

Growing a stronger youth council

Key evidence

This pack accompanies the “Growing a stronger youth council” report, published in October 2019. It is a snapshot of the key evidence that our Young Commissioners considered when making their recommendations on behalf of children and young people in Kirklees. We’ve published this evidence pack, along with more detailed evidence from our engagement activities, on the Democracy Commission website:

www.DemocracyCommission.org.uk



Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| The Kirklees Youth Survey | 3 |
| Kirklees Youth Survey results | 3 |
| Survey respondents by ward | 7 |
| Spread of survey respondents | 8 |
| Kirklees Youth Survey headlines - Dr Tom Loughran, University of Huddersfield | 9 |
| Our engagement activities | 15 |
| Key messages from our engagement sessions with children and young people | 15 |
| Key messages from Kirklees Youth Council 10th Anniversary celebration event | 17 |
| Key messages from Kirklees Youth Councillors, past and present | 22 |
| Key messages from meetings with Kirklees Councillors & the Mayor of Kirklees | 24 |
| Written responses | 26 |
| Cllr Shabir Pandor, Labour Group Leader & Leader of the Council | 26 |
| Cllr David Hall, Leader of the Conservative Group | 28 |
| Cllr John Lawson, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group | 29 |
| Cllr Andrew Cooper, Leader of the Green Group | 31 |
| Cllr Charles Greaves, Leader of the Independent Group | 32 |
| Cllr Paul White, Independent councillor | 32 |
| Jonathan Stephen, President of Huddersfield Students' Union (2018-2019) | 33 |
| Parents and carers | 35 |
| Key messages from other Youth Councils in the UK | 37 |

The Kirklees Youth Survey

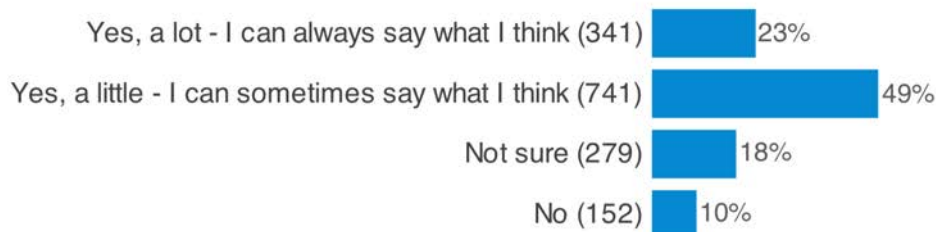
Kirklees Youth Survey results

This summary report was created on 25th April 2019.

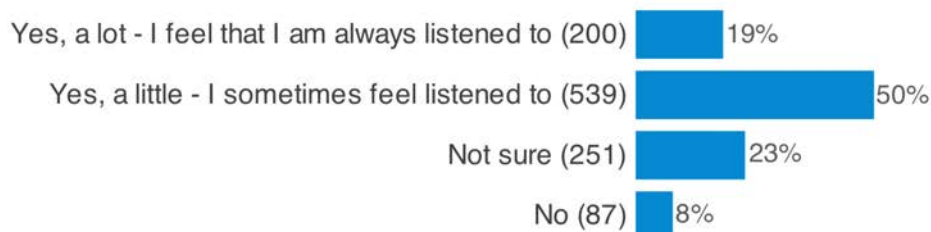
Overall 1,524 respondents aged 11 to 18 in Kirklees completed the Kirklees Youth Survey. Over 95% of participants had not previously taken part in any Kirklees Youth Council activities.

Your voice

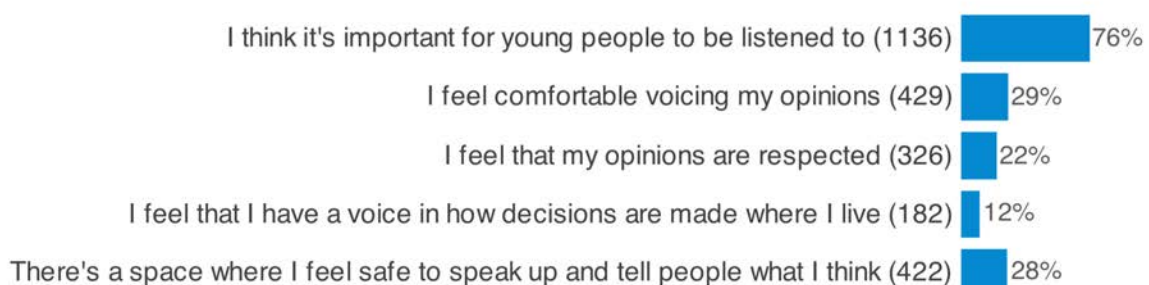
Do you feel that you can voice your opinions?



... and do you feel that your opinions are listened to?

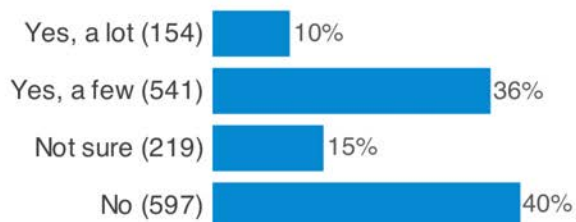


How do you feel about having a voice? (Select all that apply)



Getting involved

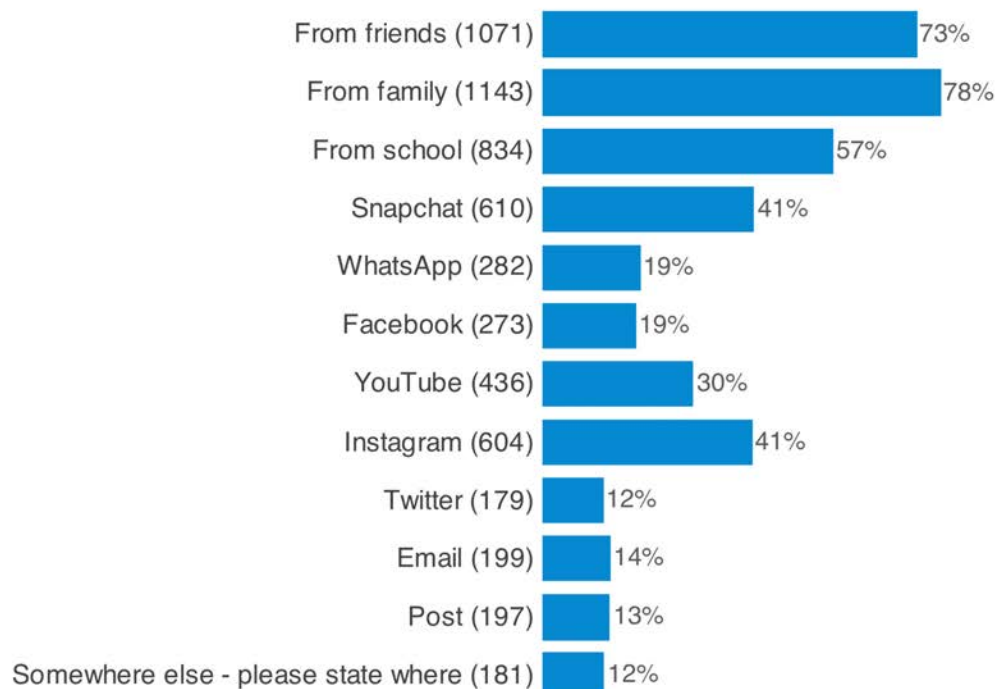
Do you get involved in any activities in your local community?



