



**YOUTH VOICE IS NOT  
JUST A BOX TICKED**  
It's a journey we commit to!

**Young Voices of  
Oxfordshire Report  
for you, by you!**



# You Spoke. We listened!

We teamed up with 5 local Youth Voice Champions to find out how young people in Oxfordshire want to be heard.

  522 voices heard  
(ages 8–25)  via surveys,  
focus groups, and art activities.

 One goal: Changing how  
decisions are  
made in our county.

This isn't just another report.  
It's the blueprint for how we  
work with you,  
not just for you.



# YOU WANT IN!

The message from across Oxfordshire was loud and clear: You don't just want to watch decisions happen —you want to make them.

88% of young people said they want a say in the decisions that impact their lives. 🔥

Nearly 2 out of 3 answered, 'yes absolutely,' or 'yes quite a lot!'

You told us you want the power to shape your own future and drive real social change.



It's Not Just Oxfordshire. 🌍

What you told us matches what young people are saying all over the UK.

In 2024, National Research confirmed what you already know:

- ✗ Traditional politics isn't working for you.
- ✓ You are done with token gestures.
- 🔥 You want inclusive, real opportunities to make a difference.



**Bottom line:**  
You aren't the only ones asking for better.





# How do you want to be heard?



We asked for your preferred method, and one option stood out. **Surveys (55%) Why? Because privacy matters.**

We know the irony here. We used a survey to ask this question, so naturally, people who like surveys answered! We are keeping that bias in mind as we look at other ways to listen.



## WHERE WE MEET MATTERS

We know that walking into a formal setting can feel intimidating (and boring). That's why the location matters.

■ 1 in 3 want to speak up on Social Media.

🎫 1 in 4 prefer Specific Events.

You want us to come to you. Whether it's on your feed or in your community, engaging shouldn't mean travelling far or entering scary, formal spaces.

You need safe spaces and trusted adults to guide the process, not just an empty seat at a boardroom table.





## Why You Don't Want In

We asked why you hesitate to get involved. You gave us the cold, hard truth. 1 in 3 of you said "People don't listen" or "Nothing will change."

**You feel like you're talking to yourself!!!**

**When you don't see results, it feels like a waste of breath. 18% of you said you don't get involved because you simply don't know what will happen.**

**We aren't making it clear where your voice goes or what impact it has. The "Feedback Loop" is broken. You speak up, but you don't hear back. We need to fix that. We need to keep you involved through every step of the process.**





## Why You Feel Ignored 🙄

We dug into the why, and the answers were real.

1. The "Age Card" The biggest reason? You feel like adults dismiss you just because you are young. Being told you are "too young to understand" is a major barrier to being taken seriously.
2. Access & Neurodivergence One size does not fit all. Many of you pointed out that standard ways of talking don't work for everyone—especially if you are neurodivergent or have specific support needs. If the system isn't accessible, the voice is lost.
3. It's Emotional (And Complicated) We saw a mix of feelings:
  - 🙄 Frustration: With adults (and sometimes peers) who just don't get it.
  - ❤️ Empathy: Surprisingly, you also told us you get it—you know adults are busy or stressed. You want to be heard, but you understand why it doesn't always happen in the heat of the moment.





## Who is Actually Listening?

We asked if you feel listened to.  
The results were mixed...

95% of you have someone in your life who listens. For 2 out of 3 of you, that listening only happens "sometimes." Consistent support is still missing for many.

 To the 5% who said they have no one to talk to: We see you! This report highlights that you need urgent, targeted support.

## Who's listening?

 **81% Parents/Guardians:** Family is still the #1 support system.

 **49% Teachers:** Less than half of you feel heard at school. You told us you get that teachers are busy/stressed, but it's still frustrating when you need to talk.

 **24% Youth Workers:** This number is low — mostly because many of you simply don't have access to a youth worker in your area.



**What You Want to Say**   
We asked what matters to you.

The answer? Everything. From your own backyard to global politics, you have a lot to say and you want to see real change.



**The Big Issues (System Change):**  
You are fighting for equity and justice. The top topics were:

-  Climate Change
-  Housing & Healthcare
-  Global Conflict & Human Rights
-  Education & Curriculum



**The Local Issues (Community):** It's not just global—it's local. You want better spaces to hang out, safer communities, and real opportunities for you and your friends right here in Oxfordshire.





**Who Needs to Hear This?  
You don't just want to be  
heard, you want action!**

**You want to talk to trusted  
adults, the government,  
teachers and local leaders—but  
only if they take you seriously  
and it leads to change.**



 **Confused? That's okay. A lot of  
you said, "I don't know what to  
say." If you feel unsure or don't  
know where to start, you aren't  
alone. That isn't a lack of interest  
—it's a sign that we need to make  
speaking up easier and less  
confusing.**





## WHAT YOU NEED TO SPEAK UP

We asked what makes it possible for you to get involved. The answer wasn't money or status— it was safety and trust.



