



Young Voices Oxfordshire

December 2025



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Foreword

Oxfordshire Youth are proud to have partnered with young people to have co-produced a Youth Voice Analysis. We would like to thank Oxfordshire County Council for their supporting grant, and extend our thanks to everyone who took part in the research. We are grateful to all of the participants for their wisdom which has enabled this work.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to the young people who have co-produced this research. The Youth Voice Champions (five young people aged 16-18) have been instrumental in advocating for the needs and voices of young people, and shown immense dedication throughout this process.

This research is a vital contribution to a county which values young people and lived experience, and works tirelessly to give every young person in Oxfordshire the skills, support, and connections they need to thrive.

Executive Summary

The voluntary and community youth sector and local government in Oxfordshire report the need to invest in a county-wide youth voice and participation strategy that expands youth-led decision making. Alongside the launch of the National Youth Strategy: Youth Matters, it has been crucial to understand the landscape of youth voice and participation in Oxfordshire, and work with young people to understand how they want to be heard.

Working alongside 5 Youth Voice Champions, this research consisted of surveys, focus groups and creative activities to reach the young people that often do not feel heard. 522 young people aged 8-25 across the county told us what they think, and more importantly, how we can do this better. An analysis of what they said, alongside a literature review supported by Research Oxford has produced a set of ten recommendations for Oxfordshire.

This report raises the voices of those 522 young people so that we can hear from them about why they want to be involved in decision-making, and so that we (adults) can better understand what needs to change, what barriers young people may come up against, and more importantly how we ensure young people are shaping this work from the outset.

This report sits alongside a separate piece of work: Youth Voice Mapping. This is a full mapping exercise of all existing 'youth voice' provision across the country in education, public sector and the voluntary sector. Together these two pieces of research will inform our new Youth Voice Strategy for Oxfordshire.

Summary of Key Findings:

Young people want to be heard

Young people overwhelmingly wanted to be involved in decisions that effect their lives with 88% of young people we spoke to saying they would like to be involved in decision making, with nearly 2 in 3 young people answering 'yes absolutely' or 'yes, to an extent'. Young people told us they wanted to be involved in decision-making, with a focus on agency and future planning. This indicates a clear desire for youth voice and participation, that is not just about being heard, but enacting and being a part of social change.

Local findings mirror national findings. In 2024, the Diana Award found that young people were often disillusioned with political engagement, and wanted to see more meaningful and inclusive opportunities to contribute.

How do young people want to be heard

Around 55% participants wanted to be heard via surveys, indicating the significance of anonymity and privacy. It is important to note that for many young people, this data was gathered via a survey and thus confirmation or survivorship bias may be present.

Around a third of young people cited social media platforms and a quarter cited specific events as preferred ways to have their voices heard. Within this, it is important to meet young people where they are and within spaces they are already utilising and active within. This removes travel barriers and potential intimidation of institutional, formal settings.

Structured forums were chosen by less than 1 in 5 young people. This suggests that these forums may be thought to be too formal or bureaucratic and inaccessible for young people. Language or structure may not be clear or inviting for young people, combined with a perception that it may be time-consuming and with low output. With another finding stressing the significance of safe spaces and trusted adults, it is clear that young people require support to engage in these spaces.

Why do young people not want to be involved:

Around 1 in 3 young people told us that they felt that ‘people don’t listen’ or that ‘nothing will change’, indicating a breakdown in the feedback loop and lack of visible outcomes. 18% chose uncertainty about outcomes, suggesting that there is lack of knowledge and clarity for young people’s involvement, and current communication practices are not meeting young people’s needs. There is a breakdown in the cycle of participation for young people.

Are young people feeling listened to?

Our findings showed that 95% young people feel listened to by adults in their life, indicating positive support networks and access to trusted adults. The 5% who did not feel listened to represent a small but vulnerable group, highlighting the need for targeted external support to address this heightened risk. It is necessary to caveat this finding, as 2 in 3 young people only felt listened to ‘sometimes’.

81% reported feeling listened to by parents/guardians: family relationships are a primary source of support and often fulfil the role of trusted adult. 49% felt listened to by teachers. With this figure at just under half, indicates that there are barriers in institutional educational settings for many young people to feel heard. We also asked young people who is not listening to them. A qualitative grouping of answers found that many young people cited teachers. Qualitative findings indicated empathy for ‘business’ of teachers as well as frustrations at school and with educators.

24% felt listened to by youth workers. This finding could indicate two things: a gap in access to professionals or a gap in the effectiveness. Qualitative findings suggest that most young people we spoke to did not regularly access youth workers, which must be considered alongside this finding as well as the wider climate within the youth work and voluntary and community sector. Additional answers indicated feeling listened to by trusted adults such as support workers, therapists or other family members, as well as MPs and Systems.

When asked why, many young people cited their age and perceived as being ‘too young’ to be taken seriously. There is also reference to access and support needs, specifically around neurodivergence. Many answers appear to be very emotive: whilst at times there is frustration with peers or adults for not feeling listened to, there is also empathy for adults who are busy or for not feeling listened to in heightened moments.

What do young people want to say?

Young people raised a wide range of topics and issues, and throughout it is clear that youth voice is key: both in terms of their own lives, spaces and communities and also for socio-political issues on a national and global scale. Young people have things to say and want to see change happen.

Key issues raised were around the wider socio-political climate, system change, lived experience and equity. Young people cited climate change, housing and healthcare, conflict and humanitarian crises, education and the curriculum, to name a few, with immense passion and drive for change.

Young people also mentioned personal experiences, school and education, and local community issues such as needing more spaces for young people. There is a real sense of being grounded in their communities and wanting to see space and opportunities for themselves and their peers.

When asked who would they say these messages to, young people repeatedly said someone they trust and someone who will take action. There is an explicit ask for trusted adults, and part of that is someone they trust to make change and to take them seriously. Young people said they wanted their messages heard by systems and governments, parents and guardians, teachers and authority figures in their lives, professionals and ‘everyone’.

Throughout there is a feeling of ‘I don’t know’. Many young people were not sure what to say or who to speak to, and not feeling confident or knowing about what youth voice might mean for them.

Why is it important for young people to be heard?

We asked how important different aspects of youth voice and participation was to young people’s involvement, and overwhelmingly young people told us ‘safe spaces’ and ‘an adult I trust’. Confidence was also key as well as listening to others and team work: young people know how important advocacy as well as dialogue and problem solving are to meaningful participation.

The findings pinpoint the essential internal capacities (confidence, listening skills) and external conditions (trusted adults, safe spaces) young people themselves identify as crucial for effective participation.

Recommendations:

The project successfully engaged with a significant number of young people, capturing 522 responses, with over a third (35%) of participants engaging through targeted focus groups. These opportunities provided the project team with rich, qualitative insight into children and young people's experiences of Youth Voice, the ways in which they want to engage in opportunities and the barriers they currently face to engagement. We have heard what matters to them most, their experiences and their frustrations with current processes and systems.

Young people absolutely want to be involved in decision making, for themselves, their peers, their communities and for the betterment of future generations. They are passionate about issues that affect them as individuals and issues that have local, national and global reach.

Collaboratively, this project has culminated in 10 recommendations:

1. Shared Language, Model, and Framework: establish a unified approach to youth voice for the county.
2. Training for Professionals: high quality training for all staff and volunteers working with young people.
3. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-oppressive Practice: youth voice must be intertwined with challenging systemic barriers.
4. Training for Young People: provide skills based training to maximise confidence and effectiveness for your voice initiatives.
5. Trusted Adults: recognise the crucial role and resource required for trusted adults to support young people's engagement.
6. Safe and Brave Space: address the lack of targeted support and safe spaces for young people from marginalised groups.
7. Consistency for Youth Voice and Participation: a commitment to high-quality youth voice opportunities across the county.
8. Critical Feedback Loops: validate input and output accurately for young people involved in youth voice work.
9. Youth Network: develop a formal, structured network for ongoing consultation and feedback on county-wide issues.
10. Remuneration: recognise and compensate young people's time.

Introduction

Oxfordshire Youth (OY) is Oxfordshire’s leading youth charity, with a 78 year history of supporting young people and the youth sector in Oxfordshire. OY, with our partners, endeavour to ensure that best practice youth work is fully accessible and available to all young people. OY is uniquely placed at the centre of the youth work sector in Oxfordshire, delivering both grass-roots youth work as well as infrastructure support.

OY’s commitment to young people through the delivery of youth work is demonstrated through our mission:

Through the power of youth work, we transform young people’s lives, unite communities, and tackle inequality of opportunity.

Background:

In support of OY’s key priority for 2025: to “invest in a countywide youth participation model that expands youth-led decision-making”, Oxfordshire County Council provided a supporting grant to secure the delivery of a youth voice analysis for young people aged 8 -25.

This work also supports Oxfordshire County Council’s commitment to considering the wellbeing of Future Generations in all decision-making and acting in a manner which sought to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. A crucial element of this was to enable “citizens to participate in shaping their desired futures, especially next generation voices”. This work will support this ambition to hear from young people across Oxfordshire.

The youth voice analysis co-produced with young people combined:

- Qualitative and quantitative insights from young people in Oxfordshire
- A desktop review of existing research and data collected from young people (local and national)

The research aimed to ensure that decisions regarding the youth offer in Oxfordshire are grounded in young people’s lived experiences and align with youth-centred practices. This analysis captured the views of young people across all settings where they engage.

Outcomes

- a) Young Voices Report for Oxfordshire, including recommendations on strengthening meaningful youth voice across the county.
- b) Report and recommendations for Oxfordshire Youth's new youth voice strategy to strengthen its own youth participation, and to inform next steps for supporting meaningful youth participation across the county of Oxfordshire.
- c) Representatives from Oxfordshire County Council will engage with Oxfordshire Youth beyond the lifetime of this grant agreement in active consideration of the council's relationship with Oxfordshire in the context of supporting meaningful youth participation across the county.

Involving Young People

Engaging young people in meaningful participation is not only recognised in the values of OY, but is a right of children and young people. Article 12 from The UN Convention on the rights of the child guarantees the right of the child to give their view on decisions affecting them, and for those views to be given 'due weight' in line with their age and maturity. In order to ground this project on the rights of children and young people we took many steps to ensure that young people's voices were leading throughout.

At OY we are committed to embedding article 12 throughout all levels of the organisation, across strategy and programme delivery, in accordance with national best practice (NYA, UK Youth & Centre for Youth Voice). We believe that this approach ensures that there is meaningful benefit and impact for the individual, the organisation and the community.

The Individual:

- Empowerment and Agency: Giving young people a platform to express their views fosters a sense of control and ownership over their own lives and the programs that affect them.
- Skill Development: Participation in youth voice initiatives builds confidence, critical thinking, and leadership skills. Engaging with peers from diverse backgrounds promotes open-mindedness and broadens perspectives.
- Personal Growth: Young people develop a stronger sense of identity, passion, and purpose as they become involved in projects that reflect their own experiences and values.
- Mental Well-being: Youth voice work strengthens mental health by providing support, a sense of belonging, and validation for young people's opinions and experiences.

The Organisation:

- Innovation and Creativity: Young people bring fresh, digital-age perspectives to challenges, leading to innovative solutions that may be overlooked by adults working alone.
- Improved Programmes and Policies: Authentic insights from young people ensure that programmes and services are more engaging, relevant, and meet real needs rather than assumptions about what young people want.
- Increased Engagement and Inclusivity: By creating engaging opportunities and involving young people in decision-making, organisations see greater participation, more positive experiences, and more inclusive services.

The Community:

- Stronger Communities: Youth voice and volunteering build stronger connections to the community, fostering engaged and active citizenship.
- Future-Focused Solutions: Involving young people with their creativity, energy, and fresh perspectives allows communities to explore new approaches and build a sustainable future.
- Fundamental Human Right: Youth voice is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which emphasises children's right to have their views heard and considered in matters affecting them.

The fundamental principle of the Youth Voice Project was to be youth-led. With this at the forefront of the project team's focus, we embarked on a process of recruiting young people for the co-production of the entire project's design, delivery, review, analysis, and evaluation.

“Co-production is a way of working, where everybody works together on an equal basis to create a service which works for them all. Co-production is a process that involves citizens in the design and delivery of services.”
[Social Care Institute for Excellence]

‘Co-production with young people is a collaborative model of working in which researchers, service providers and other relevant stakeholders work together with young people to develop research, policy, and interventions...

Co-production also allows young people to realise their right to participate in decision-making affecting their lives.’
[Pavarini & Parker, 2023] [1]

Youth Voice Champions:

Six young people from across Oxfordshire were recruited as Youth Voice Champions. As part of the project team, they worked with OY for seven months, co-producing work to undertake a broad Youth Voice analysis.

Their reasons for being involved in the project include:

- Wanting to change systems so that children and young people are listened to and their voices have impact and create change.
- Having a greater understanding of how and why young people want to be involved in decision making and their experience of current systems.
- To listen to and represent young people in Oxfordshire because of our personal experience of being 'unheard' and to make sure future young people are heard.