Would you like to take part in any of these activities? (Select all that apply)

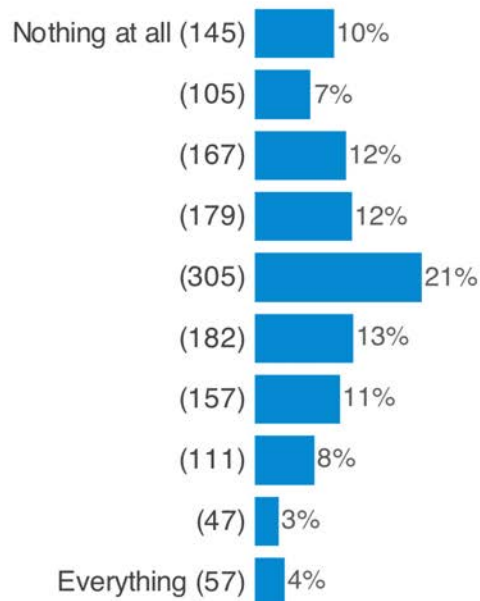


Where do you get information about what's happening in the area where you live? (Select all that apply)



Learning

How much do you feel you know about the decisions that affect young people? (For example, who decides and how)

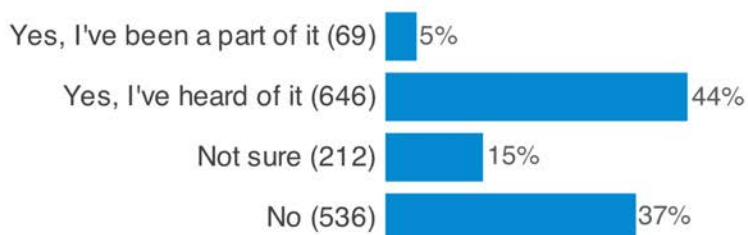


Have you been taught anything about politics or democracy in school?

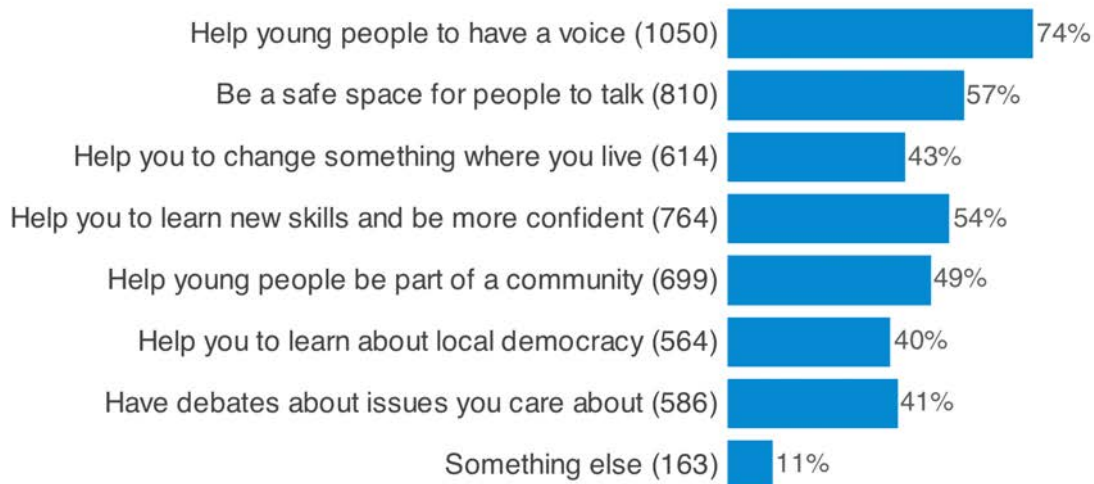


About Kirklees Youth Council

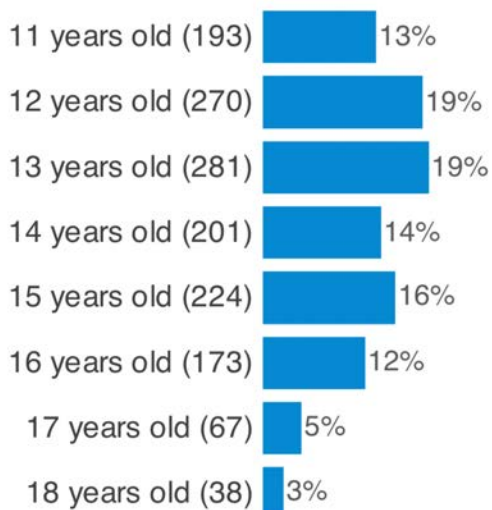
Had you heard of Kirklees Youth Council before today?



What do you think our Youth Council should do? (Select all that apply)



How old are you?



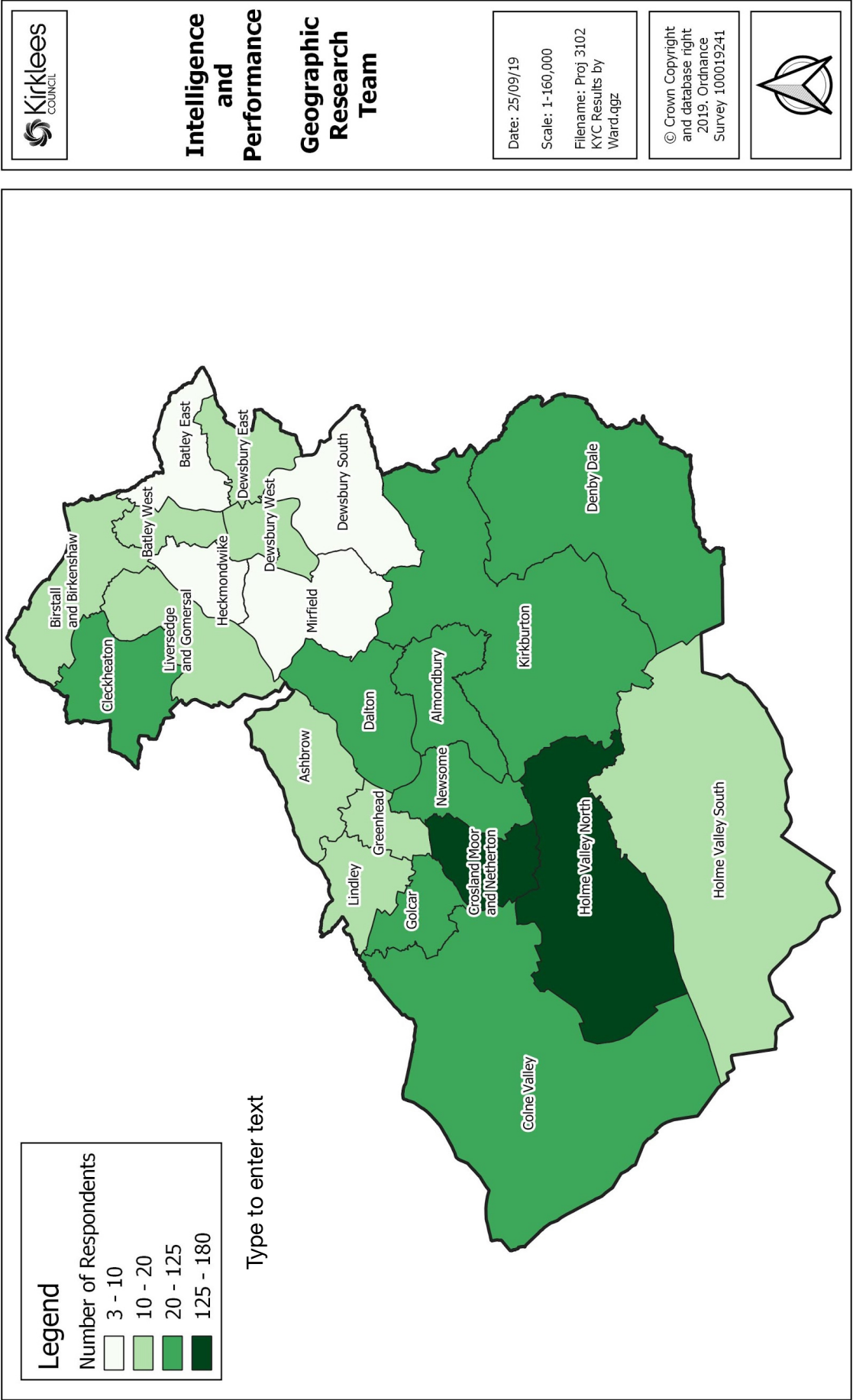
198 young people said that they would like to receive updates about future Kirklees Youth Council activities via email.

