Library and the Town Hall.

People feel that we don't make enough of our heritage - we don't fully appreciate what we have, our impressive architecture is not being showcased effectively and some buildings (such as the library and art gallery and town hall) need attention.

The George Hotel has been empty for many years and is becoming increasingly derelict. Participants said that St. George's Square should be a jewel in the town, with all ground floor units open for business, food, drink and leisure, with more seating and areas to encourage people to stay in that area rather than it be a thoroughfare. Some feel that the architecture is hidden at street level as it's masked or spoiled by poor shop frontage and signage. There is potential to develop St Peter's Gardens as an outdoor space, but there are issues such as antisocial behaviour, homeless people and local drunks who cause nuisance, beg and harass passers-by.



People appreciate some of the newer buildings, including buildings at the University of Huddersfield, Kirklees College and Huddersfield Leisure Centre. Some said that buildings from the 1950s to the 1970s are not sympathetic to the surroundings and the quality of the built environment has been severely diminished because of them. The bus station was only mentioned as a “monstrosity”.

Participants said that the town centre has a very different feeling from one end to the other. The area from the train station and St. Georges Square up to Kingsgate and the Piazza is the nicer part of town, whilst New Street down to Wilko’s and the Co-op building are the not so nice end of town, with lots of cheap, unkempt and scruffy shops giving a poor impression to both residents and visitors. The tax office building and old sports centre were also mentioned as being “kind of grotty”.

There is a general feeling that Huddersfield looks a bit run down, with some abandoned buildings (the old technical college being the main offender) and empty shops (such as BHS and Marks and Spencer), too many charity shops, betting shops, pound shops, fast food takeaways, cafes and e-cig shops. The lack of variety, lack of big stores and abandoned shops makes the town centre feel quite depressing. Empty buildings could be used as pop-up shops or have lower business rates to attract new businesses.

People said that street furniture is cluttered, with lots of railings, bins that are falling apart and mismatched colour schemes, which all detracts from the overall look of the town centre. Signage is lacking, given that the town centre is so spread out. For example, it’s a long way from the bus or train station to Kingsgate, the indoor and outdoor markets or the university, especially if you don’t know the town centre.

On a positive notes, many of the streets are wide and pedestrianised, along with squares which are spacious and appealing. Areas people mentioned are the Piazza which is “OK” and St Peter’s, which is sadly not suitable for spending time in. More green spaces are needed but these must be maintained and have more seating and planting, which will add to the vibrancy of the town centre. On the whole, participants feel that the town centre has declined over the years. It doesn’t look cared for or maintained, it lacks vibrancy, some buildings are unsightly and it feels unloved.

Suggestions from participants: Turn empty buildings into green spaces or car parks. Bring empty buildings back into use (for example, Station Street). The council should put pressure on the owners of George Hotel to bring this back into use as soon as possible. Turn the George Hotel into a place to celebrate the birth of rugby. There needs to be publicity about the history of the town, its parks, museums, canal and its other landmarks. A tourist information centre with a cafe to act as a vibrant hub could be a real asset and meeting point. Information boards (these could be interactive) showing what to see and do. Improved signage to inform people where seating areas and toilets are. Better signage to promote walking (for example, 5 minutes to the train station). A pedestrian walk from the station to Kingsgate, Queensgate and Piazza would be more welcoming (the university signpost well for open days and this model could be followed). Planned changes to the Piazza should be done quickly with minimal disruption. Quality of design in our public spaces - aim for international standards. Serious, on-going funding to maintain new public spaces must be factored in. The Town Hall needs sandblasting.

556 people commented on this theme.

"Huddersfield still has a lot of appeal - it has retained much of the Victorian town centre."

"The George Hotel... a complete eyesore when it should be a flagship building."

"When I first moved to Huddersfield the town was really pretty and it was a pleasure to show friends and family around. However these last years, I feel ashamed. The place looks dull, dark and depressing."

Natural space



Key issues: Our participants commented about green spaces, planting, seating, toilet facilities, maintenance and cleanliness.

Some people said they would not expect to see natural space in the town centre as this has not been its purpose in the past. There is very little natural space, greenery, trees or flowers in the town centre except for the Piazza area and St Peter's

Gardens. People appreciate the piazza greenspace but say that it's not used enough, as there is little to make you want to sit there, it's not well designed (though the steps provide a natural seating area) and there are no toilet facilities.



Many people commented that St Peter's Gardens is a nice area, but they would not go there due to antisocial and drunken behaviour by some groups, and it's spoilt by dirt and litter. Green areas in the town centre are not accessible for disabled people and there is nowhere for families to sit out. Greenhead Park is the nearest good quality natural space, though it is quite a walk from the centre and some are concerned about antisocial behaviour there.

People said there's a noticeable decline in cleanliness both within the town centre overall and in the town's gateways (for example, the slip road from Halifax Road towards the ring road) and issues with dog dirt. "Vast swathes" of green corridor planting have been removed on access routes into the town centre. The pedestrian area by Primark has a number of planters that have been covered with paving stones or are full of weeds ("it looks awful"). The trees here are really beautiful but the overall shoddiness of the area makes them unnoticeable. The canal is not well used and doesn't feel safe. People also mentioned Castle Hill and the need to protect this historic site.

