SCVYS
STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL OF VOLUNTARY YOUTH SERVICES

University of Staffordshire

Know Your Place:

Year 2 summary report

KNOW YOUR PLACE · LEAD THE CHANGE ·

A Year of Community Research

Know Your Place (KYP) is a collaboration between the Young People's Steering Group (YPSG), Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS), University of Staffordshire, and Staffordshire County Council. It is part of the national Community Research Networks programme, funded for five years by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and coordinated by The Young Foundation.

This report tells the story of our Year 2 activity since the last KYP Festival in October 2025, bringing together what young people and Innovator Organisations have done and discovered.



YEAR 2 ROADMAP

Innovator Organisations: Local Consultations shaped by local groups

From September 2025 to January 2026, Innovator Organisations carried out consultations using questions developed by the Young People's Steering Group across the five areas of focus. Each organisation adapted the questions and methods to suit the young people they worked with and the settings in which they worked. These included schools, youth groups, dance and theatre activities, accessible SEND sessions, group discussions, and work with care-experienced young people and care leavers.





5 areas of focus

1. Belonging and Connections- What helps young people feel known, included and part of their community?
2. Place- What is good, missing or difficult about local spaces and opportunities?
3. Voice and Influence- What should young people have a greater say on, and how should adults listen?
4. Equity and Opportunity- What pressures and barriers are overlooked, and why are opportunities unequal?
5. Safety and Wellbeing- What makes places and relationships feel safe, welcoming and supportive?

Organisation	District	Delivered Understand Your Place Creative Consultations with young people...
Biddulph Town Council	Staffordshire Moorlands	... in Biddulph within schools, youth groups and town council events.
Breathing Space	South Staffordshire	... within a Scouts group across South Staffordshire
Burton Youth for Christ	East Staffordshire	.... in schools and their own youth groups
Crystal Academy	Cannock Chase	... within their youth dance groups across school holidays and term time
Liberty Jamboree	Lichfield	... aged 11–24 with Learning disabilities, Physical disabilities, Neurodiversity and/or Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) barriers. Some young people communicate verbally, others use assistive technology, symbols, or Makaton. Every voice was included.
Re-Solv	Stafford	... aged 15-17 in 2 education settings, one Sixth Form and one special school for children with social, emotional and mental health difficulties with resulting behavioural problems
Voice Project and Staffordshire Virtual School	County-wide	... who are care experienced across Staffordshire

**Note: There was no specific representation for Newcastle-under-Lyme or Tamworth in this year's projects, although there was some coverage of Newcastle-under-Lyme in the county-wide project.*

As part of the funded project, Innovator Organisations submitted their consultation findings for our Young People's Steering Group to analyse **(please see Appendix 1 for summary of their findings or click *here* for the full report)**

YPSG analysis and further Research

In February 2026, the Young People's Steering Group (YPSG) came together to review and analyse the consultation findings submitted by Innovator Organisations. Through a collaborative analysis process, they identified several emerging themes and worked together to prioritise the issues they felt required further exploration.



During this process, YPSG members recognised that experiences of discrimination and negative stereotyping of young people were recurring themes across the findings. They identified potential links between these experiences and issues relating to belonging, mental wellbeing and involvement in crime. In response, the group designed a Participatory Action Research project to investigate these connections in greater depth. This included identifying and recruiting participants, developing research questions and creative consultation tools, practising research and interviewing techniques, and allocating roles and responsibilities to support the project.

> **The main YPSG research question for this project was: "How do stereotypes and discrimination of young people affect communities?"**

The Young People's Steering Group (YPSG) carried out their Participatory Action Research project throughout March 2026, engaging directly with other young people to explore the impact of discrimination and stereotyping. Using a peer research approach, YPSG members conducted interviews and gathered insights through a range of creative and participatory methods, including informal conversations, drawing activities using gingerbread person templates to explore perceptions of a 'typical' teenager, and the creation of a podcast to capture and share young people's experiences and perspectives.
Following data collection, the group reconvened to review and analyse their research findings. Through a collaborative process, they identified a range of key themes and patterns emerging from participants' experiences.

Who took part?

- 43 young people and 19 adults took part in the survey
- 10 semi-structured interviews with young people
- Podcast-style group discussion with other young people
- Hosted a creative activity at a school in Staffordshire

The group came back together to do a further analysis of their own findings, identifying a range of themes. **See appendix 2 for summary of findings or click *here* for the full report.**

From voice and evidence to priorities: five messages chosen by the YPSG

In June 2026, the staff team and the Young People's Steering Group (YPSG) came together for a dedicated workshop focused on analysing the data gathered from the Innovator Organisations and the group's own research project. The session explored how to translate research findings into clear and meaningful messages for change.

