



Our Voice Progress Report

A Summary of Participation and Projects
2020-2022

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Voice and Influence and participation? What's that all about then?

Our Voice is the Children and Young People's Participation Programme for Kirklees.

We work with anyone aged 4-19 (or 25 if you experience Special Educational Needs and or disabilities, are a young person leaving care or a young parent), who lives, works, or attends school or college in Kirklees.

Our Aim: **To involve young people in local decision making.**

We support children and young people to communicate their thoughts, wishes and feelings to the Senior Managers in our Council, Elected Members, Partner Agencies and to the 'Buyers' (Commissioners) of our services. Our ethos is that young people are experts in their own lives. By sharing their knowledge and experiences, we can listen and adapt what we offer to meet their needs, promote inclusion, and create a climate for co-production.

Why we do this: We are a restorative service. We believe we should 'work with young people, rather than doing to them'. We value young people's contributions. Our work is underpinned by Article 12 of the UNRC-That children have the right to express their thoughts, wishes and feelings and for these to be taken seriously. We know that by involving children and young people in decision making, it helps them develop skills, feel included and ensures our services can be designed to meet need.

How we do it: By having fun! We understand all young people communicate in their own way. Therefore, our sessions are all about building trusted relationships. They are informal, activity and game based. We weave important questions into the activities we do and listen to what children and young people have to say. We collect these messages, anonymise them and with the young people's consent, pass them on to where they need to go. We ensure young people understand why we are asking for their help, what might be the outcomes and how we will let them know the 'so what?'. This creates meaningful participation.

There is currently no charge for the Our Voice offer. We only ask adults who commission projects have a budget to reward the young people who volunteer and that where possible, we partnership work with services to share resources and skills.

The benefits of participation: The children and young people who participate receive a local Young Advisors Award, evidencing their contribution. They then become part of an active advisory group. We stay in regular contact and offer participation opportunities. This offer is flexible; where young people engaging pick and choose what they want to do and much time they can commit to projects of their choice. We work with rewards, expenses, and recognition, valuing the voluntary hours young people give.

Meet the Team



Kay Parry-Team Leader

Kay absolutely breathes all things participation.

In every session, Kay shares “I’ve the best job in the world, because I get to listen to and work with young people, each and every day” and it’s absolutely true!



Susan Adams-V&I Officer

Susan is the longest standing member of Our Voice-18 years to be exact! Susan is an exceptionally creative fashion designer and lives by the slogan of her favourite book...

“Feel the Fear and do it anyway!”



Harry Duggan-V&I Officer

Harry is our resident tea enthusiast. When Harry isn’t working with us, he’s studying for his Psychology Degree. Harry’s special interest is co-working projects alongside young people from our LGBTQIA+ communities.

and playing Dungeons and Dragons!



Lewis Hemingway-V&I Officer

Lewis is all about our environment.

Lewis is a Zoologist and works with projects that support Youth Climate Activism. When Lewis isn’t working with us, he’s building cool peddle powered sound rigs, walking his doggy and enjoying the outdoors.



Mary White-Commissioning and Partnership Manager

Mary is a wonderful link to our Decision Makers. Sitting in the ‘strategic’ world of the team. Alongside Mary’s talent for forging and maintaining strong working relationships, Mary is also the most excellent proof-reader! Thanks Mary! 😊

*Kirklees has been committed to Voice & Influence since 1996: We were formerly known as IYCE (Involving Young Citizens Equally), the team has evolved over time: but endured. This is with thanks to being valued by our children, young people, our partners and Decision Makers

Find out what we do here: [Our Voice Web Page](#)

Our engagement journey...

420 children and young people directly engaged with us in parks and open spaces throughout the Covid pandemic **708** children and young people took part in indirect engagements, using arts and virtual methods. Over **1000** young people virtually accessed the Our Climate: Our Voice, climate change fest, created in partnership with young people who are care experienced.

We have **23** Our Voice @ Groups established across **21** provisions. This means we've built ongoing, working relationships with **193** young people.