Participants also shared their comments about:

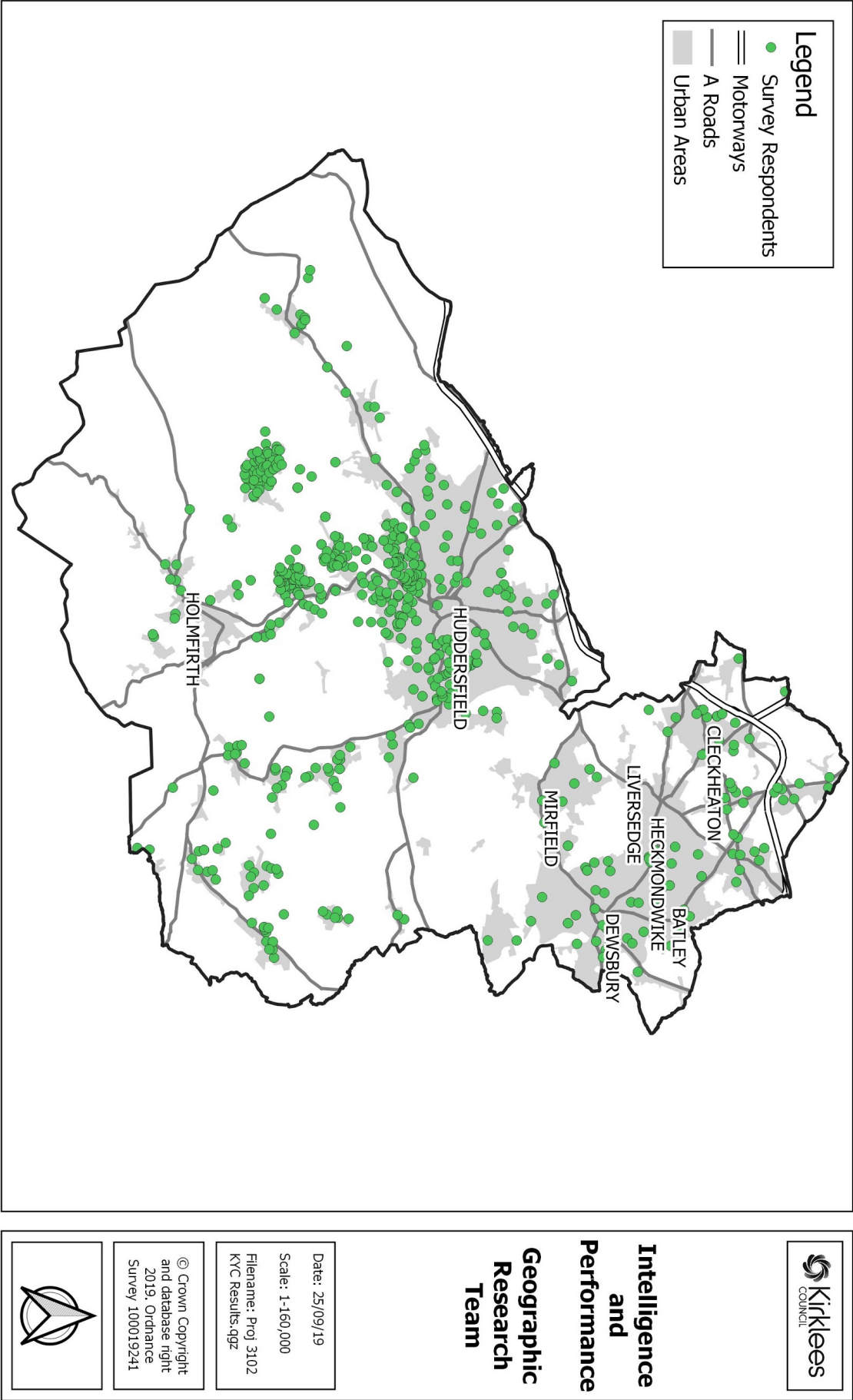
- Places where young people feel safe.
- Activities that young people get involved in.
- Anything else that they'd like us to consider.

The full survey results are available on the Democracy Commission website..

Survey respondents by ward



Spread of survey respondents



Kirklees Youth Survey headlines - Dr Tom Loughran, University of Huddersfield

The headline findings:

1. **Young People primarily desire real world spaces** (as opposed to virtual ones) in which they can interact and engage with each other on issues that matter to them.
2. **There is no 'magic' online platform** through which Young People can be engaged. Young People's use of online information platforms is diverse rather than universal. Not all young people are 'digital natives'. A third of young people did not get their information online at all and among those who did they use a wide range of different platforms.
3. **Young People's sense of voice matters.** Those who felt they could voice their opinions were significantly more likely to engage in community activities and to believe that they had a higher level of knowledge about the decisions that effect them than those who did not. They were also more likely to have heard of the Youth Council. (Interestingly, expressing voice seems more important in this regard than having that voice listened to, where the differences on these measures were a lot smaller). So it seems more about a need for expression than efficacy.
4. **Political Education clearly makes a difference**, albeit a modest one. Those that said they had been taught politics were more likely to believe they had a higher level of knowledge of the decisions that effect them and were more likely to feel that they could express their opinions than those who had not been taught politics.

Real world spaces

On real world spaces, it's pretty straight forward. The survey data shows clearly that it is real world spaces that young people appear to crave, not virtual ones.

Nearly three quarters of these young people (74%) thought the youth council should be about giving young people a voice, while over half (56%) believed it should be providing young people with a safe space to talk about issues.

This seems consistent with the fact that nearly half of the respondents (48%) expressed preferences for community activities that allow them to meet up with other young people.

All of these responses are comfortably the most common in their respective questions.

No magic online platform

On the social media platforms, it was just a case of exploring the responses on where young people get information on their local area and teasing out the ones related to online platforms.

There's some important messages in this survey about communications strategies for young people's democracy organisations I think.

Contrary to the narrative about young people being digital natives and prioritising online sources, a third (32%) of young people in the sample do not get information about their local area from online sources.

Of those that do get information from online sources, there is a wide diversity in the platforms that they are using.

Instagram and Snapchat are the most popular, with 60% of those who get their information online using these platforms. However, that still amounts to less than 40% of the overall sample.

So any online communication or publicity strategy must recognise that young people utilise a range of online platforms and it cannot be assumed that there is a single platform through which the majority of young people can be reached.

For those getting information from offline sources, Family (66%) and Friends (66%) were unsurprisingly the most commonly selected sources of information. However, it is slightly surprising that less than half of these young people selected Schools (45%) as an information source.

Interestingly there is no relationship with age. It might be expected that the older respondents (16-18 year olds) may be more likely than the younger ones to get their information from online sources. There's no evidence of this.

Sense of voice

The finding that sense of voice matters is based on analysis exploring the relationship between young people's answer to the first survey question (on sense of voice) and other questions.

These differences aren't particularly big but they are real.

Those that feel that they can voice their opinions are more likely than those who do not to engage in community activities (76% to 66%).

They are also more likely to have heard of the youth council (77% to 67%) and are twice as likely (30% to 15%) to have a high level of confidence that they know about the decisions that effect young people.

Unsurprisingly these differences also apply to those who feel their voice is listened to compared with those who do not, but the differences are a lot smaller.

So expressing voice seems to matter slightly more than whether they feel it is heard. This seems consistent with other parts of the survey where young people consistently express stronger preferences for places to interact with other young people than for getting involved in campaigns, local democracy etc.

Political education

Again, the headline about political education is based on exploring the relationship between young people's answer to the question of whether they have received any politics education or not, and the other relevant questions.

Differences are fairly small but they are interesting. Being taught politics made a small but significant difference to young people's attitudes towards engagement.

Those who had received at least some politics education are more likely to feel confident that they have a higher level of knowledge about the decisions that effect young people (28%) than those who had not received politics education (19%).

Likewise, they are also more likely to feel that they can voice their opinions (75%) than those who had not (65%).

However, they are no more likely to feel listened to or to engage in community activities than those who did not.

Surprisingly these findings are also unaffected by age (you'd expected the older respondents to have been more likely to have received at least some political education, but this isn't the case here).

Generally I expected age to have a stronger impact on this analysis and it didn't - there is very little variation by age on any of the questions which seems surprising.

Community activities

830 respondents, which is 55% of the sample, did not list any activity at all. This is considerably more than the 597 that answered 'No' to whether they took part in any community activity. So it's important to note that this does not necessarily mean that 55% all do nothing - they may have just ignored the additional question about what type of activity they take part in.