Creating more green space in the centre would really improve the feel of the town, along with traffic free places. Whilst pedestrian areas are appreciated, some feel that we are too eager to create pedestrian areas that are paved or concrete, so are not very attractive.

There needs to be a culture in the town centre of feeling like we belong and we have the right to sit on the grass or enjoy any natural space. There's a striking contrast between Huddersfield and continental towns: "if they can manage it, why can't we?"

"Feels over urbanised."

"Huddersfield town centre is a concrete jungle."

"Love the green space on the Piazza, we need more of it. Like the park by the church but I wouldn't sit in it because of the drunks."

"Not much chance of contact with nature unless you count pigeons."

Suggestions from participants: Claim back St Peter's Gardens as a family friendly space. A park for young people's activities and play area. Improve disability access to St Peter's Gardens and to the Piazza. Better maintenance of the large grassed area on the Piazza. A bigger, more central green space in the town centre. Replace paved and concrete pedestrian areas with grass and wild meadow flowers like in Rotherham. The large concrete paved space between Civic Centre 1 and 3 buildings could be made more green and inviting to de-stress shoppers and workers. Create a café culture zone on the Piazza. More zoned areas like Millennium Square in Leeds, which offer non-shopping experiences. The green corridor provided by the narrow canal could be a great asset and should be part of the plan. Improve the canal side so workers can use it at lunchtime. Create green corridors into the town centre, for health and reduction in carbon footprint benefits. A competition for landscape gardeners to create natural spaces to relax, experience nature and socialise. More seating and more attractive planting. Green the streets with planters and trees. Soft landscaping. Raised beds and sensory gardens for easy access. Improve signage to Greenhead Park, and information about how and where to access the natural spaces from the town centre. Better walking and cycling routes, and walking groups around the town centre for workers at lunchtime. Green chill out space you can read a book in. More parking at Greenhead Park and Ravensknowle Park so people can use these spaces. Urban green space which encourages wildlife into the centre, with volunteer groups looking after designated areas. The council needs to manage anti-social behaviour around town, otherwise families will not use the town centre. A lot could be learnt from Sheffield City Council who have worked with Sheffield University to have a new approach to managing urban green spaces. Create more parking outside the town centre. Pull down derelict buildings and create more green space. Allotment type growing in unused or neglected areas of town.

541 people commented on this theme.

Play and recreation

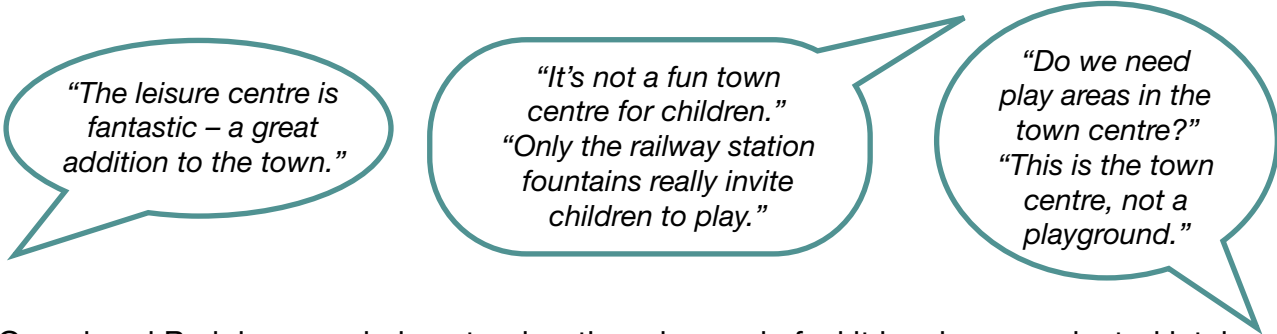


Key issues: Participants talked to us about sports and leisure facilities, Huddersfield Food and Drink Festival and social spaces for young people. Most people couldn't think of any regular play and recreation facilities in the town centre, other than the leisure centre. The sports facilities there are good, though the limited availability and strict timetable can make these difficult to access and it's not

affordable for everyone. Some people do bring their children into the town centre for organised activities (for example, at Huddersfield Library). There is a general feeling that there is nothing in the centre that encourages play or activities.



The Food and Drink Festival brings people into town. The Lawrence Batley Theatre is good. There are no safe social spaces for teenagers, who can be perceived as a nuisance. Both adults and young people do not feel it's safe for children to be in the town centre unaccompanied, in particular after dark. The constant presence of cars doesn't encourage play or a sense of relaxation and isn't child friendly. 'Chuggers' spoil people's enjoyment of public spaces and inhibit social contact. The chess board outside the library and table tennis in Queensgate Market are much enjoyed, and there are facilities for young people on Cambridge Road.



"The leisure centre is fantastic – a great addition to the town."

*"It's not a fun town centre for children."
"Only the railway station fountains really invite children to play."*

*"Do we need play areas in the town centre?"
"This is the town centre, not a playground."*

Greenhead Park is a good place to play, though people feel it has been neglected lately and could have better playground facilities. There are areas of woodland close to the town centre, such as TP Woods, which could be improved, but these are not as accessible as they used to be. Generally grassy areas are left too long, making it difficult to play games on. Many community facilities used by young people have been closed in recent years.