This report is shared with Oxfordshire County Council, District Councils, Schools and the Voluntary and Community Sectors who extensively support young people across Oxfordshire. The findings and recommendations will directly inform the development of the county's future Youth Voice Strategy.

This work represents a significant step toward ensuring that young people's voices are not only heard but actively shape the decisions and services that affect them.

Research Methods

What did we do?



Desk research



Focus groups



Survey



Creative activities

522
young people
took part

Co-production:

The project team collectively believe young people should be meaningfully involved in shaping the systems, policies, procedures and services that impact them and this collaborative initiative has been designed to ensure that those who are ‘unheard’ and ‘underrepresented’ are reached.

Over the timeline of the project, the Youth Voice Champions met weekly and developed skills and knowledge to support their engagement in co-production. They co-produced the research methodology, and analysis, delivered focus groups, presented ongoing findings, and developed recommendations, ensuring the process was youth-led and authentic. All information gathered has been used anonymously to protect participant privacy while capturing genuine perspectives from young people throughout Oxfordshire.

The Youth Voice Champions time and commitment was recognised through remuneration.

Desktop research:

- We commissioned Research Oxford to support the desktop research and create a literature review, outlining the existing landscape of Youth Voice and decision making nationally and in Oxfordshire.
- This review will supplement our findings and connections to the wider local and national landscape.
- The full report is included in Appendix 2.

Survey, Conversation Corners, Creative Activities and Vox Pops:

In order to overcome barriers to engagement the project team worked together to identify a number of methods to gather feedback to increase the accessibility of opportunities.

Survey:

Questions were co-produced alongside the Youth Voice Champions and methods to distribute the survey identified to expand reach:

- Co-produced an online survey with Young People: this comprised 10 questions about youth voice: how young people want to be heard, how they wish to contribute to decision-making, what skills they need to participate effectively, and the current barriers preventing their engagement. The questions were a mix of open-ended and multiple choice questions, with most being marked as mandatory. Questions collecting information about characteristics of young people have been designed in line with wider OY's demographic data collection and EDI strategy. These questions were not mandatory. (See Appendix 1)

Survey design and distribution:

- The research questions were co-designed alongside the Youth Voice Champions. These questions formed the basis of the research via a mixed-methods approach. This included the survey, both online or in person; focus groups; creative activity sessions and targeted outreach.
- The answers have been collated to create a singular data set, quantifying the complexity of the methods of outreach.
- Created an easy read version for accessibility and to increase targeted reach.
- Included a prize draw incentive to encourage participation and recognise young people's contributions and time..
- Voluntary demographic information was produced to identify the range of voices and trends in feedback.
- Direct targeted emails sent to over 120 organisations, including schools and alternative education providers across Oxfordshire.

- Distributed via OY's sectorwide communications, (reaching 687 professionals working with young people).
- Shared on social media targeting both professionals (to share) and young people directly.
- Visits to targeted organisations to directly distribute the survey and supported young people's engagement.

Conversations corner and creative activity design and distribution:

- Youth work approach adopted
- Graffiti boards highlighting the research questions, facilitated discussion and recording of findings by young people and the project team.
- Creative activities including tie-die, friendship bracelet making and stressball making delivered at youth provisions during summer holidays. Building relationships and providing opportunities for informal conversations with young people to take place (voluntary participation)

Vox Pops design and distribution:

- When visiting youth provision: audio and video options were available for young people to engage in feedback
- An Interactive and accessible way for young people to engage in the process
- Barriers to engagement: young people did not want to be recorded with image or audio, this was hard to deliver without established relationships with young people.
- Young people not wanting to be identified alongside the feedback they provide to adults and an organisation they didn't have a relationship with

Targeted Participation (we targeted our efforts):

A priority of the project was to focus efforts and resources on engaging 'unheard' or 'under-represented' voices, with the aim of gathering feedback that reflects the diverse lived experiences of children and young people across Oxfordshire.

Through targeted communications and outreach, groups and organisations supporting children and young people who may be considered marginalised were contacted to promote engagement opportunities. Groups identified include:

- LGBTQIA+ young people
- Young people from the global majority
- Young carers
- Care leavers and looked after children
- Young people with learning disabilities
- Young people engaged in alternate education

Participation was monitored throughout the project. To further boost response rates, Oxfordshire Youth’s team carried out a series of active outreach activities, including direct emails to key contacts in organisations, schools, and alternative provision. This involved utilising relationships with professionals to galvanise support and encourage children and young people to take part in the survey, alongside a social media campaign targeting schools and voluntary sector organisations.

Focus groups and supported conversations ran in the following organisations and schools:

- EMBS Community College
- Train Youth
- Get Fed
- Targeted Youth Support Service
- Leys CDI
- Yellow Submarine
- SOFEA
- Inspire Sounds
- Trax
- Distraction Youth and Community Project
- Parasol
- Radley Young Men’s Project
- OY Digital Futures Project
- OY Wellbeing at Work Project
- St Joseph’s Primary School Banbury
- Wheatley Primary School

The project achieved significant engagement, successfully capturing 522 responses from young people. A critical component of this success was the use of targeted focus groups, which reached over 180 young people—representing over a third (35%) of all participants. These focused opportunities were instrumental in providing the project team with rich, qualitative insight into young people’s actual experiences of Youth Voice, effectively amplifying the overall narrative with authentic, real voices and perspectives.

Limitations and challenges:

As with any research project, it is necessary to outline the limitations to the findings and identify challenges that may have occurred during the process.

The project team implemented a mixed method approach, utilising creative ways to encourage as many organisations to participate, however not all did. It is also possible that there were additional opportunities for children and young people, which were not reached through the methods described and therefore did not get a chance to participate in the exercise.

- Potentially due to capacity, resource, and survey fatigue, there was mixed engagement from schools and organisations across the county.
- As a result of the complexities around access to provision, due to capacity and resource, the opportunities and support for encouraging young people to participate varied.
- Across the county and the sector, there are different understandings of Youth Voice and Participation language and terminology. This may have impacted how practitioners and young people engaged with the survey and research methods.
- Despite efforts for targeted outreach, there are some gaps in our demographic reach, namely from: LGBTQIA+ young people, aged 19 - 25, Global Majority young people, Young Carers, and Young People who are cared for.
- This may be attributed to capacity of targeted provisions and organisations, as well as the wider socio-political context. Many young people chose not to provide personal information, thereby creating a gap in the knowledge of who we have reached, and this may also correspond to young people with different lived experiences choosing not to participate, due to feelings around data sharing and safety.
- The wider local, regional and national social and political climate has also been incredibly heightened, particularly in discourses of gender, race, religion, (dis)ability and sexuality. This may have impacted young people who are queer, disabled, gender diverse, and/or of the Global Majority in feeling safe or motivated to participate, or share personal information.

Our Participants

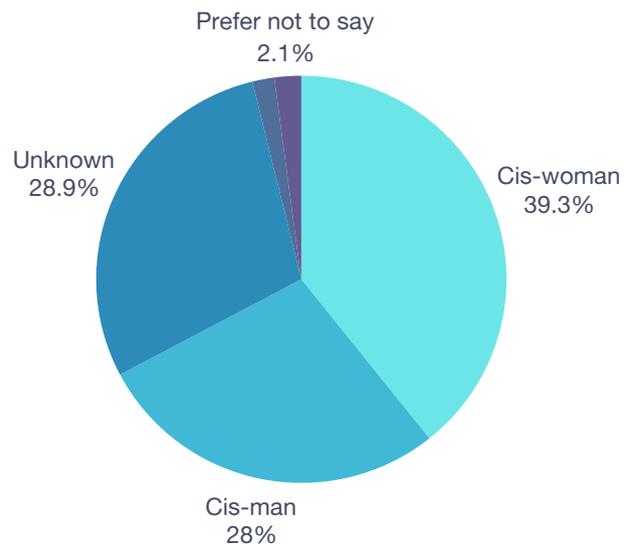
We collected demographic data for our participants. These questions were always optional and young people had the option to self identify ('tell us in your own words') and select multiple answers. Young people at times responded by questioning the need for this information for example by answering 'why does this matter' or by explicitly stating that this was private: "I'm not telling you" or "You don't need to know" or "That's personal".

This may in part be due to the wider socio-political climate around identity and / or around privacy, data collection and hacking. This is important context, particularly for young people who are trans or gender diverse, migrants, have lived experience of race or religion which is marginalised or who are disabled.

During the research the project team reviewed the gaps in data and further targeted their efforts to engage focus groups whom were representative of Oxfordshire's demographics and those with lived experience of marginalisation.

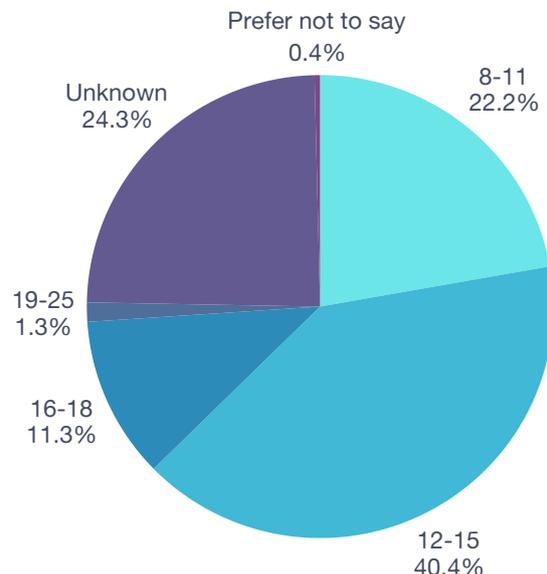
Gender:

Around 2% of young people identify as trans or gender diverse.



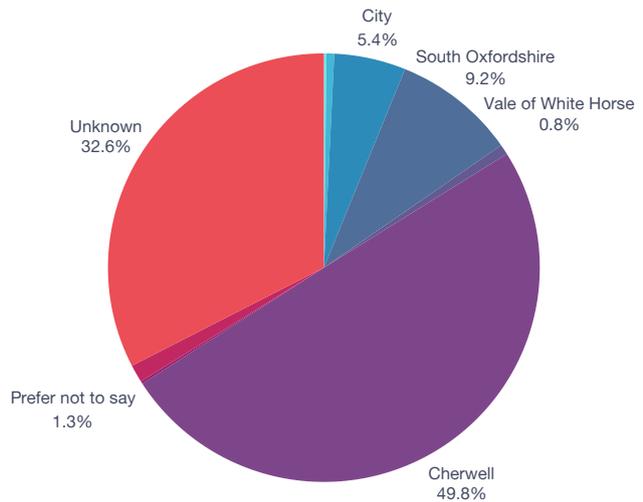
Age:

The majority of young people who disclosed their age are 12-15, with notable lower participation from 19-25 year olds.



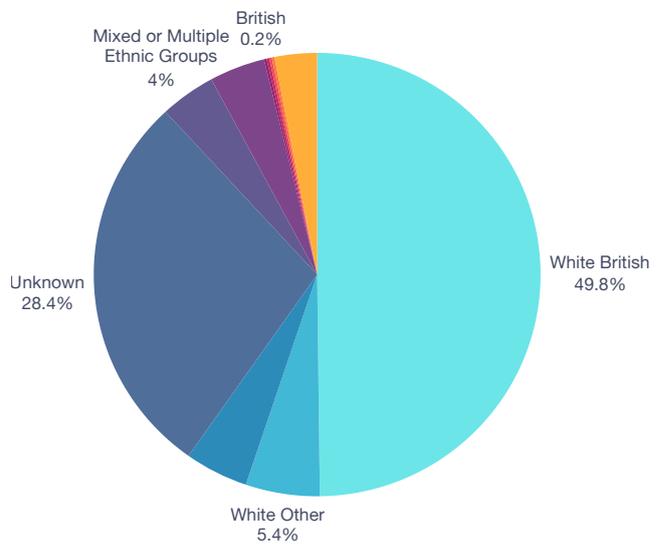
District:

We asked young people for the first part of their postcodes. This was corresponded with district councils.