Participants considered the findings within both local and national contexts, identifying key issues emerging from the data. Using a tree-based root cause analysis activity, the group examined the underlying factors contributing to these issues. They then used this analysis to explore potential solutions and identify opportunities for improvement.

To build on this work, members of the YPSG took part in a residential programme designed to further develop and refine their priority themes. The residential provided dedicated time and space for young people to reflect on the findings, strengthen their key messages, and plan how these would be communicated to different audiences. Through a range of creative activities, the group developed engagement and dissemination approaches aimed at influencing decision-makers and other changemakers, ensuring that young people's voices and research insights were communicated in an impactful and accessible way.

Building on this work, the group developed a set of evidence-based key messages for change, grounded in the research and informed by their analysis of the findings.

Our 2026 research messages for change

1

Young people in decision-making

Young people, under 25, should be more genuinely involved in decision-making, rather than tokenistic or performative consultations.

2

Transport

Transport needs to be more reliable, frequent and affordable for everyone, everywhere, especially rural areas

3

Education

Education needs to have more resources to address areas of curriculum that are not covered, e.g. doing taxes, getting a job, doing a CV. We think that this could be covered in tutor, after-school clubs, and specific study groups outside of school

4

Spaces for young people

We want co-produced spaces for young people that feel age-appropriately designed and are disability friendly

5

Working together

By working together, more connectivity can create quicker and more personalised change. We don't think that change can happen unless we work together! Changemakers need to work with each other, and young people need to be considered in change-making in the services for young people

The following pages provide further detail on each of the key research messages, outlining the thinking that informed their development and highlighting the research evidence that underpins them.

Transport

OUR MESSAGE

"Transport needs to be more reliable, frequent and affordable for everyone, everywhere, especially rural areas"

Please see below a screenshot from a video created to support their Transport research message

The Change

- **"Cheaper and more frequent transport to connect people to their communities and opportunities"**
- **"More consultation with users of public transport services to ensure systems work for those who use them"**
- **"Making transport accessible to everyone"**



Click **here** to watch the full video

The Data

Research carried out through KYP so far shows that young people want transport to be affordable, reliable and shaped around their needs. They see transport as a key factor in accessing education, work and social opportunities.

Rural areas and villages have difficulty because the way services are provided means opportunities for young people can depend on family cars, parents' and guardians' time and confidence to travel independently.

The main evidence comes from Innovator Organisations:

- Six Innovator Organisations identified transport or getting around as a barrier, with respondents from Innovator Organisation activities voting strongly for greater influence over better transport.
- Consultation respondents described expensive and irregular buses, undesirable stops and difficulty reaching part-time work because of transport.
- Consultation findings linked opportunity for young people directly to where someone lives and local transport links. This was considered especially difficult in rural areas, with difficulty meeting up with people.

Innovator Organisation Consultation

"The decision that affects my life the most: the decisions of adults in parliament and looking after the politics and my education, and transport actually. It's very expensive..."

"[it] depends on your area/where you live/transport links."

"Poor transport- lack of part time working being available in the local area without need to travel further."

"Buses are irregular and bus stops aren't the nicest, so students won't want to wait there."

"often the more rural an area you live in, because the transport's not very good around here, it's even harder to get to places and meet up with people."

Additional Context

- **West Midlands Railway transferred to public ownership in February 2026. For young people in Staffordshire, day-to-day operations, timetables, and ticket prices remain unchanged in the short term as part of the transition into Great British Railways**
- **Staffordshire's Local Transport Plan links connectivity to education, training, employment and social inclusion.**
- **In Staffordshire, 14% of people in education usually travel by bus, compared with 3% of people travelling to work. Passenger journeys have fallen around 48% since 2014/15.**
- **The Staffordshire Local Transport Plan says there is no one-size-fits-all approach.**

Source notes:
Cheaper travel for millions with a third off fares - https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cheaper-travel-for-millions-with-a-third-off-fares

Transfer to Public Ownership- https://www.westmidlandsrailway.co.uk/publicownership

Staffordshire Local Transport Plan 2026- https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files

Education

OUR MESSAGE

"Education needs to have more resources to address areas of curriculum that are not covered, e.g. doing taxes, getting a job, doing a CV. We think that this could be covered in tutor, after-school clubs, and specific study groups outside of school."

The Data

Across the research, young people repeatedly asked for more practical preparation for employment, managing money, politics, interviews, CV writing and life after school. Education was also discussed as a source of pressure, because of target grades, homework, exams, balancing part time work, and expectations about future choices. Considering the pressures that young people felt, they also spoke about the support available to them. Support in schools was described as being difficult to access, particularly when pathways involve several referrals or young people feel their problems aren't serious enough.

Innovator Organisation Consultation

"Students want sessions on finances, life skills (e.g. every day first aid), politics - to prepare them for after school."