Lots of people commented about the town centre being a space to engage with children and young people - we should not assume that everyone just wants to shop. We need to create spaces for play. A town centre crèche, so it's easier to shop, would also be appreciated. Some young people said they "just go to McDonalds, there is no space to go to" and that there needs to be space for teenagers' play and recreation. This is difficult to find and young people feel "judged when walking around in groups if there is little else to do."

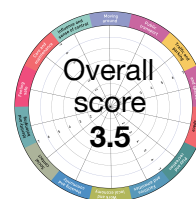
Suggestions from participants: Put innovative play equipment or a playground on the Piazza area and tie in with activities run in the library to encourage children to join the library. Better promotion on the Piazza of children's activities in the library. Open it up in the evening. Have a play area at the leisure centre. The giant chess board outside the library would be more used if the pieces were not always locked up. A large music venue. A zip line from the top of the university into the town centre. Improve the range of activities for adults as well as children on the Piazza (and seating and security). More for school age children and teenagers, especially in school holidays, such as art and craft activities. Nicer places near the bus station for older people to sit in (currently it's all stone slabs and alcoholics). More pedestrianised spaces - create clean, cohesive and distinctive areas. Pleasant designated town centre walking routes. More water play features at Greenhead Park and more adventurous play in communities. Natural play and nature trails round the centre for children. Clever sculpture that children can play on. Ice skating on the piazza (it was popular). Park, chill out area, basketball or slide area. Outdoor park or gym, small tennis court, ice cream van. The council should provide and facilitate play spaces with an easy reporting system for the public, to let them know if something needs attention. Encourage local businesses to open up things like bowling alleys, roller blading for young people. Provide something as simple as railings that children can swing on (the bus station used to have them to divide the queues). Somewhere to take young children when shopping in town – a family friendly offer and play for all ages. More central space for play and recreation including music. More indoor facilities, a play or games centre, skating rink and outdoor facilities such as boules, crazy golf, climbing wall. Information about Harold Wilson next to the statue in St George's Square, and why the letter box is gold. Extend the free bus that goes around the town centre to include a stop at Greenhead Park. Multi lingual signage at the leisure centre. A town centre play group.

487 people commented on this theme.

Facilities and amenities



Key issues: Participants had very mixed views and opinions about facilities and amenities, compared to the other themes we talked about. Key issues include shops, restaurants, cultural facilities, nightlife and toilets.



There were lots of positive comments about bars, restaurants and places to eat. There are plenty of them, however they are spread too far apart, some look quite scruffy, the variety and choice is quite limited, some are quite expensive and there's nothing original or upmarket. People feel there are too many coffee shops in the town centre. The range of cultural foods available is limited - apart from takeaways, there's not many restaurants where you can sit in and eat that offer a halal option.

An overwhelming number of participants said that the town has very little to offer by way of good quality shops. There is not enough choice and too many of one type, such as bargain shops, e-cig shops, nail bars, gambling shops and charity shops. Retailers such as M&S and BHS that have closed have created a feeling of a town in decline. The town centre is progressively getting worse and with limited shopping facilities people say there is "no incentive to come to town at all."

Some of the reasons people mentioned for the decline of the high street are the boom in internet shopping, the selection in chain stores tends to be much smaller than in cities, and alternatives that are in close proximity such as White Rose and Meadow Hall also offer free parking. There are some little gems in the town centre, however these are hidden and not all in one place. The layout of the town is felt to be "disjointed with no real flow" and these gems get overlooked.

Comments about the Packhorse Centre suggest that it's used for access rather than shopping. The removal of the seating seems to have "disrupted the social life of the elderly muslim men". The Library and Art Gallery is recognised as an asset by the vast majority of people, with potential to do more by way of physical improvements, book shop, coffee shop, family friendly area, better access and "better facilities to display collections". Leisure facilities including Greenhead Park and the Leisure Centre are quite good. The Lawrence Batley Theatre and Huddersfield Town Hall are also valued, but need to have a more diverse offer including something for people with disabilities, including visual and hearing.

The issue that most people complained about was the lack of toilet facilities. There's a need for significant improvement in facilities for disabled people, baby changing and for the general public. There are toilets in Kingsgate that people would use, but again the layout of the town centre isn't conducive to this. Others have said they would not use the bus station toilets.

On the whole, the night life leaves a little to be desired and is felt to be "over run by loutish and intimidating behaviour". Safety issues and perceptions of crime are preventing people from coming into town in the evening. People feel especially unsafe in St Peters, on John William Street near the Cherry Tree, around McDonalds and at the bus station. Amenities are needed for children and young people, not only to keep them entertained when shopping, but also for leisure and activities. Views about whether there's enough access to GPs, health facilities and chemists were fairly mixed.

"More independent restaurants in the town centre to create the right vibe. Less takeaways and newsagents required."

"It's so unsafe in town and the only people that I think would be attracted to its night time economy are the young and naïve or the drags of society that cause these issues."

Suggestions from participants: Introduce 'zones' in the town centre for eating, culture, business and travel. Cultural quarter. Bowling alley. Picnic area. New cinema. Cycle lockers. Walk in health centre. Community space for exhibitions and dances. Street foods. Dedicated live music space. Safer parking to encourage the night time economy. Create a 'China town' or a better local market so that international students are encouraged to stay when they graduate..