But of the 848 listed activities (quite a few listed more than one) they can be broken down like this:

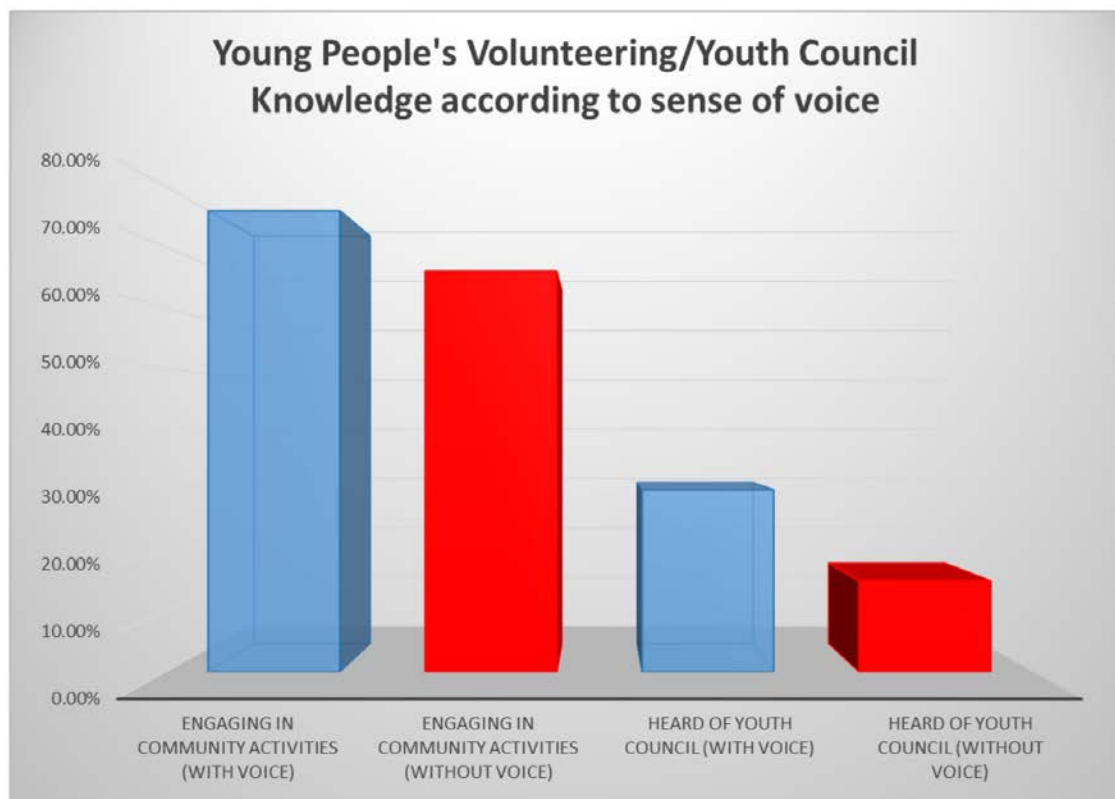
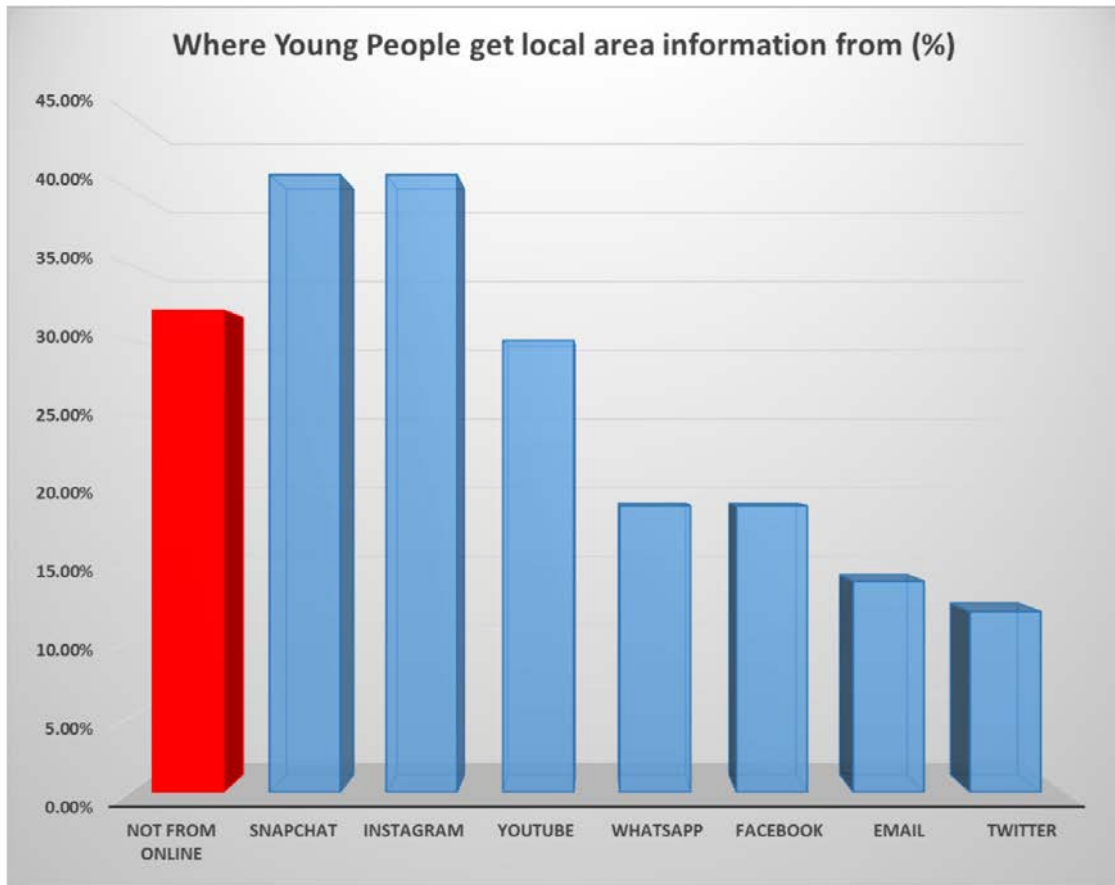
- 47% Sport
- 17% Youth Clubs
- 14% Community (including Charity, Volunteering, Campaigns, Politics etc)
- 13% Arts and Crafts
- 2% Religious Organisations
- 2.5% Other

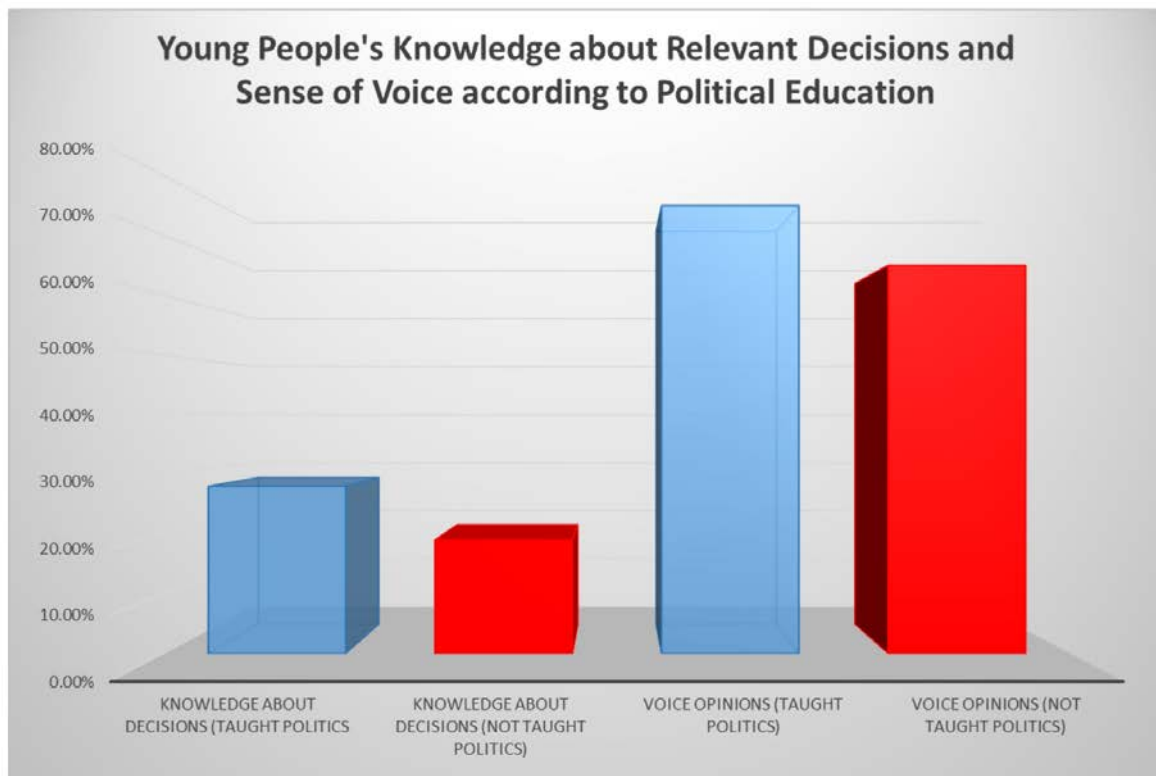
(the percentages are of young people who listed at least one of each activity type)