We've completed **3** service commissioning projects, for mental health, young carers and LGBTQIA+ Services. Recruitments too, including one for a Head of Service and Early Support Managers.

We've completed **11** other projects, bringing young people's voice and influence to the SEND Transformation Plan, Safeguarding Children Partnership, grants panels for the Youth Development Programme Board, presented at the Children and Young People Partnership and supported the evaluation of the Holiday Activity Fund.

A total of 2,453 contacts are recorded in our projects

Find out what we do here: [Our Voice Web Page](#)

March 2020: Our Voice is re-established.

The team expands and work begins on the first day of lockdown (what a challenge!)

Throughout Covid March 2020- March 2021:

Online [Local Offer Engagement](#)

Exploring online approaches to [communication](#)

Real time pandemic response work including

outreach, '[Somewhere over the Rainbow](#)' and working with the Children and Young People Partnership

Virtual engagements took place for the Youth Development Programme Board

March 2021: Our Climate: Our Voice:

Kirklees first ever [virtual youth climate](#) fest.

Over 1000 young people access the virtual event. 56 young people become Eco-Ambassadors to support the Climate Commission and Eco-Fest 2022

July-September 2021: Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) Engagement:

Visits to 30 provisions, to speak with 460 children and young people about the youth offer and covid recovery.

January-April 2022 Everyone's Invited:

We respond in partnership with 248 young people to the OFSTED review about Peer-on-Peer Sexual Harassment and Harm

July 2022: Assistive Tech & Summer Programme

Assistive Tech and VR engagements begin. Eco-Ambassadors create content for the 2022 Climate Fest. We head out to HAF to meet young people



February 2021: Young Carers Commissioning: Young people help write the service specification by discussing a [young carers](#) needs.

May -June 2021: Mental Health & Wellbeing Service Commissioning: Direct engagement with **121** children about what they need to [be happy and healthy](#)

September-December 2021: Our Voice @ Group development and Team Recruitment. Lots of direct work, building relationships for up-and-coming projects. Young people support the recruitment of new V&I Officers

May-June 2022: Our Space Capital Grants.

84 young people help allocate £1million of [capital grants funding](#).

June-July 2022: Responding to the SEND Green paper & LGBTQIA+ Commissioning:

74 young people create a response to the Governments [SEND Green Paper](#).

19 Young people help develop the LGBTQIA+ service specification



What creates meaningful engagement? Our approaches on a page.

Participation is not a one size fits all and so we have a variety of ways to reach the young people we work with.



Virtual Engagement

Our less used and least preferred method of engagement.

Essential during the pandemic and favoured by some young people.

Although you can be relatively creative, this method lends itself to questionnaires (another thing we try not to use) or getting young people who live far apart 'together'



Outreach Approaches

Our approach to engage young people who might not usually participate.

We grab our trainers and head out to our parks, open spaces, and estates. We tend to do this on a seasonal basis as we meet more young people in the spring and summer.



Indirect Work

Our approach to work with young people who might not want to do face to face but have something to say!

This might include sending surprise games or activities by snail mail or creating a resource for colleagues to use with young people they work alongside.

*A new development is the participation network. Bringing together adults together who can share and pass on information from the young people they support.



Direct Work-Our absolute fave

We visit young people in their community groups or provision. This means we are on 'their turf' in a known space. The young people don't have to travel places to participate, reducing barriers to inclusion. We can spend money on rewards, rather than travel reimbursements.

We currently have networks in...

2 specialist provisions

3 alternate provisions

1 college (North and South) with 2 groups

7 secondary schools

6 primary schools

6 community providers

A group for elective home educated young people

*we are already booked up Sept-Nov '22 in new provisions

We use the [Lundy Model](#) of participation in our projects with young people:

SPACE

We create a safe space

virtual, outreach or provision

VOICE

We facilitate communication

build relationships, use games, tech, or whatever works

AUDIENCE

We truly listen and advocate

We share what we have learnt

INFLUENCE

We act on what we hear

We work together to make change

All 4 elements of the process happen, in this order, to make children and young people's participation, meaningful.