496 people commented on this theme.

Work and local economy



Key issues: We heard from participants about the types of jobs on offer, attracting new businesses, business rates, young people, training and volunteering. Some participants feel there are reasonable or good job opportunities in Huddersfield, with the big employers being named as Kirklees Council, the University of Huddersfield and the colleges. Some said that jobs are there for those who want them, such as in the leisure industry, retail and solicitors.



However, many more people feel there are limited opportunities for work due to businesses closing, the lack of large or 'blockbuster' employers in the area, empty retail units and choices being limited to low paid or low skilled jobs. Some pointed out that the borough of Kirklees has the highest level of workforce export (people traveling to Leeds, Bradford, Wakefield) in the region, according to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, which suggests there are limited opportunities in Huddersfield. A lot of jobs are minimum wage, which seems to be a worsening problem as better jobs disappear. This results in less money in people's pockets and less money being spent in the town.

There needs to be more done to keep businesses in Huddersfield and greater investment in new companies such as high end IT, chemical, clinical and drug companies, finance, architecture and consultancy firms. There are spaces that could be used for fledgling businesses, but the rent and business rates can be off-putting. An area where the council could help new businesses is by offering substantial reduction to rents or rates and providing space for starter businesses, for example in empty buildings that could be used as incubator units or pop-up spaces for new or small businesses.

Young people are struggling to find work, due to lack of experience and lack of opportunities unless they are food, retail or bar related jobs. There isn't a good range of diverse, quality jobs on offer to local people. Apprenticeships are seen as a good thing for young people, as are vocational types of training opportunities - for example, plumbers, electricians, plasterers, engineers, medical science - that give young people and adults a skill or trade.

There were a number of positive comments about the University of Huddersfield, how it provides local employment and brings students and other people into the area. It could provide opportunities for more high tech companies as well as small business start-ups. One negative comment was that the university has become self-contained and that previously students would cross the ring road to have lunch and shop around lunchtime. Other education facilities are valued for young people and adults, although adult education evening courses can be difficult to find. This is particularly significant for adults who work but may want to retrain to improve their prospects.

C&K Careers, Kirklees Council and the Job Centre are providing support for job seekers. The biggest issue is that everything is now online, including job searches, uploading a CV and online applications. This is particularly challenging for people who aren't IT literate or whose first language isn't English. Some said that the Job Centre does not provide a good service, with some staff being rude to young people. There's also felt to be little support for those who are working but want a career change.

Volunteering opportunities are promoted through Third Sector Leaders Kirklees and people feel there is a "good volunteering culture" but also that "many people may not be informed of these opportunities". Whilst there are plenty of opportunities for volunteering in Huddersfield, participants said that most of these are filled by retired people.

More support for people with disabilities is needed. This includes people with physical, learning and special educational needs. Lack of understanding of disabilities and willingness to put reasonable adjustments in place were given as main reasons affecting work opportunities ("all the policies say the right things but their implementation is non-existent at best"). For people who have a visual impairment, adult education courses are not felt to be particularly suitable. Support from REAL employment for people with disabilities was acknowledged.

Feedback from Black and Minority Ethnic communities suggests that there aren't a lot of good quality or well paid jobs available. Kirklees Council was mentioned as the main employer, with comments that the majority of the opportunities go to white British and "BME groups are concentrated on low paid front line work" (such as cleaning, customer service, security and caretaking). People feel that there is almost no BME representation in higher level jobs and that meaningful training and promotion opportunities are normally reserved for white British majority workers in the organisation.

Some people commented that markets and festivals take money away from the local economy, rather than encouraging people to patronise existing shops and businesses.

Suggestions from participants: Lower rates to allow people to occupy town centre shops and grow businesses. To have a hub space where ideas can be shared with other folk who have similar ideas - it needs to be affordable and support or facilitate creative thinking. Better promotion about where to go or ask about start up space. Hold more local markets for local people to have one-off stalls to support their home businesses to grow and then support them into local shops as their businesses grow. Better links with training providers and employers - ideally have direct links with businesses to support work experience and easier routes into work. More opportunity for training in trade skills of plumbers, builders, electricians, plasterers, engineering, medical sciences and fabrication. Create a more diverse shopping experience.

Queensgate Market has the potential to provide small spaces at reasonable rents for specialist businesses, and could be much more than it is now. The council should be much better at advertising job opportunities to all. Ban zero hours contracts. Bring back the mantra of 'lifelong learning'.

435 people commented on this theme.

"Good quality work requires travelling to Leeds or Manchester."

"The university is excellent at providing jobs and training. I think the university has done a lot for the town centre, and it would be lost without its input."

Housing and community



Key issues: Participants commented about student accommodation, rough sleepers, private rented housing, costs and quality, empty buildings and infrastructure. Many feel that town centre housing is dominated by students, which has been brought about because of the development of the university.



It's generally felt that there needs to be a more balanced

offer, for a number of reasons. When the university is in full swing the town feels busy and bustling, however the drawback is when the students finish for summer. Also students don't have the same spending habits as Kirklees residents, as they tend to want entertainment spaces and they don't really engage with the community.