Safe spaces

Of the respondents naming the space they feel comfortable speaking up in (keeping in mind some named more than one space):

- 85% said school
- 43% said family
- 10% said friends
- 1.5% said online spaces
- 0.5% said work
- 6% said youth clubs
- 7% said anywhere
- 5% said somewhere else





Our engagement activities

Key messages from our engagement sessions with children and young people

We held 21 evidence gathering sessions with children and young people across Kirklees. We used a range of different engagement methods including self-guided group discussion, role play, scenarios and local democratic education.

Young people would like:

Relationships:

To involve the wider community when sharing their views. This includes local businesses and the Police.

Activity:

- Opportunities to volunteer in their community.
- Opportunities to debate in school and the community.
- Somewhere safe to make friends outside of school.
- Opportunities to meet with Councillors and MPs face to face in interest groups or peer groups to develop their confidence.
- To learn about local democracy, the different parties and how things work, at school (by teachers). This should be a standardised offer throughout Kirklees.
- To use events such as General Elections to learn about democracy.

Purpose and Values:

- To educate adults about life as young citizen in Kirklees.
- All young people to be given the opportunity to get involved.
- A qualification or accreditation to demonstrate their learning.
- A different name.

Structure and Format:

- To start by learning new skills and be provided with a safe space to test things out.
- Democratic education to be provided by teachers in school.
- To meet decision makers face to face at school.
- Teachers to be given the skills and resources to deliver local democracy lessons.
- School to create space for debate and facilitate it.
- A representative group in each school.
- A representative from each ward.

- Young people to volunteer to be a part of the youth council, two per school, if more young people are interested it should go to election. Each school should determine what works best in their setting.
- All representatives should meet as a group monthly.
- Create links with other schools.
- Dedicated space and time in school to meet with decision makers & young people.

Influence:

- Feedback from people that they are talking to.
- To build trust with decision makers. This includes understanding the parameters of decision making.
- Reassurance that where change can happen it will.
- A young person to represent their views in decision making processes.
- To understand the impact of sharing their views before they do so.

Reporting and Sharing:

- To share stories about young people's positive contribution to change the image of young people.
- School to share more information about what's going on in their community.
- Young people to share information with other young people.

Children would like:

Activity:

- To start by writing letters & emails to decision makers - develop skills step-by-step.
- Opportunities to learn practical skills, including fundraising and making things, to support their community.
- The opportunity to discuss current affairs.
- To meet local Councillors and their MP.
- To learn how decisions are made.
- To learn how to make things to help their local communities.
- To share their views.
- To learn new skills such as public speaking and how to listen to each other.
- Events such as a democracy roadshow.

Structure and Format:

To meet with other children but not lots of meetings.

Influence:

Everyone to be given the opportunity to voice their opinions.

Key messages from Kirklees Youth Council 10th Anniversary celebration event

As part of our 10th Anniversary event, former youth councillors shared their experiences and we asked our participants to discuss young citizens, having a voice, getting involved, learning and the future of Kirklees Youth Council. We gathered further insight via Slido and video interviews. We also provided resources for participants to take away to carry on the conversation. Our workshop participants included former Youth Councillors, young people, Kirklees Councillors, partner organisations and teachers.

Your voice

How can we help more young people to feel listened to?

Relationships:

- Obtain the support of:
 - The senior leadership team in school.
 - Frontline workers in Kirklees Council and KNH.
 - Dedicated adult in schools to support the youth council..
- Careers support to give tasters about politics as a future career.
- Promoting it in the right way, for example what it can do for you in your future careers.
- Promote it at Careers Fairs, when young people are thinking about their futures – life skills, the confidence and softer skills that employers want.

Activity:

- Engage young people with issues that are important to them.
- Show young people the decisions made every day that affect them.
- Teach young people how to express themselves.
- Mentoring and building confidence.
- We prefer to discuss things in smaller groups with friends and peer support younger ones.
- Young people to run a full Council meeting in place of the councillors!

Purpose and Values:

- Change the culture in schools, so it is the norm not to talk politics in school.
- Continue the level of responsibility children have in year 6 through to year 7.

Structure and Format:

- Target years 7 and 8.
- Start in school, for example drop in sessions in PSHE / Citizenship lessons.

Reporting and Sharing:

- Promote via youth clubs and groups that work with young people (these places should know about it as part of the work they do with young people).
- Hearing about it from your friends is important to young people.
- Social media presence is key, all young people use it.
- Use drop boxes, live Facebook, tweeting to say what young people want to have changed.
- Youth clubs are important. They are safe places to be and to speak about issues.

Getting involved

How can we help more young people to get involved, and stay involved?

Relationships:

- Councillors having a connection with young people in their ward.
- Teacher support in school.
- Schools want the opportunity to talk about things that matter to them.
- MP – have packs to give away.

Activity:

- Have a Democracy day like a sports day.
- Face to face conversation is valued by young people.
- Roadshow or workshop – councillors talking about a different issues.
- Suggestions box.
- Sparking debates.
- More opportunities for councillors to go into schools.
- Provide a range of practical opportunities.
- Find out what year groups are interested in, it's not one size fits all.
- Provide opportunities to interact with decision makers.
- Using citizenship in more creative ways.
- Summer democracy workshops.
- Extension of school hubs.

Purpose and Values:

- Understanding the role of a Councillor.
- Support Councillors to develop the skills and knowledge to interact with schools and young people.

- Engage young people with issues that are important to them.
- Address intergenerational issues. Older people think young people don't know anything about politics.

Structure and Format:

- Mentoring and shadowing opportunities.
- Ambassadors feel more able to debate contentious issues with people they don't know.
- Consider the age range carefully. Making it age appropriate.
- Join up local school councillors to have more impact and commitment.
- Young people doing assemblies, groups of friends joining together works better through schools.
- Friendlier atmosphere.
- Not all young people want to stay behind after school, meetings could be a barrier.

Reporting and Sharing:

- Share the work young people are involved in.
- Former youth councillors to promote Kirklees Youth Council.

Learning

How can we help more young people to learn about local democracy?

Relationships:

- Teach teachers how to deliver local democracy sessions.
- From Careers advisors, colleges, parents, carers.
- Youth Councillors to create relationships with Councillors - invite them into school to find out what they do.
- Uniformed groups.

Activity:

- Age appropriate learning resources from year one.
- Include after school clubs.
- Learn how to use your voice before you reach 18 years old.
- Democracy day or week in schools.
- Develop a curriculum for democracy, include it in Drama lessons etc.
- Bite sized sessions.
- Mobile interactive quizzes (Kahoot)
- Accreditation.

Purpose and Values:

- Build on what is already there
- Teach young people that they can have a career in politics.
- Sharing the positive contribution of young people.

Structure and Format:

- Each school have a democracy club or society. These clubs can meet Kirklees Youth Council and help them understand what needs to be done in each area.
- Need more officer support.

Reporting and Sharing:

Create TV advert to drive others and make it more fun.

Kirklees Youth Council

How can we grow our youth council?

Relationships:

- Opportunities for councillors to meet would be helpful.
- Continue to develop the relationship with the University of Huddersfield.
- Develop relationships with MPs.

Activity:

- Coming into school is friendlier.
- Get young people's perspective by key contact with youth council.
- Work placements with Councillors are a good idea.
- Personal development skills.
- Good to meet other schools.
- Offer modernised debates.
- Visit Parliament.
- Ensure projects are completed.
- Create enough time for project work, meetings etc.