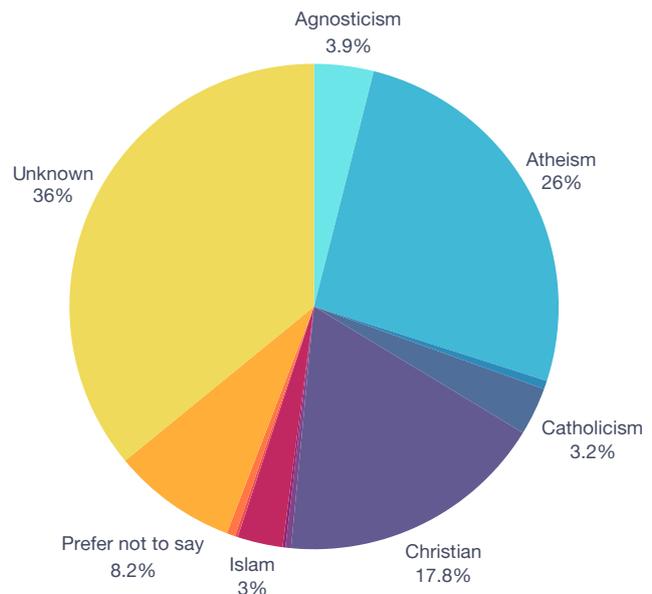
Ethnicity:

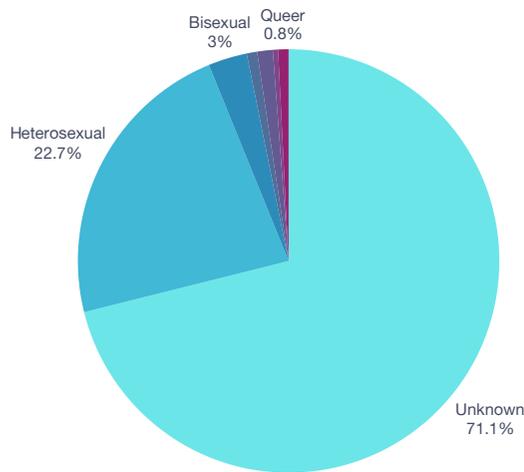
Around 18-19% of young people we spoke belong to an ethnicity or racial identity which may be marginalised or racialised as an 'other'. There are notable gaps from young people who belong to Traveller or Gypsy communities and Latinx identities.



Religion:

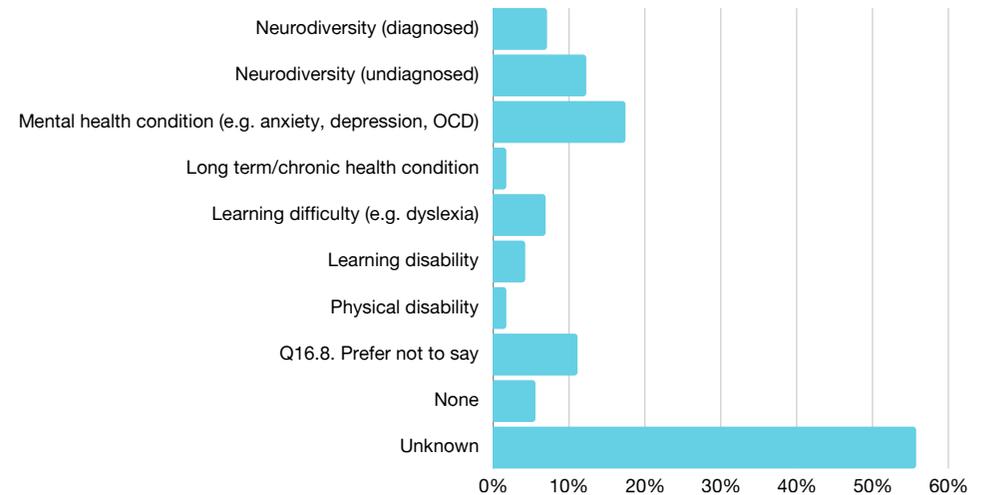
Notably low participation is from those who ascribe to Judaism, Sikhism, Buddhism or Hinduism.





Sexuality:

A large proportion of young people chose not to answer this question, selected prefer not to say or answered that they did not understand the question. Whilst an open question was given to allow freedom for young people to self-identify, this may have resulted in many young people not understanding the question or interpreting it as gender identity. Only answers that clearly indicated an identification a / multiple sexualities have been categorised, others have been grouped into 'unknown'. Around 7% identify as LGBTQIA+.



(Dis)ability and Neurodivergence:

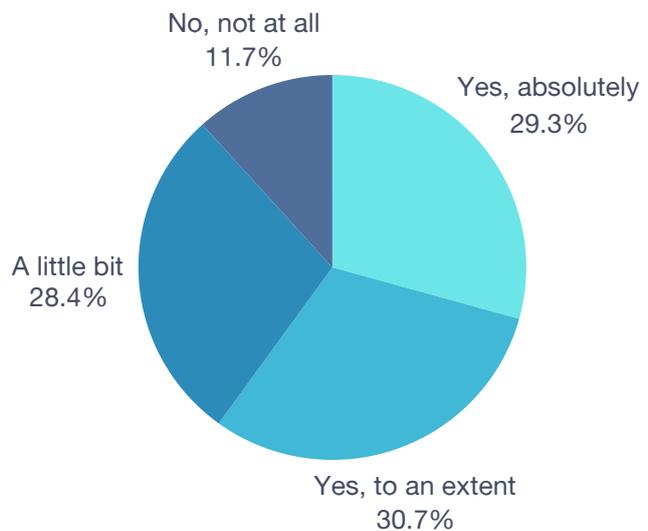
A large group of young people did not specify whether they did not identify with any of the categories listed or explain in their own words. It is plausible that a proportion of the 'unknown' are young people who do not identify with having any of the following, however this cannot be known.

Young people in this question often selected more than one option: the percentage reflects the number of young people, not the number of responses, thereby the total does not equal 100%.

Findings

Do you want to be part of decisions that affect you?

88% young people want to be involved in decision making



“I want to be heard, I want to create change, not just follow people's instructions - be part of them”
[12 year old]

88% of the 522 surveyed reported wanting to be part of the decisions that affect their lives to some degree. This figure is not only indicative of general interest in being involved, but also represents a clear desire for youth voice and participation.

Nearly 2 in 3 young people want to be involved to an extent or absolutely, The intensity of the desire suggests that traditional methods of consultation (simply asking for opinions) are insufficient. There requires a shift towards co-production models where young people are genuine partners in designing and delivering solutions.

“I think that being a part of decisions that affect me is really important as people my age are the next generation. Being able to have input into systems and policies that are going to affect us is really important”
[17 year old]

When asked why, young people consistently told us, “it’s important to me” and they want to “help adults make decisions that reflect young people’s needs and wishes”.

“We (young people) will live with the decisions in the future so any decisions big or small will have a major effect. It is fair that everyone is involved as we may have different views to older generations so it just makes life better for everyone”
[17 year old]

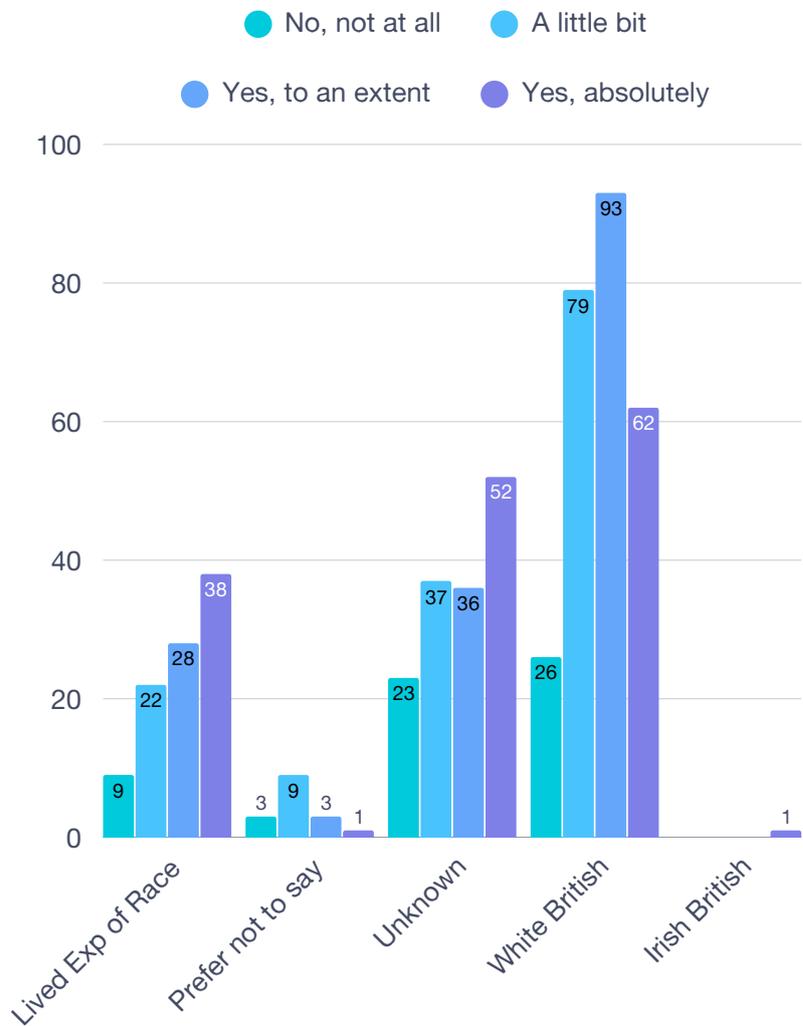
With such a significantly high number of children and young people wanting to be involved in decision making it is imperative that there are opportunities, systems and structures available for them to participate. Not only do they want to be heard they want for their voice to have an impact and create change.

Do you want to be part of decisions that affect you?

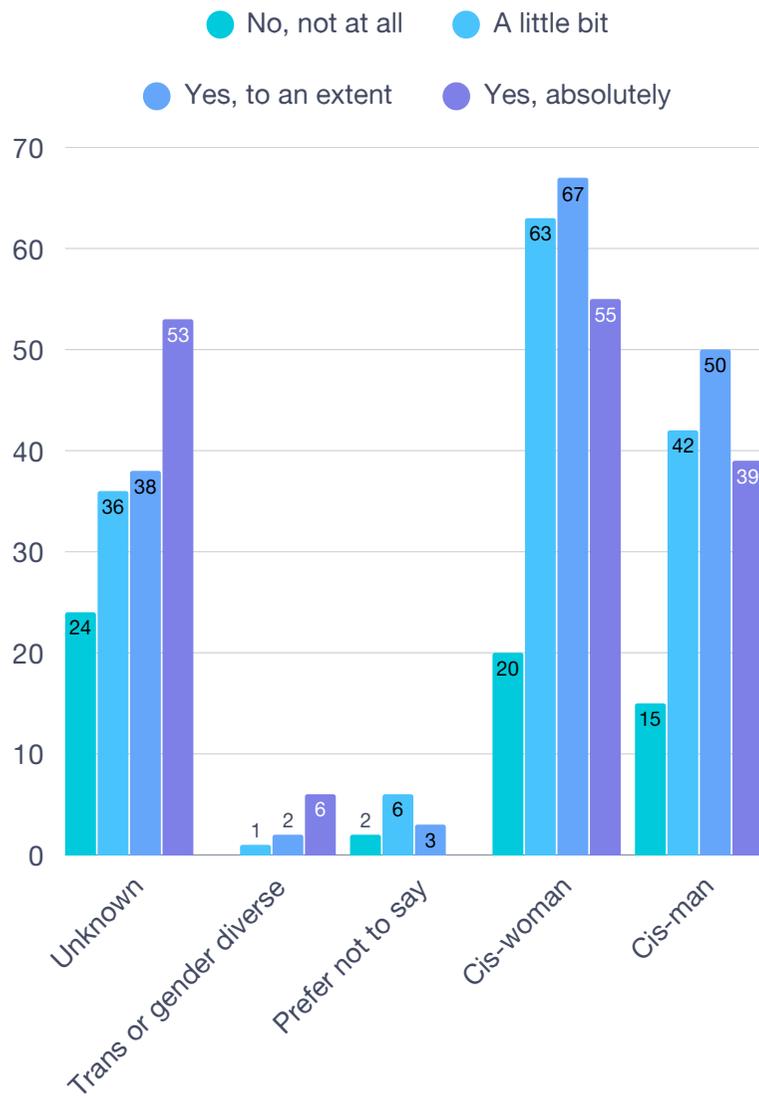
It was important to cross-analyse our data to map trends for young people with different lived experiences.

Due to the varying degrees of engagement from different areas and young people with different lived experiences, this data has been grouped to allow for more robust comparisons. Still, it is necessary to use with caution and understand that this data reflects counts rather than percentages or averages across demographic data.