There needs to be a better mix of good quality homes near the town centre, in particular for young people aged 20 to 30 years. There are a number of private sector houses but comments suggest that quality is poor with "a large proportion of private landlords offering substandard accommodation that unfortunately for some is their only option."

People said that more affordable housing is needed within one mile of the town centre, and investment in social housing for all ages and household types, preferably with gardens. Private renting is too expensive for what you get and new builds are beyond some people's means, even with help to buy schemes. Where there has been housing development, supporting infrastructure improvements have not always been made. Extra pressure has been put on existing services such as health facilities, schools and roads.

People are worried about rough sleeping and homelessness, and feel that the numbers are increasing. It's visible near to the outdoor market. Participants said it's impossible for young and vulnerable to get houses. There's a direct correlation between the lack of affordable and adequate housing and the rise in homelessness, and it needs to be addressed. Empty and disused buildings were suggested as a solution to the lack of good quality housing for rent, purchase and mixed tenure.

Participants also asked for more investment in extra care living arrangements, rather than "sending elderly people to care homes", and improving safety in the town centre so people will feel safe to live there.

"I work hard in a full time job and so does my partner and we cannot afford."

"The lack of infrastructure being created with homes is shameful."

"The town centre should be re-thought in terms of housing with many empty buildings and spaces that could be reimagined as real housing and not just for students."

Suggestions from participants: Repurpose empty buildings to address the lack of good quality affordable housing. More one and two bedroom homes. We need investment in infrastructure, not just housing.

458 people commented on this theme

Social contact



Key issues: Some people feel that there are a lack of opportunities for social interaction in Huddersfield town centre. However, a large number of our participants said they generally feel there is a good range of opportunities. People shared lots of examples, including churches, cafes, community centres, the library, Kingsgate, football, theatre, town hall, community groups, walking groups, volunteering groups, pubs, restaurants, the leisure centre, Greenhead Park, the Mission, Elim Church, The Media Centre, Brian Jackson House, dance schools and martial arts.



There are a number of barriers to social contact, including the lack of good quality outdoor spaces that feel inviting, with attractive gardens and space where people can sit and feel safe. Areas such as St Peters Gardens could be much better used if they felt safer. Opportunities in the evening are limited by the choices available (which are largely pubs, restaurants and the theatre). Perceptions of crime and antisocial behaviour affect how people interact, along with affordability of activities.

There are limited opportunities, especially in the evening, for people who have disabilities to socialise, and in particular for those who rely on public transport. Support to Recovery is valued as a place where people can meet. However, this closes at 3.30pm most days. Participants said they are worried that limited opportunities could result in people feeling isolated and alone. The cost of hiring a community space is also prohibitive and is more limited in the evening (for example, Brian Jackson House closes at 5pm).

There are a lack of opportunities for young people to meet. Somewhere to chill out and play board games would be welcomed, "where the youth aren't judged". The only place young people say that they hang out in the town centre is outside McDonalds. Safety concerns around this area have been mentioned many times. Lack of family friendly activities is also an issue.

Many people commented on the lack of social opportunities that bring people from different backgrounds together. There are spaces in the town centre, but not all of them are suitable for everyone (such as pubs). Opportunities are needed to use shared food and music to bring people together in ways that are accessible, affordable and well-advertised so people can join in.

"We can learn a lot from different generations as well as cultures and backgrounds."

There could be opportunities at the outdoor market where there is a bustle of Urdu and Yorkshire to bring people together to sit and relax in the same shared space.

Suggestions from participants: A one stop information point for local activities, groups and volunteering opportunities. Local directory of opportunities. Publicise affordable community space. Outdoor space to sit and relax. Free Wi-Fi in the town would help. More organised events, like the Food and Drink Festival and the Festival of Light. Create more hub space where people can dock down in a more relaxed environment. A music venue would be great. More places for people to meet based on shared interests and activities. Space and opportunities for people from different backgrounds to mix.

434 people commented on this theme.

Identity and belonging



Key issues: Participants said they do not view Huddersfield positively, due to the state of the town centre and a loss of feeling pride in our town centre. People told us that the “community feeling is being lost.” Many people said that Huddersfield used to be a great place to live. Huddersfield is a university town but some said that this doesn’t seem to benefit the town. Recent football success was short lived and the town did not really benefit from it.



Reasons for people feeling this way include the town centre not being clean or attractive, a deteriorating shopping offer, antisocial behaviour, a lack of safety, parking charges, bus gates and council budget cuts. Reporting in the Examiner is perceived as negative and sensationalist, and participants said this is stoking bad feeling between communities.

No-one feels a sense of ownership of the town centre because it is seen as a mainly transient resident community of students and a retail centre. It is the council’s job to maintain the centre, so no-one feels compelled to volunteer.

People who have lived in Huddersfield all their lives were more positive about its identity and their sense of belonging. Participants commented on the proud heritage of the Huddersfield area, but said there isn’t enough in the town centre to help people learn about this.

The wider Huddersfield area has a diverse community which participants said should be celebrated more. People from different backgrounds seem to be mixing less, with an increase in racist views lately due to the current political climate. The Caribbean Carnival and Sikh Parade were mentioned as positive experiences. And the town’s strong association with textiles and sport are things to be celebrated.