Funding:

- Now we don't get travel expenses.
- Continue to fund Kirklees Youth Council for the next 10 years.
- Identify support and resources.

Purpose and Values:

- Be inclusive and informed.
- Hearing people's voice was great as everyone is powerful.

- Lack of funds, representation and aggression can put people off.
- Continue to provide young people with the same opportunities.
- Local Councillors, MPs and decision makers need to promote the youth council within schools and across the local area.
- Showing people that politics is for everyone.
- Ensure young people's voice is really heard.

Structure and Format:

- Work shadowing – councillor – get out and see people.
- Structured but not regular.
- Reach more schools.
- Campaigns and commitment have been a problem.
- Include colleges and the University.
- Current - all of it works.
- People don't like to have to meet up after school.
- More interactive.
- We met in Council chambers, it was very lively.
- Getting 2 days off school was great.
- We used to come together every 6-8 weeks. It's good to get people from different backgrounds.

Influence:

- More links with Kirklees Council.
- Attended regular council meetings to raise issues.
- Young people engaging other young people across Kirklees in democracy and decision making.

Reporting and Sharing:

- Social media – Instagram, snapchat.
- Word of mouth.
- Use each school Twitter account.
- More advertising and social media is crucial.
- Sharing the positive contribution of young people.

Key messages from Kirklees Youth Councillors, past and present

Youth councillors had self-guided group discussions, answered questions provided for them, took part in workshops and shared their views on video.

Relationships:

- Develop relationships with relevant ward Councillors and beyond.
- Improve relationships with MPs
- Develop relationships with other Youth Councils.
- Create opportunities for Youth Councillors to get to know each other and have fun.
- Develop relationships with youth workers.

Activity:

- Get involved in local, national and international issues.
- Have meetings when it's easy for young people to attend.
- Make sure projects are completed even if the outcome changes and that they are resourced sufficiently.
- Suggestion that the youth council focus on one project at a time.
- Make sure everyone is involved.
- Local democratic education in schools should be for everyone. This should include the chance to debate and host visits from MPs.
- Kirklees Youth Council should work with the Youth Advisory Group.

Funding:

- Secure funding for the management of the youth council.
- Kirklees Youth Council to find ways of working that don't cost money or to work with organisations who can contribute.
- Consider the cost of travel for families and individuals.

Purpose and Values:

- Ensure young people's voices are heard.
- Be more inclusive.
- Develop the image of the youth council.
- Continue to help young people develop their confidence.
- Continue to create further opportunities for young people to help with their careers.
- Be a safe space to speak out.

Structure and Format:

- Have other opportunities after involvement in the youth council has come to an end.
- Support youth councillors, past and present, to stay in touch with each other.
- Find a suitable online communication platform for youth council business.
- Support young people to run their own projects.
- Support young people to speak at Full Council meetings.
- Support schools to be able to offer the same experience to young people.

Influence:

- Develop meaningful relationships with Councillors.
- Youth Councillors to have some influence within decision making processes.
- Work with UK Youth Parliament and other youth councils.
- Everyone should have a voice and believe that they can make a difference.
- There is need to promote the Youth Council to schools and to secure support from teaching staff.
- Youth Councillors influence each other, family and friends and it is important that this continues.

Reporting and Sharing:

- It's important to receive positive feedback from Councillors and MPs.
- It's beneficial to see what activity all youth councillors are engaged in.

Recruitment:

- Share more information with young people so they know what to expect.
- Those that want to get involved should do it for the right reasons.
- Year 7 Kirklees Youth Council taster session, then option to continue if you want.

Training and Development:

- Induction training was useful and relevant.
- Developing specific skills, such as, public speaking.
- Kirklees Youth Council members to deliver training.

Key messages from meetings with Kirklees Councillors & the Mayor of Kirklees

Kirklees Councillors meeting with Young Commissioners

Four Young Commissioners met with a group of 10 Kirklees Councillors and asked a series of questions based on conversations with young people during our activities.

What works:

- Delivering sessions in schools, particularly junior schools.
- Small group meetings with young people.
- Introducing local democracy using a mock election process and suitable resources.
- Talking about the role of a Councillor.
- Taking the politics out of it.
- The school packs ("Meet your councillor" local democracy session pack).

Relationships:

- Visit all schools and invite them to a full council meeting to sit in the public gallery.
- Address the relationship between Councillors and post 18 in the Further Education sector, including the University of Huddersfield Students' Union.
- Address access to schools using governing bodies and inform Councillors where there are difficulties.
- Identify a lead officer for Councillors to contact the youth council and share information.
- Build trust between young people and Councillors.
- Ensure Councillors understand the role and function of Kirklees Youth Council and value the voice of young people.
- Develop a working relationship between Youth Councillors and Councillors.

Activity:

- Invite children and young people to each public ward meeting.
- Youth council to link with 'You and Your Community' and 'It's up To You' to support young people's social action projects.

Funding:

Provide schools with a small budget to action issues they highlight. Possibly managed by school councils?

Purpose and Values:

- To teach children and young people about the service that Kirklees Council provide and how Councillors make decisions about those services.
- Support Youth Councillors to reach all of our communities to ensure diversity.
- Kirklees Youth Council to include young people at a young age so that by year 9 or 10 they are already interested in local democracy.

Structure and Format:

- Consider young people when organising ward meetings. Use appropriate resources to encourage participation.
- Link Kirklees Youth Council with the Children in Care Council.
- Youth council to create links with local youth clubs via the youth workers.

Influence:

- Include Youth Councillors in working parties.
- Kirklees Youth Council to be supported to hold shadow debates on topics that the Council are debating.
- The youth council to be involved in consultations that impact on children and young people.
- A nominated Cabinet member to ensure Kirklees Youth Council are involved in activities.
- Councillors to access Kirklees Youth Council as a sounding board.
- Councillors to reach young people in their own spaces to hear what they have to say about their community.

Reporting and Sharing:

Share stories about the positive contribution from children and young people.

Kirklees Mayor meeting with Youth Councillors and Young Commissioners

A group of seven young people met with the Mayor of Kirklees, Cllr Gwen Lowe, and the Mayor's Consort, Ken Lowe.

Relationships:

- After each new Mayor is sworn in, Youth Councillors should ask to meet with them.
- Create a relationship as early as June each year, so that the Mayor can be informed about what the youth council is doing and promote this across Kirklees.

Influence:

Ask what the Kirklees Mayor can do to support Kirklees Youth Council.

Written responses

Cllr Shabir Pandor, Labour Group Leader & Leader of the Council

1. Councillors and Schools

Can you share examples of good practice in terms of connecting with young people in Schools? What works and what doesn't?

Visits by elected members to Schools can be very positive especially when there is an opportunity to meet and talk informally and when young people have the opportunity to ask questions to elected members directly. School-based "question time" events can be a really good opportunity for young people to have their issues addressed and to hear different perspectives from across the political spectrum.

Any opportunity to humanise the relationship between elected members are to be welcomed and when young people can work with elected members on social action projects within their community is a real positive.

2. Local democratic education

What can Councillors do to encourage schools to introduce young people to our local democracy?

Councillors can work with the democracy team and with the network of Personal, Social and Health Education teachers who lead on this aspect of the curriculum where democracy is most relevant. The promotion of British Values in the life of schools and in the curriculum includes coverage of:

- Democracy
- Rule of Law
- Individual Liberty
- Mutual Respect
- Tolerance of faiths and beliefs

Councillors can help bring this to life in Schools whether by describing how their role promotes these values or through specific sessions around voting that the

democracy service and colleagues in the Prevent team run. Schools should also be encouraged to attend Council meetings or to view webcasts and to run their own democratic exercises whether in electing a school youth council or in making decisions about rules or policies to be introduced within the school environment.

3. Decision Making

How can young people be a meaningful part of the Councillor decision making processes?

It is vital that young people are involved in councillor decision making processes and are able to have their views represented in the Council Chamber and in the daily work of their ward members. There is a role for a youth council to mirror some of the decisions being considered by the Council and to contribute both their democratic decisions and arguments to individual Councillors, groups and to Cabinet and Full Council.

Young people should be able to access Councillors through their ward surgery arrangements and also through youth groups and forums in their wards. Councillors should be encouraged to be accountable to young people for their decisions and their work in wards - providing feedback to young people and welcoming high levels of support and challenge.