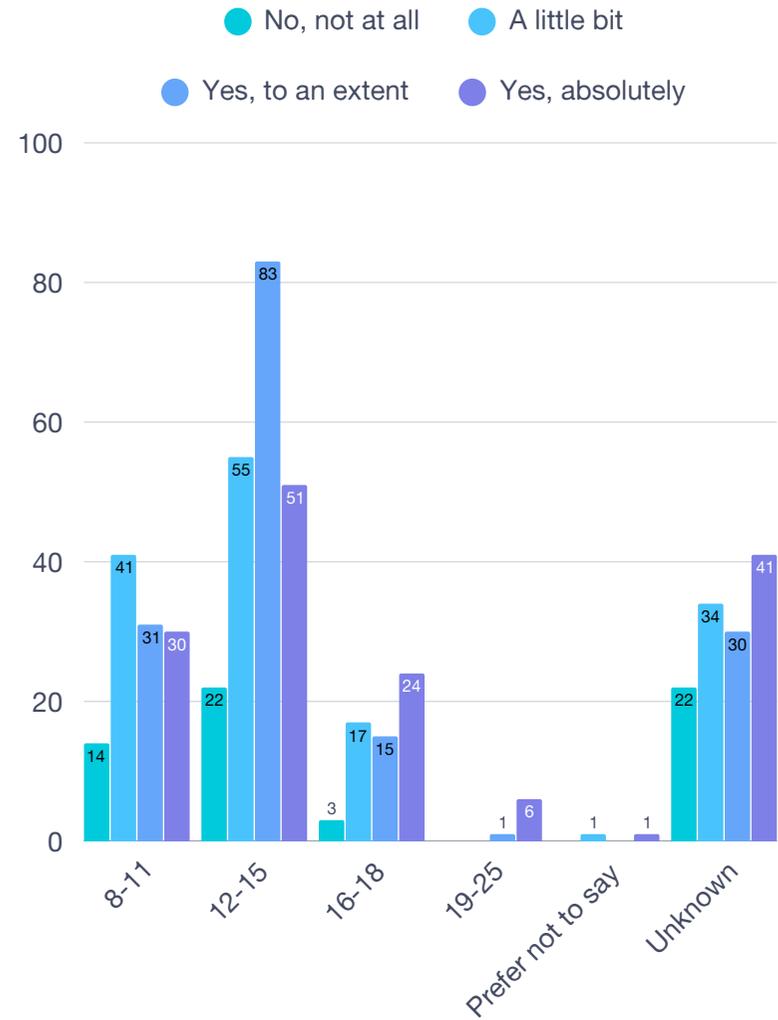
Ethnicity



Do you want to be part of decisions that affect you?

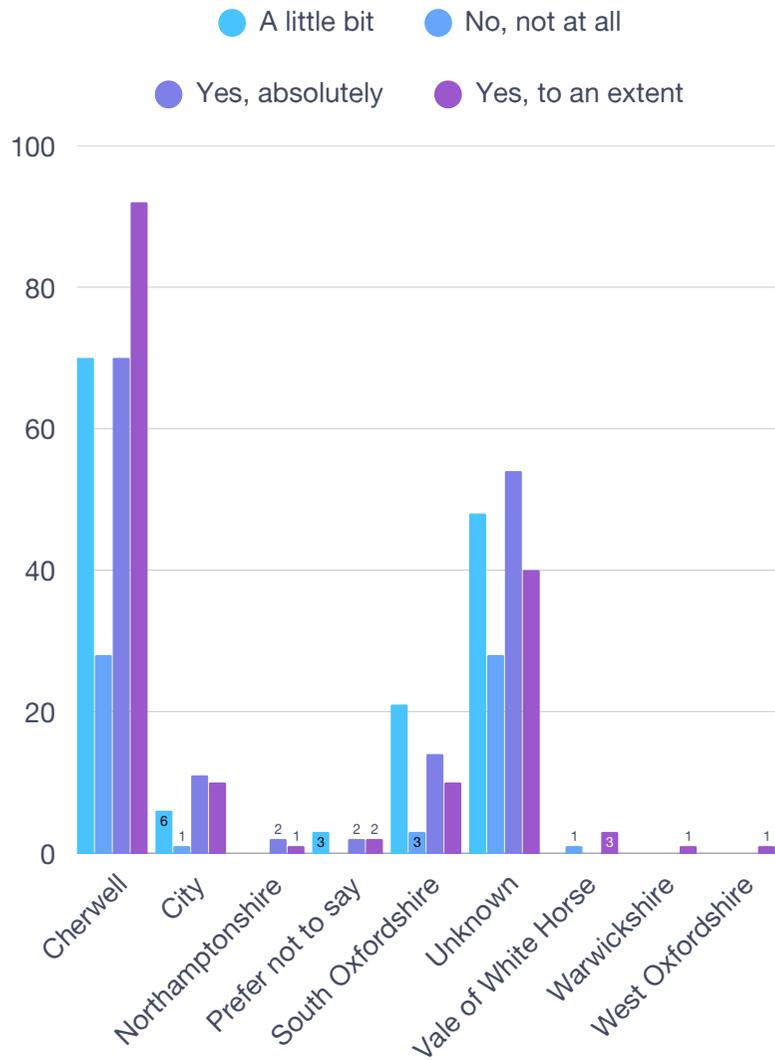


Gender



Age

Do you want to be part of decisions that affect you?



District



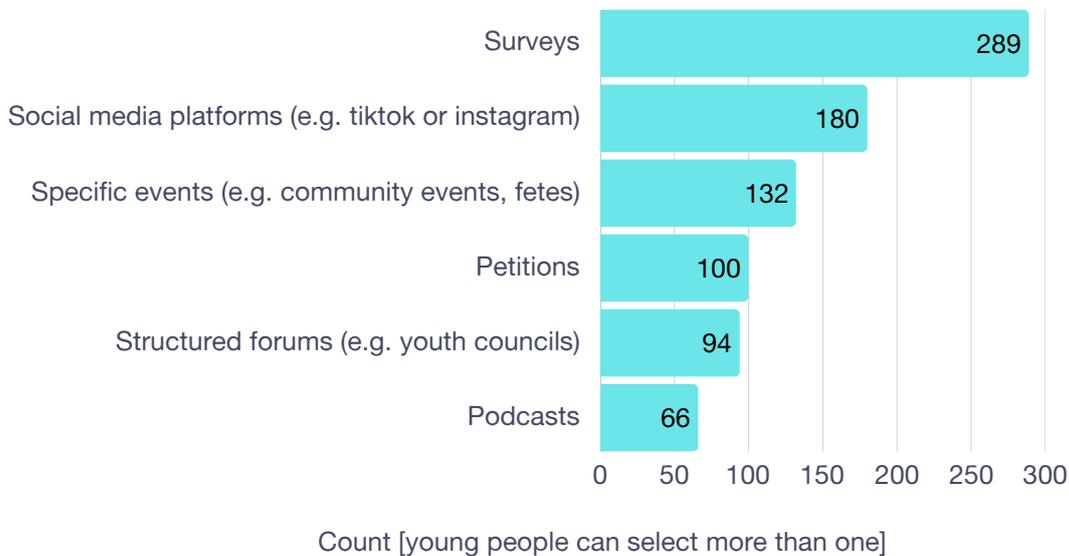
Do you want to be part of decisions that affect you?: A National Perspective

The Diana Award published a report in 2024, which looked at the role of youth voice in UK politics. Authors reported that little research existed into young people's perspectives, experiences, and desires linked to youth voice in politics. Young people involved in the research reported a deep-seated disillusionment with political engagement for young people. They felt that their ability to contribute was underestimated and they wanted to see more meaningful and inclusive opportunities to participate in politics. It was also reported that young people felt there was a need for better political education in schools, a more diverse representation in decision-making groups, and genuine engagement between young people and politicians.

Desk research undertaken by Research Oxford (Appendix 2)

This national perspective reinforces the importance of the project's local findings and suggest that there is a need to build skills and confidence for civic participation and Youth Voice from the ground up in Oxfordshire.

How do you want your voice to be HEARD?



Surveys: The Preference for Privacy and Pace

- 55% of the 522 young people want to be heard through the use of surveys. This preference highlights the value young people place on anonymity and privacy when responding to questions, particularly on potentially sensitive topics related to their lives, services, or well-being. It enables participation at their own pace and in their own spaces, removing the pressure, or time constraints associated with live group discussions. This method is crucial for gathering honest, broad quantitative data.
- It is important to note that this result may contain survivorship bias. Many young people took part exclusively through the survey, and so their participation has relied on this being an accessible and useful means for them to provide feedback. It may also be a method that young people are familiar with already.

Social Platforms and Media: Reaching Young People Where They Are

- 34% of young people reported that they would like to be involved through the use of social platforms and media. This demonstrates an interest in utilising platforms young people already inhabit daily (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, dedicated apps) as channels for input.
- Social platforms and media offer advantages in speed, visual engagement, and accessibility. They allow for creative and informal methods of feedback, such as quick polls, interactive stories, and short video submissions, making engagement feel less formal and more integrated into their daily routine.

Community Events: Participation in Own Spaces

- 25% reported that they would engage in Youth Voice and decision-making activities through specific events, in their communities, and in their own spaces, indicating that young people value participation that is localised and familiar.
- Participation in community events or their "own spaces" (like existing youth clubs, schools, or local hangouts) removes travel barriers and the potential intimidation of formal institutional settings.
- This is supplemented by qualitative answers which continually ask for adults "to come to us". This method naturally integrates Youth Voice into existing trusted networks and peer groups, boosting attendance and allowing for richer, face-to-face qualitative interaction within a comfortable environment.

'Outreach, meet us where we hang out' - [young person]

'Come to us, it's less scary to say what I want'. [15 year old]

'Just talk to people'. 'Have conversations' [9 year old]

Structured Formats: Lower than Expected Engagement

- Structured forums and youth councils received lower than expected ratings with 18% of responses. This suggests these formats may be perceived as inaccessible to many young people, as too formal, bureaucratic, or time-consuming. This data strongly supports investing in creative and flexible engagement methods over solely relying on traditional, structured youth bodies.
- With 50% of responses placing importance on trusted adults and 55% emphasizing safe spaces, there is a clear need for youth voice formats to be delivered in environments that are physically and psychologically safe for young people. This requires opportunities be facilitated by adults who are allocated the necessary time and resources to genuinely build trusting relationships, thereby ensuring that truly meaningful and impactful engagement opportunities can be successfully delivered.
- The focus groups interactions and conversations that accompanied this finding revealed that the language around forums, youth councils and boards is inaccessible; A lack of clarity and youth friendly language inhibits their understanding and opportunities for engagement. Youth Forums, Council and Boards also often lack the flexibility, anonymity, and community-embedded nature that young people prefer.

"youth talking to the government" [12 year old]

- To successfully use these structured formats, language needs to reflect young people's understanding and realities and they must be redesigned to feel less formal and rigid, perhaps by integrating elements from their preferred methods.
- The current absence of a shared experience, language, and model related to Youth Voice and Participation is problematic because it leads to inconsistency, confusion, and tokenism across different organisations and initiatives within the county. This highlights the need for more well established and accessible terminology and application of approaches and models.

If you don't want to be part of decisions that affect you, why?



People Don't Listen:

- This data provides insight into the barriers young people experience with existing youth voice and participation processes. 32% report that people don't listen, this is rooted in their perception that their input will not be taken seriously or lead to tangible outcomes. This signals a breakdown in the "feedback loop" and a lack of visible "influence".

"I feel that children's voices will not be heard" or "Its because its my privacy and I don't feel like sharing it to anyone because I don't trust a lot of people (except best friend)." [11 year old]

"People don't listen to Children" [10 year old] or "I feel that children's voices will not be heard" [12 year old]

Nothing will change:

- Tied closely to the belief that people don't listen, 32% of respondents reported that nothing will change. This response reflects dissatisfaction and a belief that the system is resistant to change. Children and young people are often willing to participate if they can see a link between their effort and an outcome. When they repeatedly see no visible impact or when promised changes fail to materialise, they develop a sense of learned helplessness and lack of power and influence. This response highlights the need for clear feedback loops and the publication of visible, tangible results that directly resulted from young peoples input.

'Things take too long' [17 year old] or 'Adults expect too much of my time' [young person]

Uncertainty about Outcomes:

- 18% were uncertain about the outcomes, this suggests a lack of transparency or clarity regarding the purpose of the youth voice participation exercise. If young people are unsure what their engagement is trying to achieve or how their input will be used, they are less likely to invest their time and energy.
- This uncertainty may also reflect a fear of the unknown outcome, potentially linked to the fear of being judged or exposed in a non-safe space. This barrier requires improving communication and setting clear expectations about the scope and potential influence of their involvement before they participate.

“too much responsibility, worried about making the wrong decisions, influenced by other people, need more knowledge, might get dismissed anyway”

[15 year old]

“I want to be involved, but topics should be explained to us”

[16 year old]

- These findings collectively highlight a cycle of non-participation: The lack of perceived influence leads to disappointment, which leads to a refusal to participate, resulting in young people experiencing limited impact and the occurrence of change. To break this cycle, the focus must shift from simply asking for views to fundamentally sharing power and demonstrating influence.