"In the future schools will teach more real life issues and politics"

"Teachers expect a lot of work to be done in a certain amount of time that is not realistic for students to meet the learning objectives and adults don't always see that this is difficult and expect a lot."

"So I feel like in school, maybe during PSHE, we could have that couple of lessons, preparing for interviews, what to say, how to present ourselves."

"Adults should ask us about our experiences because we're the ones who are having to pay for it. We're the ones going through it."

YPSG Primary Research- Young People's Survey

"They feel intimidated by the prospect of a job"

Additional Context

- **The County Council's Careers and Participation Service provides help with applications, CV writing, interview, preparation and decisions about learning options**
- **The Staffordshire Employment and Skills Strategy also identifies gaps between young people's skills and employers' expectations and describes an employer skills competency framework developed in response**
- **A core Youth Select Committee inquiry found that only 30% of the young people it surveyed across the UK said that less than 100% of them feel prepared for adult life. Only 22.3% said useful skills for managing money and finances were covered**

Source Notes:
Careers and Participation Service- https://www.staffsjobscareers.com/careers-resources/more/careers-and-participation-service/

Staffordshire Employment and Skills Strategy (2023-2030)- https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-11/Staffordshire%20Employment%20and%20Skills%20Strategy.pdf

PSHE Education in Secondary Schools: Preparing young people for adult life- https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/commons-committees/youth-select-committee/202526/2youth-committee-pshe-education-online-2.pdf

Working Together

OUR MESSAGE

"By working together, more connectivity can create quicker and more personalised change. We don't think that change can happen unless we work together! Changemakers need to work with each other, and young people need to be considered in change-making in the services for young people."

The Data

Better relationships between generations, services and decision-makers are needed, with young people treated as partners in change rather than recipients of services. However, YPSG interviews and surveys suggest that stereotypes can weaken everyday relationships between young people and adults. The Innovator consultations proposed shared activities, intergenerational events, community spaces and stronger communication between services.

From all of the consultation data and primary research, young people's needs often cross organisational boundaries, including transport, education, health, youth provision, local planning and employment, which cannot be addressed by one body.

YPSG Research

Interviews described limited links with adults and suggested fewer stereotypes could lead to more conversation, and adult survey responses described an 'us versus them' barrier, as well as 75% of adult respondents saying that young people stereotype older people.

Innovator Consultations

Three Innovator Organisations identified that young people proposed shared activities and events across ages. The example of a repair-café, where people come together through shared hobbies, community meals and creative events, shows practical routes to connection.

Quotes

YPSG Primary Research-Young People's Interview

"It depends which parts I speak to lots of people my age but not really other ages. I suppose there would be more different groups speaking if it was not stereotyping or misconceptions."

"Inclusive events would help everyone mix."

Innovator Organisation Consultations

"easier way to communicate between services."

"I felt connection [at the repair café], and it brought an element of joy."

YPSG Primary Research-Adult Survey

"It's us Vs them. I think unless it's your direct relations then stereotypes rule over the perception of other people."

"When they are brought together positively everyone benefits."

Innovator Organisation Consultations

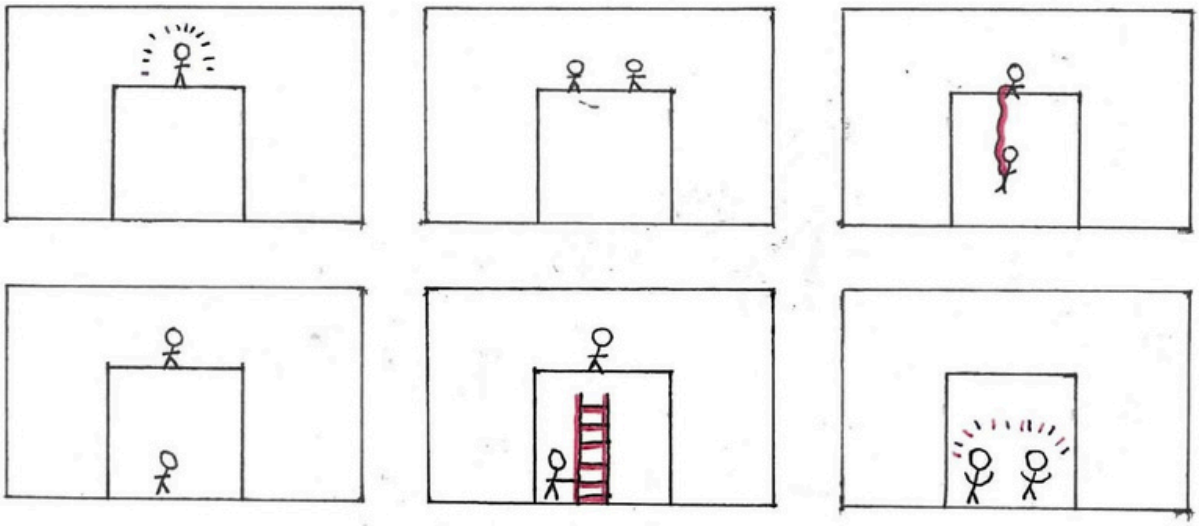
"Communities could connect more by taking more and trusting each other."