4. Finally

What can you do to help grow our youth council?

I will promote the work of the youth council as leader of the labour group and of the Council - encouraging all young people to get involved. I will also ensure that all Council employees are encouraged to promote the youth Council and where possible ensure that they are consulted routinely as part of the Council's decision making processes and powers. I will ensure that I attend Youth Council meetings and events and that my fellow Councillors are also challenged to report on their engagement activity.

Cllr David Hall, Leader of the Conservative Group

1. Councillors and Schools

Can you share examples of good practice in terms of connecting with young people in Schools? What works and what doesn't?

I enjoy my visits into the primary schools: always well-received by the staff and pupils. Haven't made it into a secondary school yet, though.

2. Local democratic education

What can Councillors do to encourage schools to introduce young people to our local democracy?

I think that is really a matter for individual governing bodies. I wouldn't want to approach a school and raise that issue.

3. Decision Making

How can young people be a meaningful part of the Councillor decision making processes?

I think councillors just need to have a regard to the effects of policies on young people. Be better informed and consult informally. Consultation of this one group on every decision is not necessary.

4. Finally

What can you do to help grow our youth council?

I wonder whether the actual Youth Council should be replaced with a looser federation of school councils? I get the feeling some of our youth councillors are quite Political and promoted by certain political parties, and I question whether the council should have an input into that.

Cllr John Lawson, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

1. Councillors and Schools

Can you share examples of good practice in terms of connecting with young people in Schools? What works and what doesn't?

As a school Governor I am provided with opportunities to really learn what a whole school experience can be like for young people. We should all aim to understand children and young people's experience of school.

I think it is also important that we understand what matters to young people beyond school as these issues can be very different in nature.

2. Local democratic education

What can Councillors do to encourage schools to introduce young people to our local democracy?

We should teach children and young people about local decision making structures and encourage them to become involved. We should also give children and young people the tools to be able to decide things for themselves. If we are not sure what children and young people want – we should ask them.

3. Decision Making

How can young people be a meaningful part of the Councillor decision making processes?

We should continue to support Kirklees Democracy Commission and involve children and young people in the decision making process before decisions are made. This includes planning, budgets and policy making.

We should consider widening the scope of Kirklees Council's 'Voice of the Child'. This good practice tool, and our role as corporate parents, could be extended to all children and young people in Kirklees.

4. Finally

What can you do to help grow our youth council?

I can continue to promote the work of Kirklees Youth Council wherever I go. This includes in public and online.

Where young people demonstrate an interest I will support them to get involved. It doesn't take a lot of effort to support them if they are curious about our local democracy.

Cllr Andrew Cooper, Leader of the Green Group

1. Councillors and Schools

Can you share examples of good practice in terms of connecting with young people in Schools? What works and what doesn't?

We have done a number of school visits as you know and I enjoy these and I feel it helps demystifies what a Cllr is and helps young people know we exist and have a role.

I don't feel School Governor roles help that much. I am one and though I get involved in the school it is not that visible or distinct a role from that of any other Governor.

2. Local democratic education

What can Councillors do to encourage schools to introduce young people to our local democracy?

Project based opportunities which deal with a practical issues, concern or need that young people have and using Cllrs to help address it and explain the factors which can help the right thing happen and those that can work against it.

3. Decision Making

How can young people be a meaningful part of the Councillor decision making processes?

We can ensure they are considered and involved in our ward budget allocation of funding on issues that they care about.

4. Finally

What can you do to help grow our youth council?

I think one of the most positive things about the Youth Council is in providing Young People with the confidence to challenge and influence institutions and those in authority. Anything I can do to help promote that aspect of its work I would be happy to get involved with.

Cllr Charles Greaves, Leader of the Independent Group

I don't have any strong views. Perhaps a youth specific Place Standard consultation, together with a meaningful budget to commission and implement work.

Cllr Greaves also shared our questions with members of the Independent group, and asked if they would like to respond individually. We received this additional response:

Cllr Paul White, Independent councillor

One area that Councillors can get involved is being present in schools in their area either at Primary or Secondary level. Of course this can involve being active as school Governors but also visiting during term time and speaking to pupils about their roles and local democracy. Many Councillors of course already do this. I'm assuming that the Youth Council already has interactions with Kirklees Councillors, but if not this could be a good way of introducing young people to existing structures and processes and real people.

From my perspective I don't know what the current Youth Council does, so some homework for me.

Jonathan Stephen, President of Huddersfield Students' Union (2018-2019)

Jonathan was an Independent Young Commissioner during our engagement. He also shared this written response on behalf of Educating Kirklees.

During my time as President of Huddersfield Students' Union (2018-2019), one of my priorities included uniting and empowering young people in post 16 education to engage in democracy. After various consultation with local college student representatives, Educating Kirklees formed. Educating Kirklees is a conference which put young people at the centre of the conversation. The events focus was all about finding out what we can do to get young people in post 16 education in Kirklees more involved and, more importantly, how we can develop as a Students' Union to better support them when they come to university. The event was about being a driving force for change in the local area, uniting post 16 students.

Throughout the duration of the event, there were a number of items that were shared by the attendees and formed the focus for the event. This included knife crime, climate change and youth identity among others. The delegates discussed their thoughts on the issues, barriers and how young people can overcome them – specifically, what do young people need in order to make the change they want to see. The key recommendations are compiled in a report completed by a student from the University of Huddersfield, with guidance from Dr Andy Mycock (Huddersfield University) and Lydia Blundell (Huddersfield Students' Union).

Here's a list of recommendations to consider, informed by Educating Kirklees and my experience as a Commissioner:

1. Educating Kirklees enhances post 16 youth engagement, uniting and empowering young people from Kirklees Colleges and the University of Huddersfield. The conference is run once per year, where delegates debate and decide on priorities for the year for young people across Kirklees.
2. The conference is funded by Kirklees Council, as well as projects/campaigns that are shaped by the attendees
3. Alongside the annual conference, young people and appropriate staff from the colleges and University, to monitor project developments, ensure regular catch-ups between the young people and control for risks accordingly
4. Based on my experience from Educating Kirklees, as well as being a Commissioner, it is evident that young people need a physical space to meet, participate in extra-

curricular activities, with a particular focus on life skills development, and is a safe environment, staffed appropriately when open and provides a space to foster democratic engagement. This is funded by Kirklees Council and the board of trustees/ directors are recruited by the young people and must have at least have the board seats reserved for young people that represent the different age groups

5. Staff should include an experienced marketing role that can map current communications to all young people, and identify opportunities to develop new communication methods that target age groups accordingly, as well as collate shared messages appropriate for each group. This could be to share updates on youth councillor actions and/or, keep all young people updated with shared projects/ campaigns
6. It is also evident that there is a demand from the delegates to examine democratic education offering to young people in post 16 education. This also provides an opportunity for Educating Kirklees to navigate a new democracy education module, that reflects the needs of young people in Kirklees – a module or similar, that is relevant, accessible and meaningful
7. Kirklees Council adopts a lead cabinet position for Young people, responsible for maintaining the revised youth engagement model and regularly updates where necessary. And also, identifying how the model could be improved to ensure robust representation and simplicity of mechanisms for change. Importantly, written into the Kirklees Council's Constitution, that sees an elected leader attending full council meetings, providing updates representative of all young people across Kirklees and able to present motions on behalf of young people
8. Explore how Educating Kirklees could inform a formal process that nurtures young people into Councillor positions, that is funded by Kirklees Council and is embedded in all relevant training provided by Kirklees Council
9. Works with other networks across Kirklees, including but not exclusive to Young Employee Network, LGBT, BAME, disabled and women's groups among others to ensure all voices are being heard and to support campaigns where relevant
10. Celebrate key national events such as results days working with local partners in Kirklees to host young people and celebrate their achievements. Explore how to incentivise local store owners to provide discount deals for young people that is accessible, inclusive and family-friendly This also could be an impact day where young people achievements are shared with the community, not just the results but change made in Kirklees
11. Impact Awards (Youth Power) for young people hosted annually, that recognises the efforts young people have demonstrated and showcases the impact on the local community

Parents and carers

This summary report was created on 18th March 2019. 4 parents and carers completed a short survey.

Thinking about your child, has being part of the youth council been..