Find out what we do here: [Our Voice Web Page](#)



Engagement in Action: a commissioning project on a page

Why did we work with children and young people to understand this?

Mental Health and Wellbeing Services are at their point of review, in the funding/commissioning process. By working with children and young people we can understand what works well and what could be done differently, to improve efficiency, experiences and outcomes.

Which approaches did we use and why?

Children aged 5-11 need shorter, activity-based activities to increase their engagement. We created a physical game with lots of running, followed by a steadier arts and crafts activity.

Young People aged 12-19 are more able to reflect on their experiences. We took treats to their provisions and held 'round table' discussions.

The ask...

“What do children and young people need to be happy and healthy?”

Who did we reach out to, for help?

121 children and young people in 10 provisions, all each volunteering an hour each of their time.

What did young people say?

“That we all need to talk about feelings, more! If we understand how to describe what we are feeling, we can ask for help when things are tough. We also think we need tools and tips on how to stay happy and healthy. This is because we really want to feel confident to manage challenges ourselves.

When we do need help from a service, we sometimes feel ‘lost’ while we are waiting. It can be hard to get the right help at the right time. It would be great if there was some help while we wait. For those of us who are older, we struggle with short courses of counselling. This is because it takes us some time to open up. By the time we do, the sessions are ending”.

Kirklees COUNCIL In Spring & Summer of 2021 we spoke to children and young people to see what they needed to be emotionally healthy. Here are the important things we learned:

WHO DID WE SPEAK WITH?
Engagement tools used...

- 51 Children aged 6-11 in a face-to-face fun session
- 70 young people aged 12+ in a face-to-face fun session
- Online survey: 131 people completed this including children, parent/carers and adults who work with children

WHAT CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO BE EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?
Here are the commonly occurring themes...

Children said...
We need people to use 'the words for emotions' in conversations and help us to understand what feelings mean. We want to be able to learn to manage challenges and choose the people we'd like to help us.

Young people said...
Help us develop our self-care and coping skills, so we can help ourselves. We want to know how to plan to feel well rather than things becoming overwhelming or a crisis. Time-based support and therapy might not work because it takes time for us to open up. Support options need to be more flexible.

The online survey said...
We need it to be easier to find and ask for help. When we do ask, we need to know how to manage while we wait and not wait for too long for a service to help us. The people who help us are important. They should be able to care for us and understand us. They should have the right skills and knowledge.

WHAT WOULD A GREAT EMOTIONAL HEALTH & WELLBEING SERVICE LOOK LIKE?

WE'VE LISTENED TO THIS... SO WHAT NEXT?

What we can all do to help each other...
Talk regularly about naming emotions and help us understand our feelings. Bring emotions and feelings into the activities we do or games we play. Help us work out who we should speak to if we have a worry - before we have a problem. Show us that it is ok to speak out and that people will listen. Help us understand things we can do, places we can go or people we can see to help us feel happy and healthy.

What services are going to do...
We've started to make changes! We've met with the people who deliver our Mental Health services to share what you have said. Already we are working on changing the ways you contact/access a service (referrals) how you move between services and what help is there for when support is ending. We are asking our partners to work a little differently and re-shape the offer. This means moving support around to 'test' if your needs.

our voice
review support change

That's great-so what do we do now?

The information shared has helped us understand that we need to work together and do somethings differently. The referral pathways for some services have changed. The offer for Mental Health in Schools has been expanded and services are being remodelled. Our decision makers are meeting with health services every two months to help us work on driving these changes. Early intervention and supporting people with activities and social experiences is also happening.

Find out what we do here: [Our Voice Web Page](#)

Engagement in Action: a safeguarding project on a page



Why did we work with children and young people to understand this?

'Everyone's Invited', a viral campaign, prompted An OFSTED review of Peer-on-Peer Harassment and harm, in education provisions. A recommendation from the review, was to seek young people's thoughts around this issue. This helps us understand the local challenges enables young people to communicate their ideas about how we can all address peer on peer harassment/harm.

Which approaches did we use and why?

