



Collective Get T★gether

Flying the Flag for Youth Voice

Session Overview

As part of the Collective Get Together, young people participated in a creative engagement activity called "**Flying the Flag for Youth Voice**". The activity was designed to create a visual celebration of youth voice and showcase the many ways young people influence decisions at local, regional and national levels.

The session aimed to explore young people's experiences of sharing their views, ideas and lived experiences, and to understand what happens when they speak up about issues that matter to them. It also provided an opportunity to recognise and celebrate examples of meaningful participation, where young people felt listened to and understood.

The Activity

Each young person was given a flag to personalise. Using words, drawings, symbols and decorations, participants captured their experiences of youth voice and participation.

Young people were encouraged to reflect on several key questions:

Who were they with?

Young people shared whether they had spoken up:

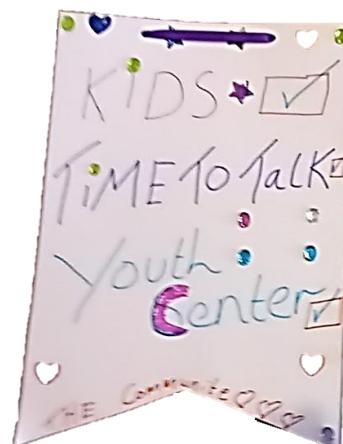
- Independently
- As part of a school or education setting
- Through a youth voice group
- Alongside friends or other young people



Who listened to them?

Participants reflected on the adults or groups they had shared their views and experiences with, including:

- Parents and carers
- Social workers
- Teachers and education staff
- School leadership teams
- Council staff
- Health professionals
- Charity and support workers
- Other young people



What did they share?



Young people described the issues, experiences and ideas they had raised, including:

- Things that were not working well
- Areas where support needed to be easier to access
- Situations that felt unfair
- New ideas and suggestions
- Changes they wanted services or adults to make
- Solutions that could help both themselves and others

What happened next?

The activity also explored the impact of young people's contributions. Participants shared a range of outcomes, including:

- Changes being made as a result of their feedback
- Alternative solutions being introduced
- Receiving an explanation when a change could not be made
- Being asked further questions about their experiences
- Feeling better understood by adults and professionals
- Being invited to join additional meetings, groups or participation opportunities



How did it feel?

Young people reflected on how it felt to share their thoughts, ideas and experiences. Discussions highlighted the importance of feeling listened to, respected and taken seriously. Many recognised that confidence can grow when young people see that their views have value and can help influence decisions.

Key Messages

The completed flags created a powerful visual display demonstrating the breadth of youth voice activity taking place across education, health, social care and community settings.

The activity highlighted that young people are already contributing valuable insights and solutions to improve services and experiences for themselves and others. It also reinforced the importance of creating opportunities for participation that are meaningful, accessible and inclusive.

Young people identified that effective youth voice is not only about being given opportunities to speak, but also about receiving feedback, seeing action taken where possible and understanding how their contributions have influenced decision-making.

Impact and Next Steps

The flags will form part of a wider visual representation of youth voice across The Collective, celebrating the contribution that young people make to shaping services, policies and practice.

To ensure the activity captured as wide a range of experiences as possible, contributions were also gathered from young people and organisations who were unable to attend the Collective Get Together in person. This included young people with a range of health conditions and SEND, as well as specialist organisations such as the **Challenging Behaviour Foundation**, which supports children and young people with more complex needs. Their personalised flags were added to the display alongside those created on the day, helping to ensure that a broader range of perspectives and lived experiences were represented. This approach enabled more young people's voices to be heard and reflected the Collective's commitment to inclusive and accessible participation for all.



The feedback gathered will help strengthen understanding of what meaningful participation looks like from a young person's perspective. It will also provide valuable insight for the Department for Education and partner organisations about how young people can be supported to share their views and influence change.

The activity demonstrated that young people want opportunities to contribute, and that when they are listened to and involved in decision-making, they can play a vital role in improving outcomes for themselves and their peers.

As part of the session round up, young people used flowers to identify the factors that make participation meaningful, accessible and successful. These were placed on the tree to be referred back to during the plenary activity. Their reflections highlighted that effective youth voice is built on strong relationships, trust and seeing that contributions lead to action.

The most common theme was the importance of **being listened to, understood and respected.**

Young people valued adults who took the time to listen, communicate well, and create opportunities for honest conversations. Trusting relationships with supportive adults, advocates and professionals were seen as essential in helping young people feel confident to share their views and experiences.

Participants also highlighted the importance of **feeling safe and supported**.

Examples included having trusted adults, calm and comfortable spaces, access to advocacy, and practical support such as pre-visits, preparation, personalised schedules and reasonable adjustments. These approaches helped young people feel less overwhelmed and more able to participate fully.

Another key message was the need for **inclusive communication and accessibility**.

Young people emphasised the value of clear communication, visual ways of learning, additional support where needed, and staff who understand how to meet diverse needs. Training and awareness were viewed as critical in ensuring that young people receive the right support and are able to contribute on an equal basis.

Young people were clear that participation is most meaningful when **it leads to action and visible change**.

Whether a change is large or small, participants wanted evidence that their views had been heard and considered. They stressed that young people should be involved from the beginning of decision-making processes, rather than being consulted after decisions have already been made.

Participants highlighted the importance of a **positive and proactive culture**.

Kindness, perseverance, courage, a "can-do" attitude, and recognising the strengths and achievements of disabled young people were all identified as important contributors to successful participation. Young people wanted adults, organisations and systems to move beyond doing the minimum and instead actively collaborate with them to create positive change.

Overall, the feedback demonstrated that successful youth voice depends on building trusting relationships, creating accessible opportunities to participate, valuing young people's contributions, and ensuring that their voices lead to meaningful influence and change.