If these two things aren't there, you aren't talking:



 **Safe Spaces:** A place where you don't feel judged and are empowered to use your voice.



 **Trusted Adults:** Someone who actually has your back.

You also told us that meaningful participation takes work. It's not just about talking; it's about:

**Confidence (Believing in your voice)**

**Teamwork (Listening to others)**

**Problem Solving (Fixing the issue)**



### The formula

**Your Skills (Confidence + Listening)**

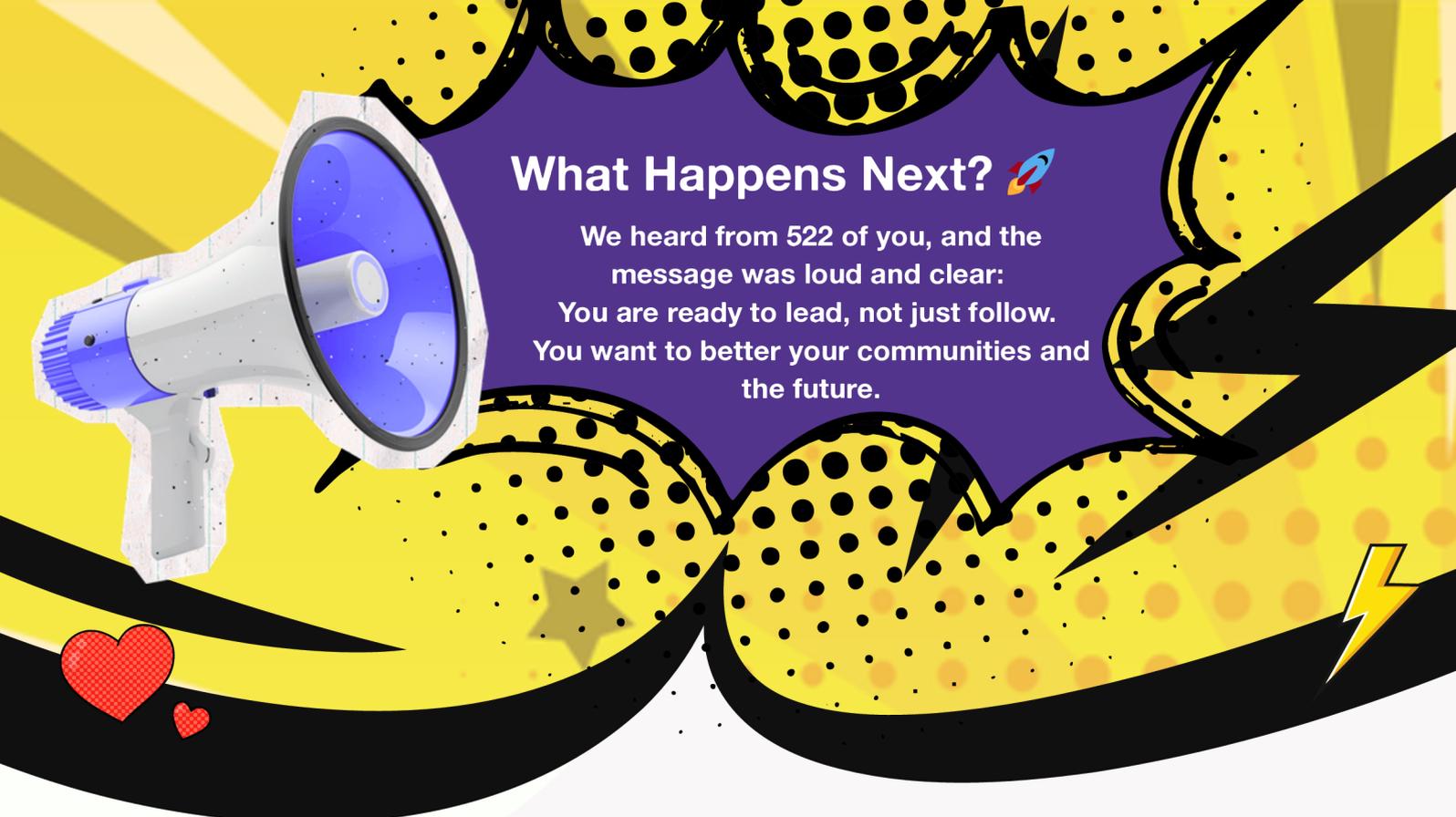
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**The Right Support (Safety + Trust)**

**=**

**Real Change.**





## What Happens Next?

We heard from 522 of you, and the message was loud and clear:  
You are ready to lead, not just follow.  
You want to better your communities and the future.

### Here are the 10 changes that must happen to make Youth Voice real in Oxfordshire:

-  **One Language:** No more jargon and a unified framework for youth voice across the county.
-  **Train the Professionals:** Staff and volunteers need high-quality training to understand how to actually listen to you.
-  **Real Equality:** Smashing systemic barriers. Diversity and inclusion aren't just buzzwords; they are a requirement.
-  **Level Up Your Skills:** Training for you—so you have the confidence and skills to debate, present, and lead.
-  **Support Trusted Adults:** Acknowledge that "Trusted Adults" are a vital resource and give them the support they need to help you.
-  **Safe & Brave Spaces:** Creating specific, safe environments for marginalized groups to speak up without fear.
-  **Consistency:** No more one-off projects. We need high-quality opportunities that stick around.
-  **No More Ghosting:** Fixing the "Feedback Loop." If you give an idea, you deserve to know what happened to it.
-  **The Network:** Building a proper, official network for young people to consult on county-wide issues.
-  **Get Paid:** Recognising that your time is valuable—and compensating you for it.



# Thank you!

**To the 522 Participants:** Thank you for sharing your truth. This research exists because you spoke up.

**To the 5 Youth Voice Champions:** A massive shout-out to the five young people (16-18) who led this project. You were the heartbeat of this work, advocating for your peers every step of the way.

**To Oxfordshire County Council:** Thanks for the grant that made this possible.



**Oxfordshire Youth is proud to have co-produced this report with you, not just for you.**





**This work matters. It's about building a county that values your lived experience and gives every young person in Oxfordshire the skills, support, and connections to thrive.**