We used scenario's (stories) that got us talking! These were adapted to each age group. We knew this was a sensitive one, so we did all workshops face to face but introduced virtual approaches too, using slido. This meant those who didn't want to 'share with the room' vocally, could do on a screen. Doodle and fiddle approaches (tablecloths and play doh) gave us some great artwork and created a mindful distraction while we chatted.

What did young people say?

Lots! They are very aware of peer-on-peer harassment and harm. Young people shared really good examples of when adults around them have worked to support them with this issue, but also ideas to improve our awareness, interventions and processes for reporting.

That's great-so what do we do now?

The full report was used to explain to Inspector's in the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) how we are working with young people to understand risk. Our Senior Leaders are looking at how we offer staff development and training, so the support and interventions we offer, work well. We have developed a follow-on project with two provisions, to look at how young people seek support for peer-on-peer sexual harassment and harm, young people's understandings around consent and how we 'flip' discussions from focussing on protective behaviours, to challenging perpetrators.

We will be repeating the process in Feb 2023 to see 'what's changed'.

Who did we reach out to, for help?

248 children and young people in 16 provisions.

Responding to 'Everyone's Invited': Understanding young people's perspectives on peer-on-peer sexual harassment and harm.

In May 2020 a viral campaign called 'Everyone's Invited' was created, allowing people to anonymously document their accounts of peer-on-peer sexual harassment and harm, which had occurred in education provisions. The government responded to the campaign with an OFSTED review.

A key recommendation of the review was that Multi Agency Partners should engage directly with children and young people, to ensure the ways we are responding to incidents of peer-on-peer sexual harassment and harm, is effective.

We spoke with 248 children and young people, aged 11-25, from primary, secondary, post-16 and community provisions.

Twenty five workshops, were completed in sixteen provisions, to discuss:

- Cat calling/verbal sexual harassment
- Online harassment (studies)
- Being followed/stalked
- Non-consensual touch

Protected Characteristics Matter!

- 100 people who are LGBTQ+ participated
- 61 people from our BAME community participated
- 25 people who experience SENSEND participated
- 45 volunteers stated they have a Faith
- 3 young people who are looked after participated

What did the young people say: The overall headlines.

- 1 We asked...** Is peer on peer sexual harm and harassment a problem?
 - Yes!** It occurs everywhere, especially for those of us who define ourselves as female or who are LGBTQ+. Verbal and online harassment are the most problematic. Non-consensual touch can happen, but is far less frequent.
- 2 We asked...** If you wanted to seek help, do you know what to do?
 - Sometimes.** Our help seeking behaviours are influenced by the type of harassment we are reporting, whether we have protected characteristics and how the person we are talking, responds.
- 3 We asked...** Do you feel safe to take action?
 - Not really.** Verbal and online harassment is so common place, its accepted. Shame, fear of disbelief and embarrassment make speaking out very difficult. We feel too much responsibility is placed on our behaviour rather than that of the perpetrator.

So now we have listened, how can we all work together, to make positive change?

We are very thankful to all the children and young people who were brave enough to speak out and be part of this AMAZING project. There are SO MANY ideas that have been shared and we are now taking some time to make an action plan of what we can do to make changes, based on what young people are saying. We will update you on the plan as it develops. Key areas for exploration are...

- The need to develop adults' confidence, knowledge and skills around understanding and addressing peer on peer sexual harassment and harm.
- Looking at the language we use, when addressing peer on peer sexual harassment and harm. How we shift the focus to the perpetrator.
- The need to look at how we make reasonable adjustments reporting processes and support, so they help young people who may experience greater challenges, because of protected characteristics.
- Listening to children and young people's ideas about what is helpful and supportive for someone experiencing peer-on-peer harassment and harm.

Children Safeguarding Online Partners

Find out what we do here: [Our Voice Web Page](#)

Engagement in Action: a grants project on a page



Why did we work with children and young people to understand this?

The Council has £1 million funding, that community organisations can apply for, to upgrade and improve places and spaces. This is part of the Community Youth Offer, Our Space workstream and the Youth Development Programme Board (YDPB). Through the YDPB we knew local facilities and places are important to our young people and communities. We believe young people should be involved in how these are developed, to provide a quality and attractive youth offer. We also now from previous engagements and in terms of safety, local places to go, people to see and things to do are important.