The creation of Kirklees as a borough was mentioned as having an ongoing negative impact on the identity of the town of Huddersfield. However, some people commented that the Huddersfield Blueprint is a positive step in terms of identity and belonging: “the master plan is promising.”

“As someone who has now lived in Huddersfield for nearly 40 years, there has been a huge decline in people’s feelings of belonging.”

"I don't want to belong to the town centre, it's awful."

"I don't feel like part of the community, when I walk through town people don't really talk to each other."

"For all its failings, Huddersfield has a proud heritage and a sense of belonging."

"If asked 21 years ago when we first moved to the area, I would have rated it a 7. The council have let the area deteriorate."

"As an EU citizen I feel less and less welcome."

"My daughter (aged 9) does not want to come into the town centre as she finds it scary walking past grubby empty buildings with broken windows and people sleeping in doorways."

Suggestions from participants: Celebrate the town's strong heritage through information boards and plaques and use it to move forward (not just look back on the good old days), lead by example and connect with communities. Encourage the stories of where we all come from and celebrate them with the younger generation. Market the town through festivals, heritage and treasure trails. More cultural events and opportunities. Promote the town's architecture. Use the town centre to bring the diverse communities in Huddersfield together and reflect our diverse communities more in the town. Celebrate more recent diversity - from recent migrants to punks. Create a sense of local pride. Make the town centre more welcoming. Investment in a stronger economy and jobs for all. A town centre business and retail forum. A new museum in the town centre, dedicated to local history. Encourage more independent shops to set up in the town centre. Reduce crime and violent attacks in the centre. Invest time and money into friends of groups and community groups. Call it "Huddersfield Council". The town centre needs to be "loved and cherished".

456 people commented on this theme.

Feeling safe



Key issues: Most people do not feel safe being in the town centre. For some, this is all the time, for most it is unsafe at night and many areas are a "no go". Many people commented that

there has been a decline in them feeling safe in the town centre over the last couple of years, or last few years. Most people would not go into the town centre at night.



Reasons given for this are social deprivation, begging, rough sleepers, increase in homelessness, drunkenness, regular antisocial behaviour, drug dealing and drug use, large groups of young people hanging about, gangs, too many narrow alleyways are overlooked, poor lighting in spots and there is not enough of a Police presence. The homeless are forceful, gangs are intimidating, and beggars accost and swear at people.

Specific “no go” areas mentioned are St Peter’s Gardens, Cross Church Street, outside the bus station, the underpasses to Springwood car park, the railway bridge under John William Street, the open market area, Lord Street at night, the Market Hall car park and seedy alleyways that smell. The Piazza feels less safe than it did when there was security. Cambridge Road car park early in the morning feels unsafe, with people drinking on the footpath, and the vacant Chinese centre is covered in used sharps. The routes into the town centre do not feel safe. Greenhead Park at night was also mentioned as feeling unsafe.

The litter, graffiti, empty and shabby, run-down shops make it worse and make people feel more vulnerable. The trains can also be unpleasant when the ale trail is busy. There is poor lighting in some areas at night - on the Piazza, outside the library and by the bus stops on Peel Street. The constant media negativity around stabbings and shootings in Huddersfield is contributing to this fear. There is a perception of a high crime rate. In comparison to the town centre, most people commented that they do feel safe in the places that they live. However, hearing about gangs and violence in Birkby and Dalton does not help.

Some people are more likely to feel safer in the town centre than others. For example, young people do not like to come into the town centre and there are not a lot of places to go. There was a comment that elderly parents no longer come into town as it is no longer safe. Some people said that they would not come into town on their own. People also expressed concerns about racism and homophobia, which some of our participants have personally experienced.

Suggestions from participants: More Police and more CCTV in town. A visible, preventative security presence. More Safer Kirklees staff around the area. Tackle gang related crime. Targeted campaigns to reduce drugs and knife crime. Better designed public spaces. Stronger night time economy. More residential use of the town centre. Investment in the town centre. McDonalds should no longer be open 24 hours and should close by 10pm or 11pm. Street Angels (as set up by the churches in 2007). Actively use empty properties.

518 people commented on this theme.

“It’s ok that all this money is being made available to make town a nicer place but what is the point in having a nice town when nobody wants to visit because of how dangerous it feels?”

“I have worked in the town centre for 33 years and have never felt as unsafe as I do now.”

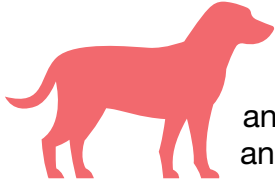
“It’s very rough on an evening and I would not come in with my family for a meal.”

“It’s not really unsafe but I do feel safer in York, where I am at university.”

“As a middle aged woman I’m quite fortunate in being virtually invisible but I can see that for some people it might be intimidating.”

“There are little side roads that I now avoid, walking the longer way round.”

Care and maintenance



Key issues: Participants talked about issues such as litter, fly tipping, dog mess, chewing gum, rats, antisocial behaviour, graffiti, buildings, planting, toilets and homeless people.



The train station, St George's Square (not the hotel), John William Street, Byram Street, Huddersfield Library and Huddersfield Town Hall are beautiful Victorian buildings, all in need of some love and care. However, other parts of town, including New Street down to the ring road and Cross Church Street, are shabby and neglected.