Additional context

- **From the 2023/24 Community Life Survey, across Staffordshire districts, 57.6% of adults agreed that people pull together to improve their neighbourhood, while 44.1% agreed that people in the neighbourhood can be trusted.**
- **The National Youth Strategy emphasises a community young people feel part of. It also talks about trusted people, places and community belonging being joined up rather than treating them as separate needs.**

Storyboards created by YPSG to support their Working Together research message

Abseiling Trust.

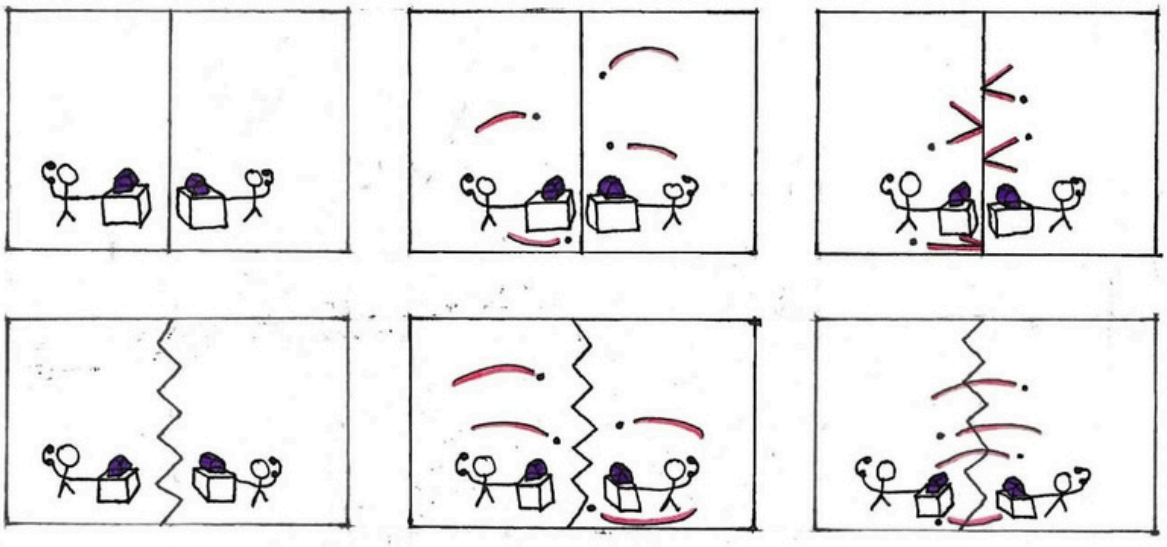


- A person gets stuck ontop of a tall wall before another person comes along to help them down, trusting they will bring a ladder.
- They both work together to help each other down where the coloured sparks become brighter to suggest their joy.

- "Communities could connect more by talking more and trusting each other."
- 'Shared activities and events.'
- 'Changemakers need to work with each other, and young people.'

- key:
  - Purple = Our point of view.
  - Green = From our research.

Communication.