“Lack of self confidence”

[12 year old]

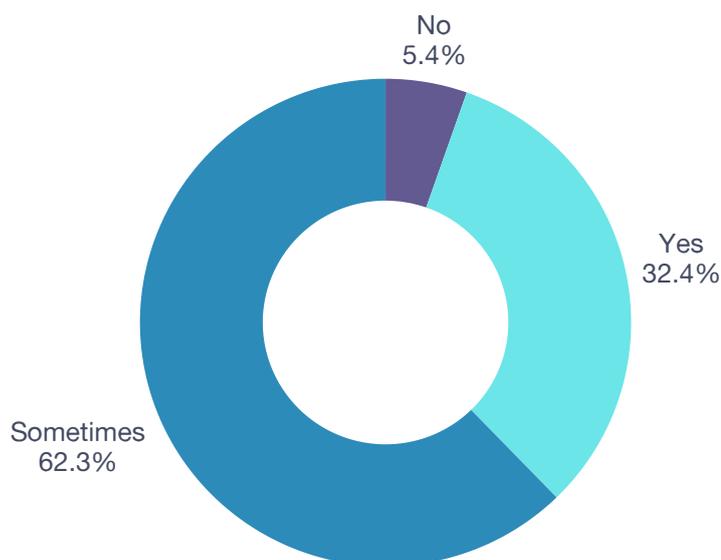


The project's findings regarding young people feeling unheard are strongly supported by independent local authority research. Desk research undertaken by Research Oxford (Appendix 2) aligns directly with these conclusions, particularly citing the West Oxfordshire District Council Youth Needs Assessment 2022. This comprehensive assessment, based on surveys of young people and parents, collected a significant 3,886 responses. Just under half (46.3%) reported feeling that 'their voice was not heard', with some having the impression that adults thought 'young people were not mature enough to have an opinion'. The main challenges reported by the young people regarding their participation were:

- Not being heard or ignored
- Not being understood
- Not being taken seriously
- Having high expectations and pressure put on them
- Adults having negative perceptions of youth or ascribing stereotypes
- Adults relating their own experiences of youth which may be no longer relevant due to societal and political changes.

The direct correlation in the research informs us that whilst young people want to be involved in decision making they currently feel undervalued, undermined and disempowered in the services that should support them, in their communities and in wider societal systems.

Do you feel listened to by adults in your life?



- 95% of young people feel listened to by adults in their life. This overwhelmingly positive figure points to the strength and reliability of young people's personal support networks. This includes parents, guardians, key family members, trusted teachers, youth workers.
- The 5% who do not feel listened to by adults in their life represents a small but vulnerable group. For these young people, the lack of a primary trusted adult creates heightened risk and signals the need for targeted external support and advocacy that extends beyond school settings, potentially involving community connectors, mentors, coaches 'trusted adults'.
- It is necessary to use this finding with caution, with 2 in 3 young people only feeling listened to some of the time.

**“Well a handful of people listen to me.”
[11 year old]**

**“Only Sometimes - I would like a proper chat and to feel listened to.”
[11 year old]**

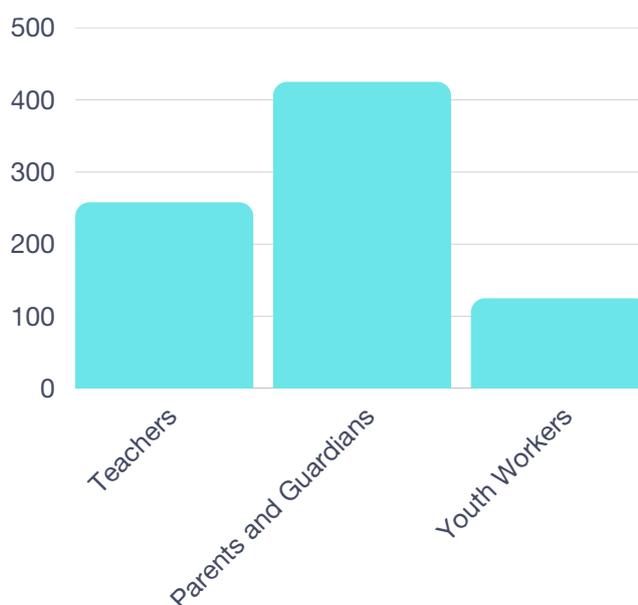
Who listens to you?

“People who know me”
[17 year old]

“Other young people”
[15 year old]

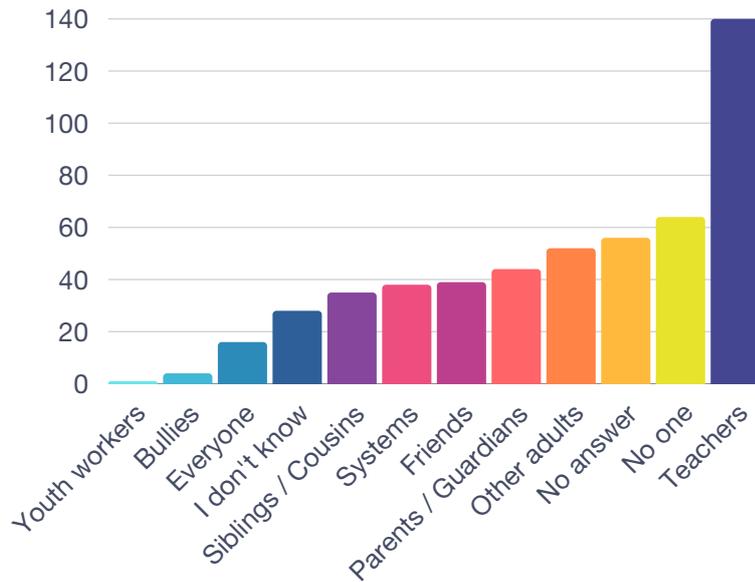
“Youth workers - feels like they care. Sometimes ideas aren't possible but they tell you”
[young person]

“no-one, they listen but don't understand”
[16 year old]



- 81% report that they are listened to by Parents and Guardians
 - This high figure confirms that family relationships are the primary source of personal validation and a secure space for sharing views and feelings. Parents and guardians fulfil the role of the most trusted adults in a young person's life, as they typically offer consistent, long-term support and have a deep investment in the young person's well-being.
- 49% feel that they are listened to by teachers
 - This figure falling to just under half indicates that, while teachers hold a vital role and many are effective listeners, the institutional context of the school introduces barriers. Schools are often perceived as places of formal authority, assessment, and discipline, which can make young people hesitant to express personal or critical views.
- 24% of young people feel that they are listened to by Youth Workers
 - This notably low figure, representing less than a quarter of the young people, highlights a significant gap for community-based support professionals. While youth workers often operate in less formal settings than schools, this result suggests two possibilities:
 - Low Visibility/Reach: A large number of young people may not regularly encounter or access youth services, meaning the percentage reflects those who have access, but their overall reach is limited.
 - Perceived Effectiveness Gap: Even among those who do engage, the perceived quality of listening may be low, perhaps due to high staff turnover, limited time, or a focus on activity management over genuine, deep engagement and support.
- Additional answers from young people reflected trusted adults including extended family members, support workers, therapists, social workers, or volunteers, as well as other young people or peers. Some youth work organisations are named as well as an instance of a young person feeling listened to by their MP.

Who does not listen to you and why?



*Qualitative answers were grouped to quantify this question. Total quantified answers is 490. Total will be higher as some answers are in multiple categories. Additional answers did not mention 'who' or could not be quantified.

Why?

- Key themes include

- Age: young people continually reference being 'young' as a source of feeling dismissed by adults in their lives including teachers, parents/guardian, professionals and positions of authority. This is also mentioned in reference to technology use, ideas not being important, and intelligence.
- Access / support needs: some young people specifically reference neurodivergence as a source of feeling misunderstood and ignored.
- I don't know: many young people didn't know how to answer this question or have explicitly stated they don't know why adults don't listen to them
- Emotions: at times this is a source of frustration and elsewhere there is a level of empathy and understanding for adults who are busy, or people who do not listen in moments of heightened emotions.
- Adults are too busy: there is repeated mention of teachers, headteachers, parents/guardians and sometimes friends being "too busy".

“Most SEND professionals because most think I am stupid, the government, school because people think because I dress differently, am neurodivergent, have childish hobbies I am not worthy of being listened to”

[13 year old]

“Teachers, friends, youth workers. They don't understand my thoughts and why I feel that way.”

[young person]

“people and because they don't think my/sisters/families view is relevant”

[13 year old]

If you were to be listened to, what would you say?

Young people raised a wide range of topics and issues, and throughout it is clear that youth voice is key: both in terms of their own lives, spaces and communities and also for socio-political issues on a national and global scale. Young people have things to say and want to see change happen.

“Why are all the adults just talking about problems and saying it's up to young people to solve them, without doing anything or giving any ways we can solve them. adults need to lead by example. The current education system is bad - both for teachers and students.”

[23 year old]

Key issues include:

- Social and political climate: Around 40% of issues raised were around social action, system change or community issues. Young people repeatedly wrote with empathy and care for others, often on a systemic scale.
- Systemic issues include: climate change, conflict and humanitarian crises, access to housing and affordability, education and the curriculum, and identity.

**“We need to do more about climate change and protect nature.
We need to promote kindness - end racism, sexism and homophobia.”**

[13 year old]

“I would explain how society affects me as an autistic teenager and what I want to be done to support myself and others like me”

[16 year old]

“Trans rights now, end the genocide in Gaza, fix the NHS, allow students a greater place at the table when designing curriculums, prioritise limiting climate change.”

[17 years old]

- This is also often in reference to lived experience around race and ethnicity, disability and neurodiversity, and gender identity.

“We need to help and free the women and children of Congo and Sudan AND Afghanistan, the people of Palestine, Syria and so on because its literally the 21st century and there's still people who fight for land that was never supposed to be assigned to anyone. Humanity wouldn't have been so bad if humans didn't exist.”

[13 year old]

A report published by The Duke of Edinburgh's Award asked 3,662 young people aged 14-25 to provide their opinions on what is important to them. The main findings highlighted that, in general, young people were driven by global issues such as climate change and human rights, however they were more likely to feel worried about issues that were more local, including housing costs, the NHS, especially access to mental health support, and the economy, including rising costs of living and employment opportunities.

Desk research undertaken by Research Oxford (Appendix 2)

This national evidence is strongly aligned with the local perspective on both issues that young people feel are important to them and youth voice and participation, confirming that the challenges and desired solutions identified in Oxfordshire reflect wider trends.

- Personal experiences:
 - Around 20% were categorised as personal experiences, such as identity, emotions, family relationships, dreams and hobbies. Young people said “I would tell anyone about my feelings” or “I would share my feelings about what I think should happen regarding problems surrounding me” [15 years old].
 - This highlights the importance of consistently listening to young people and showing genuine interest in what they have to say. By doing so, we ensure that when they need to share something that requires actions or support, they already have trusted adults in their lives who they know will listen and take action.

“Be kind and respectful to others, listen to their thoughts and if something is wrong at home try and support them.”

[11 year old]

- School and Education: Reflecting the age and current circumstances of young people who took part and their life stage, these comments around self-identity, bullying, phone use, school uniform, and hobbies are an insight into the ways youth voice can function in different spaces throughout young people's lives.
 - Young people want to see both systemic changes to the education system and more immediate changes in their schools environments around things such as uniform, discipline, bullying, mental health and lesson content.

“The school system have failed so many people, including those children with an EHCP. Social workers don't see young people's point of view.”
[young person]

- There are often specific suggestions for changes in school policies, timetables and discipline: “I suggest that we have a longer lunch or a second break throughout the day. Also I think that when students are late there should be a warning system instead of an immediate late mark or detention, I believe this because when teachers are late there is no consequences for them and yet it is far more important that they are there to teach the lesson.” [12 year old].

“School is too early, our brains can't work properly that early. School needs to start worrying about bullying and mental health more instead of the uniform.”
[young person]

- Local Community: Spaces for young people and access to groups and activities. Young people are asking for safe spaces and better opportunities in their areas: “I want more safe spaces and support”.

“I would ask to have a place where teenagers can go to study and have a drink if there isn't a place at home where they can work. I would like all teenagers to have opportunities to do well and have a place where they can meet other people in a similar situation.”
[15 year old]

“We need more safe spaces for younger people like me/ more sport facilities.”
[11 year old]

“We need people to be given chances in open spaces to allow children to talk about things that affect them.”
[15 year old]

Who would you say it to?

When asked who they would relay these messages to, young people consistently said they want to be listened to by someone they trust, someone who can take action, and that they are thinking broadly about who hears their messages. The word trust is particularly important: young people can name adults in their lives they trust such as support workers or friend's parents, and when they don't, there is an explicit ask for:

“someone I could TRUST” [12 year old] or “Someone who understands me” [10 year old]

Young people want to be heard by:

- The government, politicians, local and county councils
- Parents, guardians and other family members
- Teachers and people in positions of authority in schools
- Professionals such as counsellors, coaches, healthcare professionals
- Trusted adults including professionals, youth workers and support workers
- Everyone!

“If I were to be listened to, I would want to speak to the people who make decisions that directly affect young people’s lives — such as local council leaders, school staff, healthcare professionals, and youth service organisers. I would share my views with them because they have the power to make changes that improve opportunities, support, and wellbeing for young people in Oxfordshire. I would also want to speak to community groups and organisations that work with young people, to help them understand what matters most to us and how they can make services more accessible and inclusive.”

[17 year old]

Throughout young people are asking for “anyone who would listen” and “anyone who can make a change not a small change that has no effect a big big change that gives us what we want”. There is a real emphasis on someone taking their voices seriously, taking the time to listen, and acting as a result.