Which approaches did we use and why?

Ideally virtual approaches would have been used on this project. It's been a learning curve! Paper based applications had already been sent out, to services, when young people offered to help. So, we all worked together to turn the lengthy applications into a picture based A3 poster, some PowerPoints and some iPad-based approaches.

Who did we reach out to, for help?

84 children and young people in 12 provisions.

What did young people say?

That they thought some applications should be awarded full or part funding. Where multiple requests for the same/similar resources were made, how can providers share? How are community funded projects passing savings on to local young people? There was lots of feedback about how to improve applications too.

Our Space Capital Grants: A summary of young people's participation

OUR SPACE

Between April 2022 and June 2022, Kirklees Council had £1 million of funding to help Community groups and organisations develop their youth places and spaces.

This scheme is part of the Youth Development Programme Board

Applications could be made for:

large grants	small grants
£25-75,000	£10-25,000

Community groups were invited to apply for money. Applications started to arrive...

43 bids for funding were made by local community organisations

12 panels took place, in Spen, Batley, Dewsbury, Huddersfield and The Valleys to gather young people's feedback. 84 young people participated. Their ages ranged from 12 to 22. Secondary Schools, Alternate Provision, Colleges and Six Forms, Community Groups and young people who are Home Educated all volunteered. This helped us to include people with a wide range of experiences and views. Applications were 'matched' with young people from the local area wherever possible. If a group offered limited feedback, the application was seen by another panel. For Special Educational Needs (SEND) focussed applications, young people who experience SEND were the assessors. Over a quarter of the young people who participated stated they have an EHCP. To try to assure consistency and quality, 10 Groups did a preparatory training session to understand the criteria for funding. Two groups discussed the criteria, fairness and expectations at the beginning of their panel session.

We want to say a **HUGE THANK YOU** to each and every young person who volunteered their time in this process. We could not have done it without you :) Thank you too, to the staff at the provisions who helped organise the sessions and support the young people. Now, turn over, to see what we found out.

That's great-so what do we do now?

The applications have been assessed by community providers and adult panels too. This has been combined with the young people's feedback.

12 applications have been successfully funded and 11 pending further information. The Commissioners (people who check all the legal bits and who arrange the distribution of the money), are in the process of letting successful applicants know.

Young people can now help by visiting the provisions and letting us know how well the providers are doing- by seeing the funding 'in action'.