Areas that are well maintained are the university grounds, the LBT, the Packhorse Centre and Kingsgate, which all look clean and cared for: "well done Kingsgate."

Some of the buildings on New Street have weeds growing out of the flat roofline and look dreadful, also the planters are full of nothing but weeds or covered with slabs. The benches are covered in pigeon poo. The "Co-op building is dilapidated and has been for some years." There are other buildings on the ring road that are "hideous". The buildings opposite Sainsbury's are seen as grotty and there are lots of empty buildings. The cheap shops and takeaways bring a shabby aspect to the area and landlords don't appear to check if their properties are well maintained. Other buildings that are seen to bring the area down are the old sports centre and the old college on the ring road "they make Huddersfield look shabby". The whole area "looks tired and dirty" and needs a facelift.

There's a contrast with the way empty buildings are presented in the town centre. For example, in the Piazza they are attractively presented with window displays, whereas on New Street they look dirty, have broken windows and rough sleepers in the door ways and items such as bedding and personal belongings left in doorways. The Civic Centre area was mentioned in relation to rats, the uneven paving stones on the concourse and the office at Civic Centre 1 being draughty.

Participants said that the natural space we have generally isn't too bad, but there's just not enough greenery in the town centre. The floral displays and hanging baskets are appreciated and Greenhead Park and parks generally are excellently maintained: "parks staff need all the accolades and praise".

On the whole, people feel the streets are litter free and quite clean, although litter from fast food outlets gets everywhere, as does the litter generated by people clubbing on a Saturday night. The litter from takeaways can encourage rats, mainly around the bus station and the Civic Centre area, where the planting and hedges are. The bus station stairwells smell of pee and there is often sick in the stairwells. Some of the side streets (such as behind Nat West bank) are not felt to be clean. Chewing gum is "all over pavements". Some said that Kirklees staff are addressing the litter, smoking and chewing gum problems well.

There are a few people who feel the town centre is good compared to other towns, with areas that are cared for and where some trees, plants and greenery are available. The impact of budget cuts was acknowledged. The state of the pavements are felt to be awful, with issues raised about broken, uneven pavements and the impact this has, especially for people with disabilities.

"Recycling is poor and the types of plastic recycled should be increased, glass recycling, an easy win, is also disappointing."

"Considering the budget cuts the council has suffered, the parks are in great nick."

"Staff can be seen in the town centre advising and promoting acceptable behaviour."

"The cleaners do an amazing job that is mostly unnoticed."

There are plenty of bins, yet recycling facilities in the town centre are next to none. Some people commented that the council's policies on things like recycling have encouraged the dumping of rubbish and fly tipping. Trade waste refuse bins are ugly and a feature some would prefer not to see at the front of properties, saying they should be kept at the back. There are some issues with graffiti, with the subway under the ring road being mentioned in particular. Dog mess is also an issue.

Suggestions from participants: Sort out shop front signage – the town's rich heritage is left boarded up with shop fronts and signage not in keeping. There should be a process in place to ensure empty shops don't look shabby. More flowers. Bins are needed for general waste, glass, cardboard, paper and plastic. Be clear about what can and can't be put in green bins. More street cleaning and litter picks. Make restorative justice part of helping to maintain greenspaces in town and also recruit volunteers. We need more interactive spectacles in the town centre. Use CCTV to catch dog owners who don't pick up dog poo. Pubs should not allow patrons to drink outside. Clean the tomato ketchup off pedestrian crossing buttons. Provide information about how much we have recycled and how this has helped the environment. Have a competition between different town centres to see who recycles the most.

468 people commented on this theme.

"This is the first time in 35 years I've been formally asked for an opinion of the town. I really welcome the opportunity and would love to be involved and engaged in improving the town, but suspect nothing will happen, sadly."

"We need a voice so the town can change to benefit us, as well as the adults."

"It's hard to feel part of the decision making process."

"Consultation is fine but if residents aren't part of the planning and development there isn't true ownership and it's all just lip service."

"We have no voice, this is pointless."

Influence and sense of control



Key issues: Few people feel that Kirklees Council actually listens to them. Many said that the council “asks for people’s opinions but then never acts on them.”



Some said that the council does try to engage with people, but there is a lot of cynicism and apathy in the community. People do not support the bus gates in the town centre, people wanted a bowling green in the new sports centre but didn’t get one.

With no obvious focus for the town centre itself, it’s difficult for people to find out how to influence things. There is no longer an obvious forum for residents to meet with all the Huddersfield councillors about Huddersfield, as when there was a district committee. There is a sense of frustration that people don’t know about the big decisions about the town or how to contribute to those decisions.