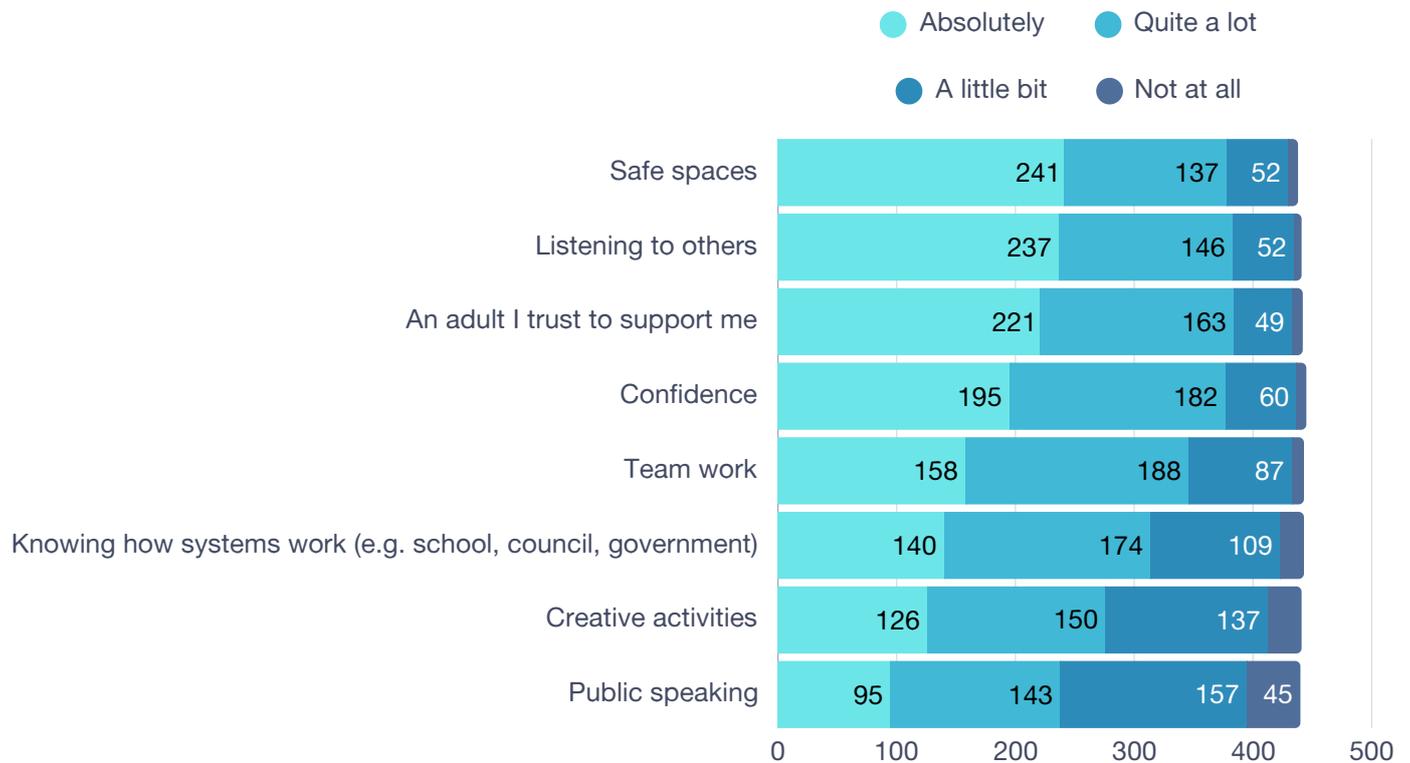
**“Any teacher that will listen and is willing to change their way of teaching”
[young person]**

There is also a recurring theme of young people, not knowing or not feeling confident about who they can speak to.

“ I don’t know - I think that's the problem I'm not sure who would actually listen and like deeply reflect on it not just brush it off or parrot it like 'the youth voice is so special listen to this.”

[23 year old]

How important are the following things to help young people be heard?



- 85% of young people said confidence is absolutely or quite important. This high figure affirms that self-assurance is a fundamental prerequisite for speaking up in any setting, particularly in formal or institutional environments. This may lead to young people being hesitant to assert their views or challenge decisions. Interventions must therefore include confidence-building training and mentorship.

“I think I need a bit more support and I don't really have enough confidence to speak up.”

[12 years old]

- 54% of young people report that skills in listening to others is absolutely needed in order to engage in participatory processes. The fact that over half of young people prioritise skills in listening to others shows they understand participation is not just about talking; it's about dialogue, negotiation, and collaborative problem-solving.

- Half of the respondents, 50%, emphasise that an adult they trust to support them is key to overcoming existing barriers to participation (such as uncertainty or feeling nothing will change). This adult acts as a bridge and a champion, providing personal encouragement, navigating complex processes, and validating the young person's experience.
- 55% report that safe spaces are vital for young people to engage. The majority consensus that safe spaces are vital confirms that the physical and psychological environment is a non-negotiable requirement for effective Youth Voice activities. If young people do not feel secure, they will not take the risk of being vulnerable, challenging power, or sharing sensitive views. The concept of the "Brave Space" builds on this by ensuring not only safety but also the encouragement of open challenge and risk-taking.

These findings are highly significant as they pinpoint the essential internal capacities (confidence, listening skills) and external conditions (trusted adults, safe spaces) young people themselves identify as crucial for effective participation.

Youth Voice Champion's Experience of Youth Voice

Throughout the project the Youth Voice Champions have shared their own experiences of Youth Voice. How they have found Youth Voice and participation opportunities across organisations, schools and community and political settings.

The challenges they have faced include:

Changes are often implemented in schools without seeking young people's views, reflecting a lack of curiosity from teachers and Senior Leadership Teams (SLT). School forums and councils are not prioritised; meetings are frequently cancelled or postponed. When students do comment, their input is often taken out of context, leaving them feeling ignored and not taken seriously—a perceived lack of "actual care."

Young People do understand that these failures are often rooted in a lack of time, resources, or systemic failure within the school environment and not that of the teaching and pastoral teams.

Young people feel they are not listened to because they are seen as too young or less experienced, and because adults hold more power. This systemic imbalance has a detrimental impact on young people's mental health, wellbeing, and character development. Furthermore, there is often a discounting of the child or young person and a greater emphasis placed on the parent or adult, which ultimately results in their infantilisation.

Why listen to Young People:

Their contributions are vital because they have firsthand knowledge of the challenges and understand their own needs. Engagement is particularly necessary as they feel they are currently only heard when they use force, media platforms, or acts of protest.

Positive experience of being heard:

They have felt listened to by MPs, but because they're right at the top, they see limited action. It feels like they hear young people, but they can't actually change anything operationally.

They have also felt listened to by Oxfordshire Youth (OY) and the Scouts movement because they get the basics right. They gave Young People:

- Information and Knowledge: They shared what we needed to know.
- Time, Space, and Safety: We had a secure environment to share our views.
- Respect and No Judgement: We were treated as equals.
- Real Choice: They genuinely wanted to hear what we had to say.
- Co-production, Not Tokenism: We were involved in the work, not just used as a photo opportunity.
- Accountable Professionals: The adults involved followed through on their commitments.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: Youth Voice and Lived Experience

One of the primary aims of the project team was to ensure that the research included the voice of young people who are often ‘unheard’ or ‘underrepresented’. During the project it became apparent that there were significant gaps in young people being reached and targeted efforts were made to engage organisations and young people for greater representation.

During this time members of the project team engaged with national conversations and learning opportunities to gain a better understanding of the national context. The findings from an event hosted by Integrated care systems and youth voice and action: A national conversation, supported the project teams experience of the local landscape.

This national workshop brought together various partners and over 100 people, to share learning focused on strengthening youth voice, with a focus on those with lived experience, those who are ‘unheard’ and ‘underrepresented’. The key findings from the rich discussions are reflective of the project team's local experience, both in terms of barriers experienced and learning for greater participation moving forward.

The challenges and barriers shared, from a national and local context include:

- A lack of trust stemming from young people being let down by professionals and services in the past, alongside issues of accessibility and awareness of available opportunities.
- Practical concerns—such as transportation, location, and cost—also present substantial hurdles.
- Engagement can also be affected by subjective factors including a poor sense of belonging, unclear purpose for the activity, and individual personal circumstances.
- Ultimately, if young people perceive that a space is not safe or that their views will not be genuinely heard, participation will remain low.

Enablers to Youth Voice participation from a national and local context can be summarised to include:

- Cultivate an environment characterised by several key enablers. This begins with establishing safe and brave spaces, both physically and psychologically, where individuals feel secure expressing themselves.
- Embrace youth-led and co-produced approaches, giving young people genuine ownership over the process. Impact is best achieved through cross-sector collaboration.
- Deliberate efforts to include underrepresented groups, such as those who are LGBTQIA+, care experienced, young carers, or from rural areas, to ensure equitable representation.

Conclusion

The project successfully engaged with a significant number of young people, capturing 522 responses, with over a third (35%) of participants engaging through targeted focus groups. These opportunities provided the project team with rich, qualitative insight into children and young people's experiences of Youth Voice, the ways in which they want to engage in opportunities and the barriers they currently face to engagement. We have heard what matters to them most, their experiences and their frustrations with current processes and systems.

The findings of this research are both qualitative and richly quantitative and while acknowledging gaps in reach, the data set offers an opportunity for curiosity, further inquiry and necessitates that courageous questions be asked of those who seek to engage young people in authentic decision-making and power-sharing.

In conclusion young people absolutely want to be involved in decision making, for themselves, their peers, their communities and for the betterment of future generations. They are passionate about issues that affect them as individuals and issues that have local, national and global reach.

They are certain that they should be involved in Youth Voice and participation opportunities, and more importantly that they have a right to be, yet they face significant systemic barriers. Crucially, young people have been clear that they don't always know how to get involved, they consistently fail to see local opportunities for participation, and they certainly don't know whom to talk to to make their voices heard. Addressing this gap in awareness and access is the central challenge that the recommendations, co-produced with the Youth Voice Champions, aims to meet.

Recommendations

Through the analysis of the research questions, both the quantitative and qualitative questions, the rich and diverse conversations, held over the timeline of the project, and the local and national context, we can confidently assert that the following recommendations are key actions for developing Youth Voice and participation in Oxfordshire.

1. Shared language, model, and framework to be developed across the county

- Establishing a unified approach to youth voice across all departments, organisations, and sectors. Ensures everyone uses the same terminology (e.g., distinguishing between consultation, involvement, and co-production) and adheres to a consistent model (such as the Lundy Model - see appendix 3). This common framework guarantees clarity, consistency, a systems approach and ensures equitable quality of experience for young people, regardless of where they participate.

2. Training for professionals

- Providing high-quality training for all staff and volunteers who work with young people. The training should focus on the principles of meaningful youth voice, utilising established frameworks like the Lundy Model to understand young people's Rights, Space, Voice, Audience, and Influence. This builds the necessary skills and understanding for adults to facilitate, rather than control, participation opportunities.

3. Links to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Anti-oppressive Practice

- Ensuring the youth voice agenda is fundamentally intertwined with the principles of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Anti Oppressive Practice. Actively challenging systemic barriers and power imbalances that prevent 'unheard' and 'underrepresented' young people from participating. It involves using data to identify underrepresented groups and implementing specific strategies (as identified in previous analysis) to promote access, equity, and belonging in all youth voice and participation activities.

4. Training for Young People:

Confidence, Listening (to peers), Public Speaking and Critical Thinking

- Offering skill-based training to young participants to maximise their confidence and effectiveness within youth voice initiatives. This includes developing public speaking confidence, fostering effective peer-to-peer listening and critical analysis skills, and promoting positive relationship-building to create a supportive and collaborative youth voice environments.

5. Trusted Adults

- Developing trusting relationships with adults takes time and resources, and the level of support offered develops young people's interest and therefore engagement.
- Recognising the crucial role of committed and reliable adults in removing barriers for young people and sustaining youth voice. The adult's role is not simply logistical but requires dedicating sufficient time to build meaningful, consistent relationships. The quality and consistency of the adult's support directly correlates with a young person's sense of value and their willingness to invest energy and interest in the youth voice participation process.

6. Safe and Brave Space

- Achieving a truly " Safe and Brave Space" (where challenge, risk-taking, and vulnerability are accepted) is the result of successfully implementing the enablers listed above (including shared framework, training, equity focus, and trusted adults). A Safe and Brave Space is a cultural outcome where young people feel empowered to speak truth to power and challenge norms.
- There is currently a lack of targeted support and safe spaces for young people from groups that may be considered marginalised. Ensuring that appropriate provision is available for these groups provides access to safe, inclusive environments and trusted adults. It also demonstrates genuine care for their needs and lived experiences, helping to build trust and confidence that decision makers value their voices and opens opportunities for co-production.

7. Consistency for Young People in Youth Voice and Youth Participation

Opportunities:

- Making a formal commitment to ensuring that all youth voice opportunities across the county adhere to the same high standards and principles, specifically those outlined in the Lundy Model of participation. This eliminates the current variation in quality and ensures that every young person who chooses to engage is guaranteed a meaningful, ethical, and consistent experience.