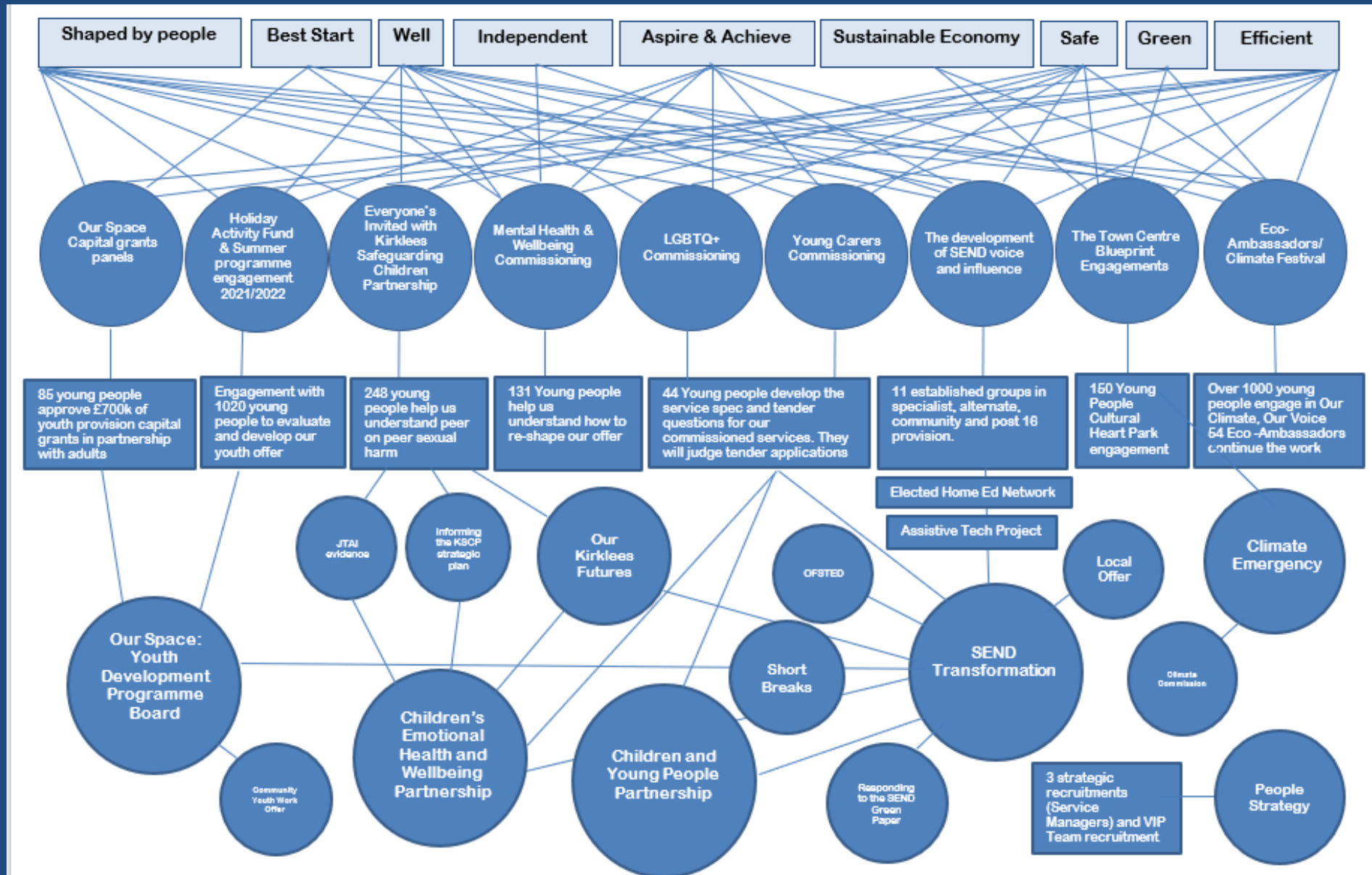
Find out what we do here: [Our Voice Web Page](#)

Understanding how all this engagement and project work, fits into a 'bigger picture'

Our Council Plan
and Priorities

The Young
People's Projects

The strategic boards
and workstream




Find out what we do here: [Our Voice Web Page](#)

Our Reach: Thinking about monitoring and Inclusion

We believe, first and foremost, that to work with us, you just need to be a young person.

So, we've always swayed away from collecting lots of demographic data. One reason for this, is that once we ask young people to fill in forms, or give information about themselves, it sometimes causes worry that their voices are not anonymous. Young people might be working out their identity too. We really aren't fans of putting people in boxes. However, we also recognise that we need to try and be as balanced and representative in the messages we share. So here are some key statistics we can share...



Our youngest volunteers are aged 5, from reception classes, in primary schools. Our oldest volunteers are 24, including the young parents who helped us understand the impact of covid and the University Students who meet us every semester. The average age in our ongoing engagement groups is 15.

We value inclusion.

We know that we have worked with 108 young people who define themselves as LGBTQ+ in our projects to date. This includes linking with young people at our local LGBTQ+ services and those from our wider community.

Gender and ethnicity are personal. So, we have developed a new anonymised monitoring form, which is completely voluntary and allows young people to share how they define themselves. We rolled this out in June 2022, so we hope to report this more thoroughly next summer.

We've really focussed on SEND this year, because young people with special educational needs and or disabilities might not always be heard. We know at least 78 young people in our on-going groups, have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). We currently working with 7 of our specialist and alternate provisions. We work with the Youth Justice Service (YJS) too. We are developing our relationship with the Youth Engagement Service (YES) and all our amazing community providers through our Youth Development Programme Board work.