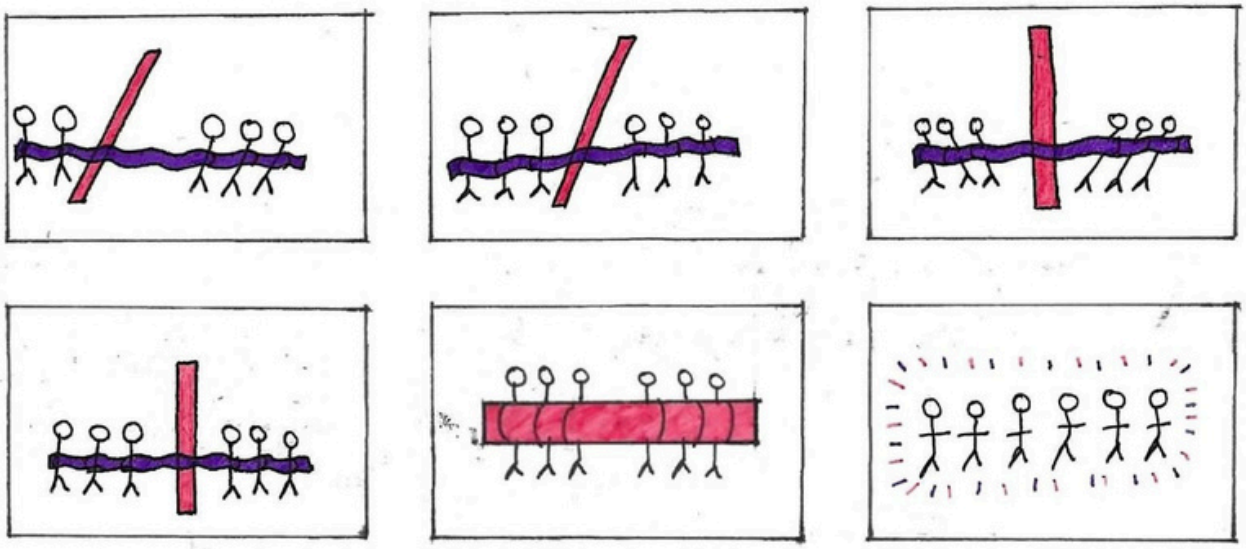


- The straight line suggests that both sides aren't open to any opposing ideas which leads to any communication bouncing back at them.
- As the line becomes jagged, both sides are open to opposing ideas which allows the communications

- "Easier way to communicate between services."
- Fewer stereotypes could lead to more conversation.

- key:
  - Purple = Our point of view.
  - Green = From our research.

Equalisation.

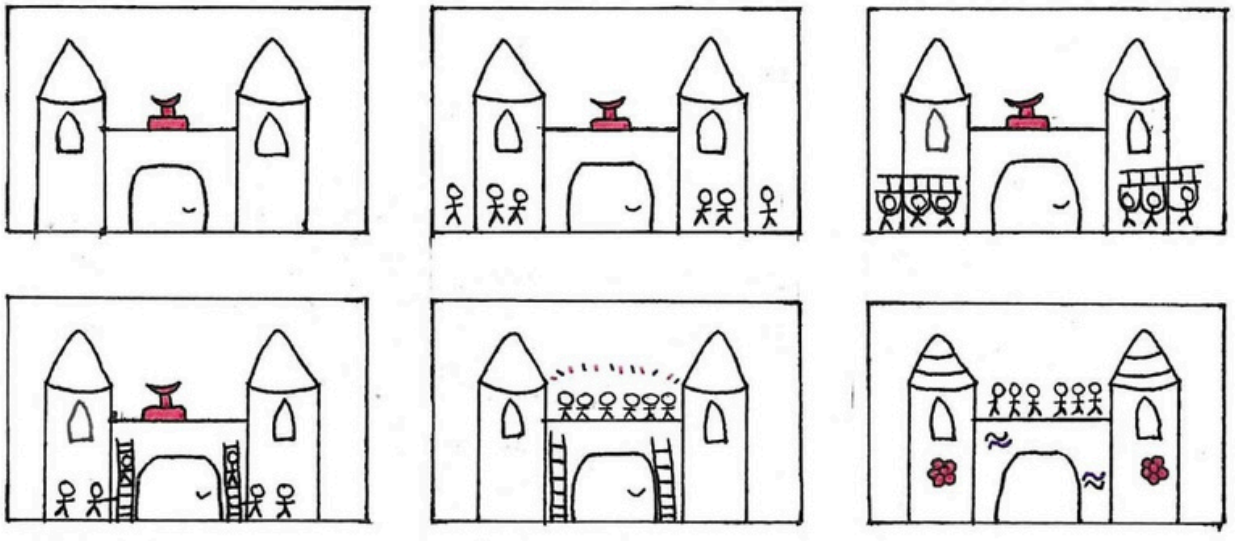


- One team begins winning before both teams decide to equal out before the line disappears and the tug of war ends.
- Both sides celebrate together.

- 'Shared activities and events.'
- "Brought together positively everyone benefits."
- "Inclusive events would help everyone mix."

- Key:
  - Purple = Our point of view.
  - Green = From our research.

The Stereotype Castle.