8. Developing Critical Feedback Loops

- Implementing a critical feedback loop, initially by presenting the draft definitions, principles, or findings (which were co-produced with Youth Voice Champions and OY - See appendix 4) back to the original group of participating young people. This step validates their input, ensures the final output accurately reflects their intentions, and fulfills the commitment to transparency and accountability and models best practice.
- Develop and share this practice, adopting the Lundy Model and a wider Youth Voice Strategy for the County.

9. Development of a Youth Network and/or Youth Voice Consultants

- Create a formal, structured network (or similar entity) of young people that can provide ongoing consultation and feedback on countywide strategies and services. The network to be linked to local place based Youth Voice activity to ensure representation coordination. Additionally, employing or appointing a dedicated Youth Voice Consultants (young people supported by an expert facilitator) to drive the strategy, offer specialised support, and ensure accountability for implementing youth voice participation across the county.
- Collaborating with existing Youth Voice forums and mechanisms across the county to leverage the skills, experiences and voice of young people and create meaningful and impactful initiatives.

10. Remuneration for Young People's Involvement in Youth Voice Activity

- Develop and share this practice as part of the Lundy Model and a wider Youth Voice Strategy and Model for the county.
- Recognise and compensate young people for their valuable contributions, ensuring that youth voice participation is seen as a valued service, not just a voluntary activity.
- Remove barriers to participation by reimbursing travel costs or providing transport
- Implementing a policy that endorses the reward and remuneration for young people's time and energy when they participate in Youth Voice initiatives, including options for, direct payment, out of pocket expenses, training, certification and experiential rewards.

What's next?

“We are not the future generation, we are the NOW generation.”

Given the landmark launch of "Youth Matters: Your National Youth Strategy" on the 10th of December 2025, this report has moved from being "best practice" to a "statutory necessity." The strategy explicitly shifts the mandate from national to local and from excluded to empowered, placing a legal and moral duty on Youth Services to co-produce local actions.

At Oxfordshire Youth we will:

Develop flexible, sustainable and accessible Youth Voice opportunities for Young People.

This will be achieved through coordinated initiatives across the sector, including:

- Co-produce a comprehensive Youth Voice Strategy.
- Design and implement a shared Youth Voice/Participation Model to standardise engagement across the sector.
- Establish a targeted Training and Development Plan to equip both professionals and young people with the necessary skills and knowledge.
- Launch a Youth Voice Champions Network to train, educate, share resources, and inspire the wider youth sector and the young people they reach to deeply understand and embed the principles of authentic youth voice.
- Develop and imbedded a partnership approach to Youth Voice across the Youth Sector including statutory partners, schools and the voluntary and community sector.

Thank you!

Oxfordshire Youth would like to extend our thanks to the wonderful Youth Voice Champions for their dedication, commitment, insight and knowledge throughout this co-produced Youth Voice research project. It has been a privilege to work alongside you.

Thank you to all of the participants for their time and valuable contributions to this research. We have such rich data, inclusive of narrative and finding's. This has enabled us to consider tangible recommendations and we will ensure that this shapes the future of Youth Voice for Oxfordshire Youth and it's partners.

We are committed to working together to understand and co-produce, with young people, the next steps in this journey and how we can support the development of this work, expanding it's reach and impact to keep making a difference in our communities.

If you have any questions or would like to get in touch with Oxfordshire Youth, please email admin@oxfordshireyouth.org.

Appendix 1:

Survey for young people:

1. In this form we will be asking for personal information about you. We will never sell your contact information, and will only share it with our partners with your express consent or if we are required by law to do so.

By ticking this box you confirm that you have seen Oxfordshire Youth's [privacy notice](#) and agree to us collecting and holding personal information about you for this research.

- I have seen Oxfordshire Youth's privacy policy and I agree to Oxfordshire Youth collecting and holding information about me.

2. Do you want to be part of decisions that affect you?

- No, not at all
- A little bit
- Yes, to an extent
- Yes, absolutely

Why?

3. How do you want your voice to be HEARD? [tick all that apply]

- Structured forums (e.g. youth councils)
- Surveys
- Social media platforms (e.g. tiktok or instagram)
- Specific events (e.g. community events, fetes)
- Petitions
- Podcasts
- Something else (please specify):

4. If you don't want to be part of decisions that affect you, why?

- Lack of support and guidance
- Lack of accessible opportunities
- People don't listen
- Nothing will change
- Uncertainty about outcomes
- Don't get any feedback
- Not sure of the topic relevance
- Something else (please specify):

5. Do you feel listened to by adults in your life?

- No
- Sometimes
- Yes

Appendix 1 (cont):

6. Who listens to you?

- Teachers
- Parents and Guardians
- Youth workers

Someone else:

7. Who does not listen to you and why?

8. If you were to be listened to, what would you say?

9. Who would you say it to?

10. How important are these things to help young people he heard? [Not at all / A little bit / Quite a lot / Absolutely]

- Confidence
- Public speaking
- Knowing how systems work (e.g. school, council, government)
- Team work
- Listening to others
- An adult I trust to support me
- Safe spaces
- Creative activities

Is there anything else you can think of?

2. Monitoring Questions

We want to hear from as many young people as possible! It's important that we hear voices from young people with different lived experiences. This means it's helpful for us to know things such as your gender identity, ethnicity and postcode. We only use this data for monitoring and research purposes.

11. How old are you?

12. What is the first part of your postcode? (e.g. OX4, OX10)

Appendix 1 (cont):

13. Which most accurately describes your gender?

- Cis-man - assigned male at birth and identifies as male.
- Cis-woman - assigned female at birth and identifies as female.
- Genderfluid
- Genderqueer
- Non-binary
- Transgender
- Trans man
- Trans woman
- Prefer not to say
- Tell us in your words:

14. Which best describes your ethnicity?

- White British
- White Other
- Black or Black British
- Asian or Asian British
- Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups
- Latinx
- Hispanic
- Prefer not to say
- Tell us in your words:

15. What are your religious beliefs?

- Agnosticism
- Atheism
- Protestantism
- Catholicism
- Christian
- Hinduism
- Judaism
- Islam
- Sikhism
- Buddhism
- Prefer not to say
- Tell us in your words:

16. Do you consider yourself to have any of the following:

- Neurodiversity (diagnosed)
- Neurodiversity (undiagnosed)
- Mental health condition (e.g. anxiety, depression, OCD)
- Long term/chronic health condition
- Learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia)
- Learning disability
- Physical disability
- Prefer not to say
- Tell us in your words:

17. What is your sexual orientation?

Appendix 1 (cont):

3. Prize Draw!

1. Promotion Definition:

Start and End Dates: The prize draw will commence on the 24th July and close on the 30th September 2025.

Prizes/Rewards: The prize will consist of 4 general admission tickets to either Thorpe Park or Legoland

Entry Method: Entry to the prize draw will consist of scanning the prize draw QR code and participating in answering 8 questions.

Proof of participation will be via your individual email address) Terms and Conditions Apply*

2. Eligibility:

Age Restrictions: Participation for the youth prize draw is available to young people aged 8-25. For all young people under the age of 16 a parent or legal guardians email address will have to be supplied.

Geographic Restrictions: The Prize draw is available to all young people residing in Oxfordshire

Other Limitations: The prize is limited to 4 general admission tickets only.

3. Prize Details:

Prize Description: This prize draw consists of 4 general admission tickets to Thorpe Park or Legoland

Awarding Process: Winners of the draw will be picked by random on the 1st October 2025 and will be notified by email.

Conditions and Limitations: If a winner does not confirm within 7 days of the offer this will be passed on to the next winner chosen by random.

4. Legal Requirements:

Data Protection: Explain how participant data will be collected, used, and protected.

Liability: We have full liability to announce the winner within 24 hours of the closing date of the draw.

Tickets will be sent out within 2 weeks of confirming acceptance of your chosen park.

All data will be kept in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations.

For more information about storing data please read our Privacy Policy.

18. What is your name?

19. Are you over the age of 16?

- Yes
- No

20. What is your parent's/guardian's email address?

21. What is your email address?

Appendix 2:

Literature Review:

1. Background to the desk research

The UN Convention on the rights of the child states that: “Every young person has the right to express their views, feelings, and wishes in all matters affecting them and to have their views considered and taken seriously.” Oxfordshire Youth, the lead youth organisation in Oxfordshire, is leading by example by looking to incorporate meaningful opportunities for children and young people to lead, influence, and co-design into its new strategy. They want to empower young people to:

- shape the services, systems, and decisions impacting their lives
- engage in national research projects and creative campaigns
- shape local policies
- build skills, support, and connections they need to thrive.

2. Research question

This desk research aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What are the needs of young people aged 8-25 in the UK?
2. What are the needs of young people aged 8-25 living in Oxfordshire?
3. What learnings can be taken from other organisations who carried out youth participation activities?

3. Methodology

a. Search terms

Primary search terms

- Youth
- Young people
- 8 to 25 year olds
- Youth-led

Secondary search terms

- Needs
- Wants
- Local needs
- Voice
- Participation

Tertiary search terms

- Analysis

b. Databases

- We searched combinations of the search terms using Google for non-academic literature and Google Scholar for academic literature. We checked the relevance of each article before deciding to include it as part of the review.

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c. Inclusion criteria

- After conducting the searches, we used the following inclusion criteria to develop our list of sources:
 - Reports and data published from 2022 onwards
 - Both academic and non-academic/grey literature
 - Articles which were publicly available
 - Literature relating to activities including young people based in the UK
 - Articles which were non-sector specific or related to the youth sector.
- This resulted in a final list of 16 articles that informed this desktop research report.

d. Limitations

- There is a wealth of academic and grey literature concerning youth participation, either sector or organisation specific or more general. This review focused on articles that were deemed as most relevant to the context of the research and were most recent, to ensure that findings were based on the most up-to-date information, given that needs of young people are dynamic and likely to have changed over the years, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. We did not include any articles dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, as the services and support available at the time and immediately after were significantly different to what is currently available.

Appendix 2 (cont):

4. Issues highlighted by children and young people a. National

There are a number of reports published since 2022, which explore the needs of young people based in the UK and highlight issues which are important to them.

- A report published by The Duke of Edinburgh's Award asked 3,662 young people aged 14-25 to provide their opinions on what is important to them. The main findings highlighted that, in general, young people were driven by global issues such as climate change and human rights, however they were more likely to feel worried about issues that were more local, including housing costs, the NHS, especially access to mental health support, and the economy, including rising costs of living and employment opportunities.
- The report also suggested that many young people were politically involved, with their primary channel being social media. They felt comfortable with sharing their views, with two thirds of respondents reporting having engaged in one or more political activity in the three months prior to the survey. The most common type of engagement was signing an online petition about a political or a social cause (41%), followed by posting or sharing something linked to a political or social cause publicly on social media (39%), donating money to a campaign around political or social cause (30%), or changing profile picture or adding a banner to their profile picture on social media to support a political cause (26%). A fifth of the respondents also reported attending a protest or a rally (19%), or contacting a politician about an issue that was important to them (17%).
- Despite the high levels of engagement, young people reported feeling unheard by the people in power, creating a sense of pessimism and disconnect. They reported feeling that issues that were important to them differed from issues that seemed to be important to politicians. While young people were more concerned about mental health support, costs of housing, healthcare, climate and environment, employment and opportunities available to them, they felt that politicians were more concerned about Artificial Intelligence, international conflicts/wars, the UK's ability to influence the world, relationships with EU/Brexit, and immigration.
- Similar findings were reported by The Youth Voice Census 2024, where mental health, anxiety and rising costs of living were highlighted by the young people as some of the most concerning. In addition, they highlighted experiencing fears around safety and discrimination, and a sense of disconnect from the local communities. Respondents reported being forced to compromise on cost, safety, and/or location to be able to access the services or activities that they needed. Many reported having access to fewer local services than before, either due to barriers created by unreliable/unavailable/unsafe transport or the services they were looking for did not exist.
- The report highlighted that overall, in 2024, young people were less confident about their ability to access good opportunities for learning, training, or employment. There were feelings of instability and uncertainty, especially amongst those still in education. Levels of confidence in employability skills have decreased at a fast rate in 2024 for young people in education, remaining steady for those looking for work. Young people looking for work reported an increase in confidence regarding their understanding of the skills employers were looking for. There was also a marginal increase in the number of young people reporting knowing how to write a CV. This, however, did not yet translate into greater confidence levels in finding quality employment, with 20% of young people feeling unsure if they will be able to progress.
- The report highlighted that there were less spaces and time for young people to 'develop themselves', with the number of opportunities being down across the board. This included not only access to sport, libraries, and parks accessible in the local area but also access to physical and mental health support. In addition, the report highlighted that the number of opportunities for enrichment have also declined. Young people in education had fewer opportunities to access art, music, sport, and after-school activities, with only half of respondents reporting having access.