We know young people who are looked after, participate in our projects too.

Find out what we do here: [Our Voice Web Page](#)



We try to work with young people across our locality. This map shows where we've engaged. We know our places and spaces are meaningful to young people. By maintaining connections in Spennings, Batley, Dewsbury, Huddersfield, Denby Dale, Kirkburton & Mirfield and the Valleys, we are gaining an understanding young people's lived experiences both generally and in the context of their local communities.



Listening to the people we work with

Why do young people choose to engage with us?

We check in, and out with young people, throughout our projects. Here is some of their feedback...

“I’ve really enjoyed working with you all this term. You are all so friendly and work to include everyone. Most importantly, you have listened to each of us” (young person 17-Post 16 SEND Provision)

“Having a chance to chat with people about our shared experiences and what matters to us is cool” (young person 14)

“Love playing uno...it’s the competition. We team up and talk, it’s fun” (young person 15)

“Never have I ever, it got us all talking and explained what everyone has done. We learnt a lot about each other as a group. You say it’s public speaking-you lot are clever; you make it relaxed so you know we will talk (laughs)” (young person 17).

“Some of the things we can share here, we would really struggle with anywhere else. Thank you for listening” (young person 16)

“Not gonna lie, I’m looking forward to the holidays-but will you be coming back in September?” (young person 15-Alternate Provision)

Why do provisions facilitate our engagement with young people?

We also send anonymous feedback forms to the colleagues who facilitate Our Voice’s access to young people in their provisions. Here are some of the things they said...

“In the preparation and delivery of the session, great efforts were made to consider the barriers to student understanding, and how to overcome these...”

“The sessions were well organised, and the team kept activities managed into short chunks, in order to keep the students engaged. I really valued the opportunity for our young people to have a voice and be listened to - thanks to Our Voice for their enthusiasm and commitment”

“Thank you for working with our pupils and giving them, such rewarding opportunities...”

“I use the sessional feedback sheet that Our Voice provided following the initial sessions as evidence... I’ve used it in assemblies and staff training”

Find out what we do here: [Our Voice Web Page](#)



Looking to the future...shoot for the stars and you might just reach the moon

We've organised this in priority-based on feedback from children and young people. This is their take on how we work better, together.

1. We have a dream that the whole of our Local Authority and all the people we work with, have a simple and shared vision of involving us meaningfully (participation). This is a few, basic principles, we all understand and strive to achieve. How we do it, will vary-but it's a shared and common aim. This must include a shared definition of voice, influence, participation, and co-production.

2. We have a dream that when we share what really matters, we will understand what difference our contribution has made in a timely manner. This means adults will be honest about what they have learnt from our messages. There will be measurable and workable responses, within a clear and understandable time frame. Delays and challenges can occur, and sometimes 'working plans' have to change-that's ok! We just need people to show they are listening and trying to create a 'needs led system'.

3. We have so many solutions. Please work with us on what is possible. We are so frequently told what we 'can't do'-lets reframe it to what we 'can'. We have a wish list and accept all things might not be manageable, but there can usually be ways to work differently.

Everything we do, can be more participatory and more restorative. So, let's work together.

Please remember, working together doesn't mean asking us lots of questions-then saying, 'we asked'. It means saying, we hear your answers and trying to work on changing these things, wherever possible, together.

That way, we don't just tick a box. We shoot for the stars, and we might just reach the moon.

If you've learnt anything, been inspired, or made changes based on what you've read-please tell us. The Our Voice Team will pass on anything you share, with us. You can email us on ourvoice@kirklees.gov.uk or reach us on our socials (on the back of this report).

THANK YOU



Our Voice

Kirklees Children and Young People's Participation
Programme

Brian Jackson House
(Office B6-The Basement)

New North Parade

Huddersfield

HD1 5JP

email: ourvoice@kirklees.gov.uk

 [@OVKirklees](https://twitter.com/OVKirklees)

Call: 07814791744 (Kay Parry-Team Manager)

Find out what we do here: [Our Voice Web Page](#)

Read our [blog](#) here