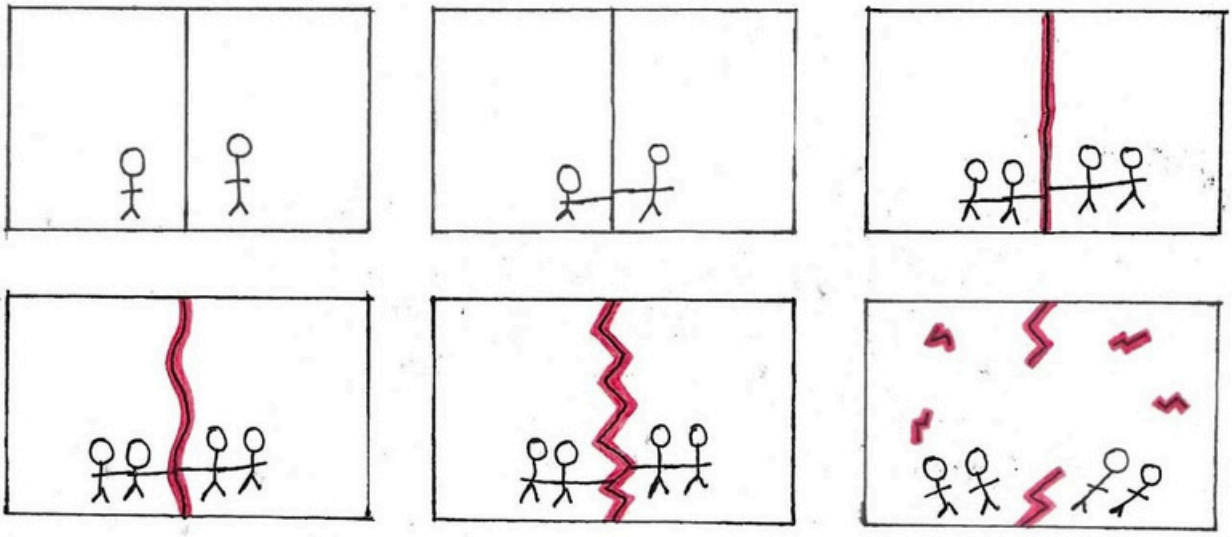


- As the stereotype rules over the castle, a group of people come together and work together to beat the stereotype castle.
- The castle then becomes more personalized and suited where the adornaments disappears and the sparks appear to suggest positivity and welcomeness.

- "Communities could connect more by talking more and trusting each other."
- 'more connectivity can create quicker and more personalised change.'
- "Stereotypes rule over."

- Key:
  - Purple = Our point of view.
  - Green = From our research.

"Us Vs Them."

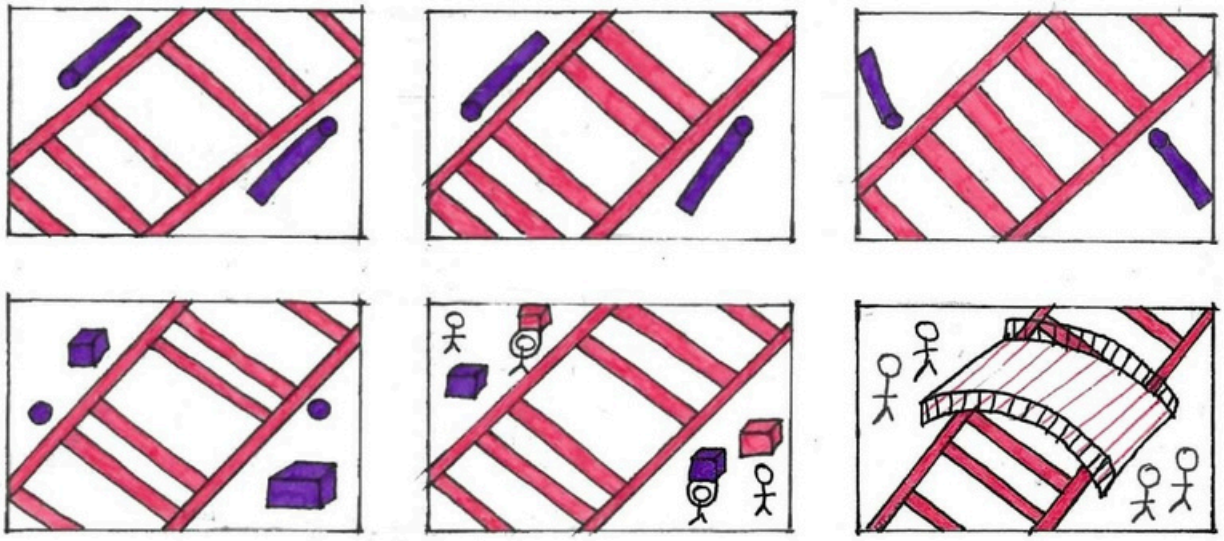


- As younger and older people connect to the page barrier, it lights up to show both sides working together to break the divide.
- The divide then starts to bend until it breaks completley.

- "It's us vs them."
- 'Young people treated as partners in change rather than recipients of services.'
- 'Young people need to be considered in change making.'

- Key:
  - Purple = Our point of view.
  - Green = From our research.

"Organisational Boundaries."



- A railway crossing becomes blocked which means that no one can cross safely.
- People on both sides work together to build a bridge to make sure people can cross over safely.

- 'Young People's needs often cross organisational boundaries.. which cannot be addressed by one organisation alone.'
- "When they are brought together positively everyone benefits."