How has being part of the youth council helped your child or young person to develop?

| | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Given her more confidence | Helped he in voicing her opinions | Given her a better outlook |
| Yes | | |
| Potentially helped give them more confidence. | | |
| Enhanced confidence and given opportunity to put across ideas of self and others in a public forum | | |

Kirklees Youth Council aims to help young people gain skills, confidence and knowledge.

What do you think our youth council should do to make this happen? Please select any that apply



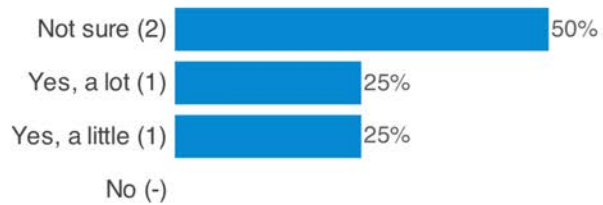
Has your family experienced any difficulties supporting your young person to be involved in the youth council? Please select any that apply



Q4a

None

Have you learned anything new about local democracy from your child or young person?



Please let us know what you learned:

About debating

Key messages from other Youth Councils in the UK

13 other Youth Councils in the UK shared their experiences with us via email.

We asked each youth council the same five questions.

This summary shows the range of different responses that we received,

Q1. What kind of format does your youth council have – and what works well about that? (For example, how do young people join, what ages are they, and what things do you do regularly?)

Membership:

- Age ranges from 11 to 21 years (25 for young people with additional needs).
- Elections are run via schools and colleges or as an independent opportunity.
- Application.
- Open access.
- Unsuccessful candidates in UK Youth Parliament elections become Youth Councillors.
- Flexible depending on capacity.
- Youth Council network (open access) provides information about events, consultations and other voice and influence activities.

Structure:

- Two year term (popular).
- Monthly meetings in formal settings.
- Two weekly mandatory.
- Weekly meetings.
- Regular events.
- Youth Council elects number of existing members to carry forward.
- Work with UK Youth Parliament and other young people's networks, such as Children in Care Council, Special Educational Needs Forum, LGBT groups and uniformed groups.
- District representation.
- Co-optees where there are gaps in representation.
- Mirror elected members.
- Youth Council working groups, executive boards, formal roles such as chair and vice chair.

Activity:

- Debate current affairs.
- Campaigns and identifying priorities.
- Invite visitors and respond to requests to meet.
- Attend full council with elected members.
- Respond to consultations from stakeholders.
- Q&A with the leader of the Council and Cabinet members.
- Youth proofing policy documents.
- Creating films for social media.
- Recruitment and Selection.
- Attend Scrutiny Panels.
- Sit on NHS Trust Board of Governors.
- Deliver training to professionals.
- Meet with stakeholders.

Support:

- Residential experiences.
- Hand overs and speed meetings provided by outgoing Youth Councillors to new Youth Council members.
- Supervision.
- Skill development training.
- Online communication, particularly in rural areas, using social media platforms.

Issues:

- How to engage all schools in the area.
- Election model in schools often dropped as it isn't inclusive.
- Limited officer support.
- Being able to meet in real world spaces in rural areas. Factors such as safeguarding and time spent travelling are real issues.
- Young people balancing their role with other commitments.

Other:

- Awards are important.
- Celebrate achievements
- Manage a small budget.
- Local Authority commissions others to provide the Youth Council.

Q2. Can you give us an example of how your youth council has influenced a local decision? (For example, by working with policy makers and elected representatives)

Campaigns and Projects:

- Successful campaign to save the Youth Council.
- Our full council have agreed to support votes at 16 if and when it becomes law.
- Securing support and funding for a youth café, mental health provision.
- Activities for young people including music events, skate parks, youth shelter.
- Working with local businesses to support young people with work experiences.
- Promoting Fairtrade.
- Supporting UK Youth Parliament campaigns.

Policy:

- Changing policies for Children in Care, the language that social work professionals use and policies for supporting young carers.
- Co-producing policy documents, such as The Voice of the Child Strategy.

Boards and Panels:

- Sitting on the County's Inclusions Advisory Group.
- Acting as a sounding board for elected members.
- Adding transport as a new priority to the children and young people's plan.
- Being included in the commissioning process for an emotional health and wellbeing service.

Stakeholders:

- Meeting with leaders of the council to ensure young people have a say in the way decisions are made.
- Strengthening the links between the young people, decision makers and service providers.

Other:

- Taking part in UK Youth Parliament's Make Your Mark ballot.
- Being written into the Council's constitution and having the right to present motions at full council meetings.

Q3. How do you engage with diverse groups of young people in schools, colleges and local communities? Do you have any top tips to share?

Young People

- Youth Councillors promote opportunities with other young people.
- Co-opting members to represent hard to reach groups.

Schools

- Regular engagement with schools who are able to encourage diverse groups to participate in activities.
- Useful for schools to evidence British Values in and out of school.
- Finding the right contact or support person in school is a challenge. Those who do engage see the value of the Youth Council and UK Youth Parliament.

Other Networks

- Attending events such as carnivals and council run events.
- Connecting with membership networks for voluntary and charity groups who have a wide reach.

Digital

- Facebook and Instagram advertising campaign.
- Publishing our work on youth websites with monthly reports.
- Virtual schools receive postal ballot papers.

Other:

- Dual role of youth council lead officer which includes community cohesion.
- Contact mechanism (spreadsheets) for sharing voice and influence opportunities with young people, school council staff and youth and community groups.
- Getting out there and talking to people, go where young people are such as voluntary groups and youth clubs.
- Not having an election.

Q4. What do you do to encourage local democratic education, both with your members and with other young people? (For example, peer to peer learning or sessions in schools)

Individual Support

- Continued personal development.
- 1:1 support
- Advice on further learning opportunities.

Group Support and Opportunities

- Informal education from Democratic Services and the Elections Team.
- Attending regular Council, District and Town meetings.
- Developing an understanding of community work by working alongside adult Councillors.

- Peer to peer learning and support in and out of school.
- Youth Voice Summits with Councillors in attendance.
- Democracy Days in civic halls for schools.
- Meeting Councillors.
- Q&A with the Mayor.
- Visiting the Council Chambers.
- Children's Mayor programme which encourages voting and democracy in primary schools.
- Debating club.
- Democracy training with young people.
- Taking part in democracy events, meetings, scrutiny boards.

Work with Partners

- Attending UK Youth Parliament's annual sitting.
- Debating in the House of Commons.
- UK Youth Parliament's Make Your Mark annual ballot.
- British Youth Council Training which includes campaigning and representation.
- Young Citizens' Democracy Ambassador Programme.
- Support schools and colleges to coordinate with the Parliamentary Outreach Team.
- League of Young Voters sub group visit colleges to promote voter registration and consult on votes at 16.
- Taking part in Local Democracy Week in October.
- Work with university students to deliver democratic engagement sessions.
- Learning about the role of central Government by visiting the Houses of Parliament which is arranged by the MP's office.

Community

- Themed young people's question time at community events.
- Summer activities to engage young people in local libraries.

Schools and Colleges

- Taking elected members into schools for Q&A style panel debates.
- Young people feedback to schools.
- Early voter registrations stalls at freshers' events using the opportunity to educate about the democratic process.
- Share opportunities and information with schools.
- We don't advocate online voting, we deliver election resources to all schools involved in elections.

- Councillors and MPs visit schools.
- Basic political sessions in schools leading up to youth council elections.

Digital

Using social media to reach young people.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us that can help us to plan for our youth council's future?

Support for young people

- Develop young people's skills.
- Find a balance of meetings, projects and events.
- Young people require a structure, routine and variety.
- Awards and rewards are important.
- Keep it simple and have fun.
- Involve young people from diverse backgrounds, try and get young people from Voluntary and Community Sector.

Support for the structure

- Secure funding.
- Have a larger team to share responsibility and cover a wider range of projects.
- Keep it flexible, what works for one cohort doesn't work for another.
- Look at setting up the youth council as voluntary organisation with its own accounts which opens up funding opportunities and sustainability for the future.

Communication

Use social media to keep people updated.



Find out more and get involved at:
www.DemocracyCommission.org.uk



Follow our journey:
@KirkleesYC
@kirkdemocracy

Contact us:
Youth.Council@Kirklees.gov.uk