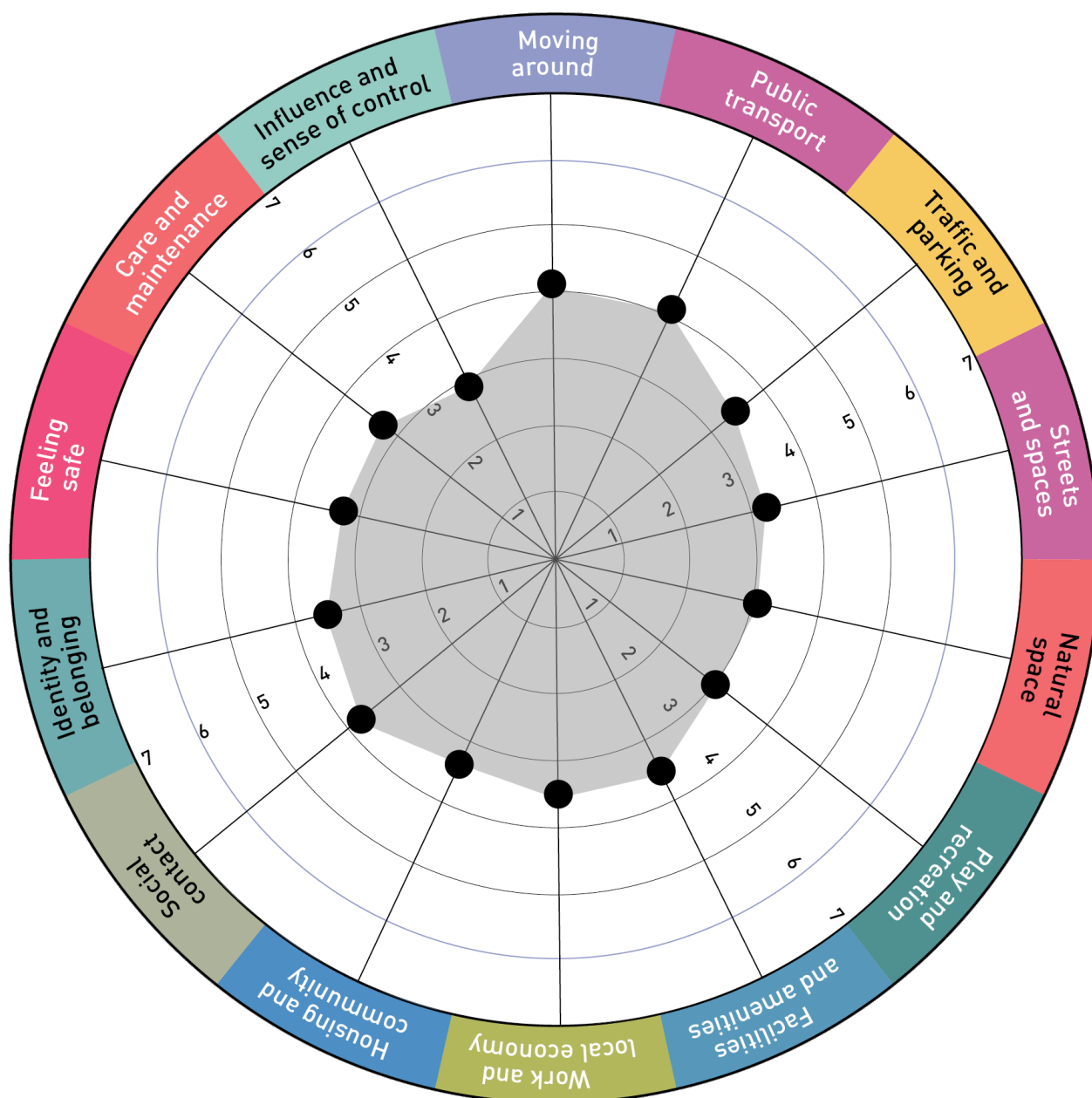
Young people said that, because of their age, they have no say in how the town changes for the future, even though it will be them who are affected the most.

Some people said that the “How do you feel about Huddersfield?” conversations, along with the Huddersfield Blueprint consultation, are showing encouraging signs of improved opportunities to participate. We also heard that Huddersfield is an active place to live in terms of opportunities to get involved in community activity, in comparison with other parts of the country.

Suggestions from participants: More time needs to be spent building long term relationships with communities, particularly underserved communities, to make decision making part of a long term conversation and to increase public understanding. More community involvement on Huddersfield matters. Feedback. The council should promote ways in which the public can get involved and contribute to the decisions which affect them, as people are unaware how to do this. Use Talking Papers to get messages out to the visually impaired. More transparency in decision making. More people need to get more active in their local community and help keep things tidy and safe. Encourage people to get involved by volunteering in the town centre. More financial support for organisations, in particular for vulnerable people. Collect taxes locally and spend it locally, only when there is a surplus should they go to the government. Create a Huddersfield Council. Have a designated person who you can speak to about the town centre if you have a concern. A working group or town centre manager that people can contact and who can facilitate meetings and act solely for Huddersfield. Involvement of young people in decision making about the town centre. This engagement should happen more often. Communities should tell the council what they want, not the other way round.

535 people commented on this theme.

Overall scores for Huddersfield Town Centre



Moving around	4.1
Public transport	4.1
Social contact	3.8
Facilities and amenities	3.5
Traffic and parking	3.5
Identity and belonging	3.5
Work and local economy	3.5

Housing and community	3.4
Care and maintenance	3.2
Streets and spaces	3.2
Feeling safe	3.2
Natural space	3.1
Play and recreation	3
Influence and sense of control	2.9



Full data is available at:
www.HowGoodIsOurPlace.org.uk