- Key:
  - Purple = Our point of view.
  - Green = From our research.

Spaces for Young People

OUR MESSAGE

"We want co-produced spaces for young people that feel age-appropriately designed and are disability friendly"

The Data

From the research, young people said that spaces for young people should be affordable, accessible, welcoming and designed around what teenagers and different groups of young people actually want.

Young people asked for varied social, creative, sporting, support and informal spaces. Within these spaces, age appropriateness mattered, particularly for teenagers who might be judged too old for playgrounds or child-focused clubs but too young for adult venues. Wider concerns about accessibility included feeling welcome and freedom from judgement, and focused on cost, available transport, disability access, sensory needs, opening times, and feeling welcome and freedom from judgement.

From all of this, we saw that "nothing to do" often means existing provision doesn't work for young people, rather than no provision existing at all, highlighting the need for co-production.

The research from the YPSG investigation and the Innovator Consultations backs this up

YPSG Research

- **The survey and interviews repeatedly supported more places, including community centres, parks, restaurants, sports and spaces to talk.**
- **A young person called for spaces "designed by young people", but another warned against young people feeling "herded" into a space that doesn't suit them.**
- **Survey respondents mentioned the need for more investment, free spaces and travel. Interviews highlighted that although they were nice to have, restaurants and gyms were often expensive to go to and use.**

Innovator Consultations

- **Every Innovator organisation raised places, activities, youth clubs, creative venues or safe social space.**
- **Six Innovator Organisation consultation findings highlighted a need for young people to influence activities, spending and design.**
- **Cost and transport were recurring barriers across six IOs.**
- **Consultation responses also emphasised the need for more consideration for disability access and sensory needs, as well as emphasising creative provision that goes beyond just sports provision. There was a final point outlining that young people placed importance on trusted local support.**

Spaces for Young People evidence

YPSG Primary Research- Young People's Survey

"definitely investment and things across Staffordshire and safe spaces but spaces designed by young people that they can be proud of and activities that young people want to do that considers people's differences and interests."

"A place where young people don't have to be under judgement could help them feel better and help loosen a bit of their stress"

"not always just youth clubs as these can be quite childish but more places like restaurants, that are affordable"

YPSG Primary Research- YPSG interview response

"I think it would be hard to say to young people, "Here is this place you can all go to" without them feeling herded."

Innovator Organisation Consultations

"We are at an awkward age: 16 - 18-year-olds. Too young for a pub, don't want to be with younger kids, we don't always want food, but unsafe walking around."

I want lots to do - that's free!"

"There's nothing for teenagers except shops."

I do think there needs to be places where like young people can connect that isn't just like a sport or a club."

Additional context:

- **The National Youth Strategy was co-produced with more than 14,000 young people and makes "places to go and things to do" a priority.**
- **The walkabouts that Rhia and Ryan did identified a recurring gap in things that felt engaging and appropriate for young people aged around 13 and above.**
- **Government evidence says 50% of young people reported either do not have access to a youth service or do not know what is available locally .**
- **National research commissioned to inform the National Youth Strategy found that participation in clubs and groups declines with age. Young people aged 16 to 19 had the lowest predicted likelihood of participating, followed by those aged 13 to 15. Older teenagers were also more likely to say that activities were not aimed at people their age, that they lacked confidence or would not fit in**

Source Notes:
Youth Matters: Your National Youth Strategy- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-matters-your-national-youth-strategy/youth-matters-your-national-Youth-strategy

Youth Matters: State of the Nation- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-matters-state-of-the-nation/youth-matters-state-of-the-nation

Barriers and Enablers to Participation in Youth Activities Research- https://assets.publishing service.gov.uk/media/688b2d71aafff64edb712e/Barriers_and_Enablers_Final_Report_accessible.pdf

Research outputs created to support their Spaces for Young People research message:

Left in the Cold

By Ben Causier

We came for football on the green,
To find a mentor, make a friend,
A safe space from the quiet streets,
Now forced to an end,
You left us sitting in the cold,

It's where we found a place to belong,
A roof when things got rough at home,
A quieter desk, a listening ear,
A space where none was alone,
You left us sitting in the cold,

Don't let us go to clear your debt,
Because the places that you close,
Are ones Staffordshire will never forget

You left us sitting in the cold,
never answered our call,
you should stop letting us fall,
You left us sitting in the cold

To the right: a screenshot from a video created by YPSG

Click **here** to watch the full video



APPENDIX 1
Innovator Organisations found: Relationships, access and relevance matter

Key findings

1. **Belonging is mainly about people:** Friends, family, trusted adults, schools, clubs, faith, shared hobbies and being taken seriously helped young people feel they belonged
2. **"Nothing to do" often means "that doesn't work for us":** Places may exist but be expensive, difficult to reach, aimed at younger children, limited to sport, poorly advertised or unwelcoming.
3. **Young People want influence before decisions are made:** They wanted adults to ask first, explain how decisions work and provide different routes to influence services, education, transport, parks and local spending.
4. **Opportunities are unequal:** Money, transport, disability, care experience, confidence, support, where someone lives and "who you know" often combine to shape access.
5. **Safety includes trusted people and early support:** Young people valued friendly adults, safe routes, lighting and well-maintained spaces. Some also wanted earlier help before problems reached crisis point.