Appendix 2 (cont):

- Young people reported a sense of unfairness, with a sense of ‘things being stacked against them’ in the current system. They wanted to be hopeful about their futures and were realistic about the fact that system changes take time. The report suggested that, if young people were listened to and able to access the services they are entitled to, they would feel more able to take their next steps into adulthood.
- A report produced for Street Games by Platypus Research looked at barriers to engagement with sport and physical activity experienced by young people from low-income households and under-served communities. Despite there being a focus on physical activity, the report highlights other barriers and experiences reported by the young people who took part. Two in five respondents reported being worried about their/their family’s finances and the cost of living, with some experiencing barriers to participation that were material (e.g. cost, transport, access to facilities).
- A similar number reported worries concerning their education. In addition, a third of young people felt they only had a limited sense of control over their lives. There seemed to be a turning point when young people reached 16 years of age, when boys tended to feel more in control than girls or those who reported being neurodiverse. In contrast, young people with caring responsibilities and those with physical disabilities were more likely to feel ‘totally in control’, perhaps due to their circumstances.
- Further research carried out by The Young Foundation in 2022 highlights that the key priority areas for young people included:
 - Improving support for mental health
 - Ensuring access to opportunities that support their aspirations beyond education
 - Tackling poverty and hardship
 - Improving and expanding access to local assets and facilities
 - Reducing inequalities
 - Helping young people stay safe
- While there was some regional variation in the priorities reported by the young people, the report also suggested high levels of consistency and commonality. The differences in priorities could be linked to urban and rural areas and the north-south divide in terms of access to opportunities. This seemed particularly relevant to activities which enabled the young people to gain exposure to and experience of sectors which were often concentrated in major cities (e.g. creative industries).

b. Local

- There was not a lot of publicly available data reporting on the needs of young people living in Oxfordshire, which came directly from research involving the young people, published in recent years.
- Research by The Young Foundation provided some regional focus. Young people based in London, South East and East of England highlighted inadequate mental health support, drug and alcohol abuse, and employment opportunities as their main priorities.
- There were a number of consultations carried out with the young people by various governing bodies based in Oxfordshire.
- West Oxfordshire District Council published a Youth Needs Assessment in 2022, based on a young person and parents surveys, which collected 3,886 responses. The report was published during the post COVID 19 pandemic fall out, which should be taken into account when reviewing its findings.
- Young people who took part in the research reported the following as priorities: mental health support access (mental health was incredibly important to the young, especially considering the difficulties they experienced accessing the help they needed), lack of local opportunities, and effects of climate change.
- The research highlighted that only 11.8% of respondents reported attending a youth club, with physical activity being the most popular after-school activity (48.7%). One in ten young people reported not attending any activities outside of school. Young people also reported football and adventure/outdoor activities as activities they would like to attend most.

Appendix 2 (cont):

- There were multiple barriers identified to participation, which included:
 - Opportunities being too far
 - Opportunities being too expensive
 - Young people having no one to go with
 - Desired activity being unavailable
 - Young people not getting along with others at the activity
- In addition, young people were asked to highlight top challenges they experienced. Those included: bullying, harassment, social media, adult perceptions/criticisms/not being listened to by adults. Just under half (46.3%) reported feeling that ‘their voice was not heard’, with some having the impression that adults thought ‘young people were not mature enough to have an opinion’. The main challenges reported by the young people regarding their participation were:
 - Not being heard or ignored
 - Not being understood
 - Not being taken seriously
 - Having high expectations and pressure put on them
 - Adults having negative perceptions of youth or ascribing stereotypes
 - Adults relating their own experiences of youth which may be no longer relevant due to societal and political changes.
- Similarly to the national reports, when asked to identify what they needed the most, young people listed the following in descending order: mental health support, high quality education/employment opportunities, accessible advice/support services, meaningful opportunities to have their voices heard, ‘things to do’, safe places to socialise, financial support to make opportunities more accessible, climate action, to feel safe, and for there to be less pressure put on them by their education and community.
- Oxford City Council (in collaboration with University of York) published a report highlighting the issues experienced by the young people who live in households in the most disadvantaged areas of Oxford. Based on data provided by 57 young people aged 11-19, the report provides commentary on the main challenges reported by the young people and their most prevalent needs. In line with the previous data, young people expressed their dissatisfaction with the education system, particularly secondary schools. Due to financial pressures and high staff turnover, young people felt that the lack of stability impacted negatively on their educational development and attainment. They also felt that those pressures added to there being less support available to students presenting challenging behaviours, resulting in higher levels of exclusions.
- Young people also commented on the prevalence of crime in Oxford’s most disadvantaged areas. Some young people felt that criminal actions were being ‘normalised’, especially when impacted by the ongoing rising costs of living, with some seeing money gained through illegal drugs sales as ‘easy money’.
- In addition, the report also highlights Oxford’s highly expensive housing market as a concern for a lot of young people. The prices of owning or renting a property were seen as discouraging and could lead to the young people moving away from the area, if they wanted to become independent, or having a negative impact on their aspirations.
- When asked what they would like to see more of, young people listed the following: opportunities and places to socialise (including youth clubs, parks), facilities to be more active (basketball courts, football pitches), relevant support (mental health support, life councillors, confidence building), improved feeling of safety (street lighting), and opportunities for skills development (apprenticeships, courses in cooking, business, leadership, communication).

Appendix 2 (cont):

5. Young people and decision making

- The Diana Award published a report in 2024, which looked at the role of youth voice in UK politics. Authors reported that little research existed into young people's perspectives, experiences, and desires linked to youth voice in politics. Young people involved in the research reported a deep-seated disillusionment with political engagement for young people. They felt that their ability to contribute was underestimated and they wanted to see more meaningful and inclusive opportunities to participate in politics. It was also reported that young people felt there was a need for better political education in schools, a more diverse representation in decision-making groups, and genuine engagement between young people and politicians. Young people felt that there was a lack of representation of young people in governing bodies concerned with education, climate change, mental health support, which were issues that were important to them. As a consequence, there seemed to be increased non-formal political engagement and a growing mistrust of government amongst young people.
- The report provided some suggestions on how the gap between politics and young people could be closed. They included:
 - End of tokenism - young people would like to see more meaningful opportunities to engage with the government. They would like to be seen as essential contributors and for their concerns to be addressed directly. They felt that it's crucial that young people aren't just consulted but are actively involved in decision making and informed on the impact and outcome of their involvement.
 - Strengthening political education - this would empower young people to make more informed choices. Young people felt that there was a failure to teach political education effectively within schools, leaving many without the knowledge they needed to engage effectively. Good quality political education should form a part of the core curriculum, enabling the next generations to actively participate and contribute to democracy.
 - Create opportunities for young people - proactive outreach is needed to support young people who are struggling to find political engagement opportunities on their own, lacking the skills or resources to seek them out themselves. Young people felt that such opportunities should be brought to them using accessible and direct means, thus ensuring that all young people are heard.

6. Benefits of youth voice and participation

- Research into youth voice and participation confirms there are multiple benefits of young people being involved in decision-making processes. An impact evaluation of the UK Youth Parliament showed that policy makers agreed that youth parliament was an important mechanism for promoting the voice of young people in local and national government policy decisions. In addition, Youth Parliament participants reported personal, social, and vocational benefits. They learnt about political processes (through a combination of training and activities), developed communication skills (through debating and presenting), social and teamwork skills. They also reported having built new social networks of peers and professionals and feeling a sense of achievement from trying new activities, engaging with decision makers, and representing the views of others. The combination of all of the above led to improvements in self-confidence and ability to use gained skills in education and employment (for some leading to identifying career pathways in public service, politics, social and youth services).
- The effectiveness of the youth engagement was assessed using The Lundy Model of Participation.
- A report published by Excluded Lives, which looked at the role of youth voice in Alternative Provision, reported that many of the recent policy documents and most of the literature still reinforced reliance on professional networks, which could 'silence the voice of the young people'. Shifting the power to professionals could create barriers for those who wished to develop their own sense of identity and agency. The report highlighted the significance of empowering, in this case, young men can have in terms of preventing exacerbation of difficulties and supporting their ability to gain reflexive insight into their own lived realities.

Appendix 2 (cont):

- A review by the National Lottery of their Youth Voice reported that 88% of their colleagues surveyed thought that the young people brought different perspectives, when involved in decision making, while 79% said that young people generated new ideas in their area of work. All of the young people involved reported an increase in confidence due to their involvement with the programme.
- Similarly, research carried out by peer researchers for The Young Foundation showed that through involvement in the project, many of the peer researchers reported increased confidence and skills in areas such as communication and teamwork.

7. Plans and guidance

- The benefits of meaningfully engaging with young people are also starting to be recognised by decision makers. The Children's Commissioner for England introduced The Young Voices Forum, where all young people aged 13 and over could take part in various consultations run by different government departments and other public bodies. This also included The Big Conversation Survey and The Big Ambition survey, where only a fifth (20%) of young people responding felt that decision makers 'listened to them'. Locally, a number of governing bodies and agencies in Oxfordshire were looking to engage young people in shaping the services they deliver.
- Those included Bright Spots survey run by Coram Voice for Oxfordshire County Council, which looked to engage care experienced young people, and Oxfordshire's Children's and Young People's Plan 2024-2028, which listed priorities and outcomes involving young people.
- In its priorities, the plan outlined the following:
 - Children are young residents, and Oxfordshire is a place that caters for their needs
 - Services across Oxfordshire are designed to meet the needs of young residents and respond to what matters to them
 - Decisions are taken and services commissioned that take into account the wellbeing of future generations.
- Outcomes listed included:
 - The views of a wide range of children and young people help shape the strategic plans of the council and partnerships
 - Children and young people are able to let decision makers know what matters to them through a wide variety of channels
 - Intergenerational fairness is put at the heart of the council's decision making
- The plan committed to 'listening and involving children and young people' so that there was an understanding of what matters to them, which could then be used to shape future services. The aim of the plan was to put the voices of children and young people at the heart of the 'collective work', which was seen as crucial to deliver Council's ambitions. The ways of engagement with children and young people were not specified in the document.
- In addition to various models of participation, resources such as typology published by The Centre for Youth Impact, or Hear by Right organisational development framework published by the National Youth Agency, provided different ways of categorising and potentially evaluating youth voice and participation activities.
- A report published by the Children Society, presenting the results of a consultation on The Prevention programme used the following principles for engagement with young people: protection, recognition, provision, professionalism, belonging and sharing, choice and influence, mutual goal, and inclusivity.
- Research into youth voice and participation published by The Centre for Youth Voice reported that most practitioners specialising in youth voice and participation were not able to pinpoint specific resources they used, although a few referred to various models of participation, which guided their practice. The consultation described current youth voice and participation support as 'fragmented', with there being a wide range of models and toolkits, which were hard to navigate. It also commented on there being limited research and evaluation to support learning and development of youth voice practices and a gap in support and training to assist practice.

Appendix 2 (cont):

- This highlighted a need for centralised resources to support capacity building for youth voice and participation activities, especially the implementation of common models of participation. Research participants identified a number of resources they felt would support better youth voice and participation work, including:
 - Guidance on how to engage young people equitably in youth voice and participation, especially underserved populations
 - Standardised checklist of activities to undertake as part of youth voice and participation
 - Guidance on embedding and resourcing youth voice and participation into youth sector organisations
 - Guidance on training and supporting young people to undertake leadership roles
 - Funding applications oriented towards support for youth voice and participation
 - Resources to support evaluation of youth voice activities
- In addition to those, young people involved in the research reported a need for guidance on how to make intergenerational governance a more integral part of an organisation, making it possible for organisations to work with young people in a more 'authentic' way.

Appendix 3:

SHARED MODEL AND FRAMEWORK:

Everyone needs to play a part in amplifying youth voice, in supporting young people to access opportunities that engage them in decision making, to expand their sphere of influence and be part of creating change, in policy, processes, services and systems. If we are to undertake this challenge with integrity, transparency and honesty, as their trusted adults, we will need to develop a shared model, framework and language across the County.

Lundy's Model of Participation can guide how we work with young people, how we lead, how we partner with others, and how we create change in the system.

Lundy's Model of Participation is a practical framework that helps us put children's rights into action. It's based on Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which says that children have the right to express their views and have them taken seriously.

The model focuses on four key areas that work together:

1. **SPACE:** Young People must be given the opportunity to express a view
2. **VOICE:** Young People must be facilitated to express their views
3. **AUDIENCE:** The view must be listened to.
4. **INFLUENCE:** The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.



Appendix 4:

Draft definition co-produced with Youth Voice Champions:

Youth Voice at Oxfordshire Youth:

Young people have continuous opportunities to be at the centre of decisions that affect their lives alongside trained and trusted adults. Truly valuing young people, not as tokens or boxes to tick, but as individuals with unique perspectives, experiences, and voices.

Statement co-produced with Youth Voice Champions:

Involve Young People in decision making in authentic and meaningful ways. Be honest about what can change or why something can't. Young People need to trust OY and that starts with treating Young People as equals, being accountable and showing them that our input leads to real change.

Empower Young People to lead and be independent. Create safe spaces where they can be themselves and be proactive to ensure everyone feels represented. Keep listening, help Young People to talk directly to decision makers and always ask 'What are young people getting out of this?'

Young People's time and Voice is valuable.