"We are at an awkward age 16-18 years old. Too young for a pub, don't want to be with younger kids, we don't always want food, but unsafe walking around."

"I turned away because it's like my problem wasn't big enough... we need to concentrate on small problems that can turn bigger."

"I think it would be very hard to belong... if you're more shy, if you don't like your own skin, I think it's very hard to refuse things."

"It feels like adults decide everything."

"Not everyone gets the same opportunities because of money and transport."

"Adults should ask us about our experiences because we're the ones... going through it."

"[Having opportunities] depends on your area/where you live/transport links."

"I do think there needs to be places where like young people can connect that isn't just like a sport or a club."

APPENDIX 2:
Young People's Steering Group Research

A mixed picture, with recurring negative stereotypes

Not every young person felt discriminated against, but the same concerns appeared across methods, and we found that young people are often judged as a group, and that the behaviour of a visible minority can shape perceptions of everyone, especially when young people gather in public, wear certain clothing or are linked to stories about antisocial behaviour.

- **Belonging and relationships:** Some young people felt connected through clubs, sport, dance, volunteering, school and neighbours. Others had friends their own age but little connection to adults or the wider community.
- **Crime and self-fulfilling labels:** Some young people described a possible cycle: being treated as a troublemaker, feeling rejected, seeking acceptance elsewhere and becoming more likely to live up to the label. Others disagreed that stereotypes cause crime.
- **Mental Health:** Young people linked stereotypes with feeling sad, helpless, isolated, unnoticed or less valuable. Small everyday interactions, such as being avoided or treated as a threat, could matter.
- **Safe and welcome:** Responses were almost evenly divided on physical safety. However, young people also described emotional safety: feeling able to speak, gather and be themselves without being judged

"We get funny looks on the street if we're in groups with our mates; there are some people that probably deserve it, but at the end of the day there isn't much for us to do apart from sit in McDonalds or a park."

"If a young person is constantly made to feel like an outsider to a community, a troublemaker to the community or a threat to the community, they will surely be made to feel less of a person."

"If you're being perceived as someone who you're not, it makes you feel unsafe, unwelcome and just judged for who you are."

"A place where young people don't have to be under judgement could help them feel better and help loosen a bit of their stress."

"[We want] safe spaces but spaces designed by young people that they can be proud of and activities that young people want to do."

Young People supported affordable, age-appropriate places and activities, but they did not want to be 'herded' into adult-designed provision. They also wanted trusted adults who listen, respond to the individual and do not rely on a script.

What Happens Next? From Research to Action

Over the last year, young people have shared their experiences. Innovator Organisations have listened to communities, and the Young People's Steering Group have analysed the evidence to develop clear messages for change. The festival is not the end of this process. It is the point where research becomes action.

Throughout today, you have heard what young people told us about transport, education, spaces for young people, working together, and involving young people more meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives. These messages are grounded in evidence and shaped by the lived experiences of young people across Staffordshire.

The Role of Changemakers

Real change happens when people and organisations decide to act on what they have heard. This afternoon, we are inviting every Changemaker in the room to consider what action you can take to make changes happen and commit to an action.

Stay connected

Cathryn Rayner - Project Manager: cathryn@staffscvys.org.uk

Rhia Taylor-Tipton - Project Co-ordinator or to contact the Young People's Steering Group: rhia@staffscvys.org.uk

Ryan Fox - Research Co-ordinator: ryan.fox@staffs.ac.uk

Nic Gratton - Participatory Action Research Consultant: nic@nicolagrattonconsulting.com

Know Your Place **Website**

Know Your Place **Facebook**

Know Your Place **Instragram**

Know Your Place **LinkedIn**
















Thank you for being part of the change.

Every conversation, commitment and collaboration helps move us closer to a Staffordshire where young people feel heard, valued and actively involved in shaping the places and services around them. Together, we can turn evidence into action and action into meaningful change.

Thank you to the young people who shared their experiences, designed and carried out research, reviewed evidence and developed messages for change. Thank you also to the Innovator Organisations, practitioners, community contacts, partners and supporters who contributed time, local knowledge and opportunities throughout the year.


KNOW YOUR PLACE
LEAD THE CHANGE