



Collective Get T★gether

End of Day Plenary – Highlights and Priorities. Growing the Future of Inclusion and Youth Voice

Throughout the Collective Get Together, young people took part in three core sessions that explored inclusion, participation and the future of youth voice. Each session concluded with a creative activity that contributed to a shared plenary display, bringing together the key messages and priorities identified by participants throughout the day.



The display took the form of a **giant tree**, symbolising the growth of inclusive practice and meaningful youth participation. As young people moved through the sessions, they added different elements to the tree to represent their ideas, experiences and hopes for the future.

Building the Tree

Session 1: National Standards for Inclusion

As part of the National Standards for Inclusion session, young people were asked to identify one thing that schools should be doing to make education more inclusive for children and young people with SEND. These ideas were written on leaves and added to the tree, representing the actions and commitments needed to help inclusion flourish within education settings. While a wide range of ideas were shared, several clear themes emerged.

The strongest message was the need for **high-quality SEND training for all education staff**. Young people consistently highlighted the importance of regular, meaningful training that helps teachers understand different needs, mental health, communication differences and how to provide effective support. Participants felt that training should be co-produced and co-delivered with people who have lived experience of SEND.

Young people also emphasised the importance of **respect, understanding and positive relationships**. They wanted teachers and school staff to avoid making assumptions, recognise individual strengths, and work with young people rather than

against them. Many highlighted the need to feel understood, listened to and treated as equals, with relationships based on mutual respect.

Another key theme was **meaningful involvement of young people and families in decision-making**. Participants called for greater co-production, stronger advocacy opportunities and improved communication with families, ensuring that support plans are developed collaboratively and that young people have a genuine voice in decisions affecting their education.

Young people also stressed the importance of creating **inclusive school cultures and environments**. This included ensuring access to the full curriculum and school activities, providing reasonable adjustments, supporting mental health and wellbeing, creating calm learning environments, and fostering a culture where everyone feels they belong.

Overall, young people's contributions highlighted that successful inclusion is about more than individual adjustments. It requires a culture of understanding, respect, participation and accountability, supported by well-trained staff and a whole-school commitment to ensuring every child and young person can thrive.

Session 2: Flying the Flag for Youth Voice

As part of the *Flying the Flag for Youth Voice* session, young people used flowers to identify factors that make participation meaningful, accessible and successful. Their reflections highlighted that effective youth voice is built on strong relationships, trust & seeing 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 different 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.

Finally, 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 work alongside 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.

Session 3: Future of Youth Voice

As part of the future of youth voice plenary activity, young people reflected on both the barriers that can prevent meaningful participation and the factors that enable youth voice to thrive. These were captured visually through **storm clouds** representing challenges and **sun rays** representing success factors and aspirations for the future. This encouraged reflection on what can make it difficult for young people to have their voices heard, as well as what helps participation to thrive.



Barriers to Participation

Young people identified several challenges that can make it difficult for them to share their views and influence decisions. A key concern was the feeling that too much attention is often placed on professionals, policymakers and organisations, while not enough attention is given to the experiences and perspectives of young people themselves.

Participants also highlighted a lack of awareness about existing participation opportunities, with many young people not knowing what groups are available or not having a local group where they can share their views. Accessibility was another significant theme, particularly around transport, the need for support from family members to attend activities, and practical barriers such as time, confidence and availability.

Concerns were also raised about funding pressures, with young people recognising that limited resources can affect the availability of participation groups, workshops, activities and opportunities. Some participants shared experiences of feeling ignored or not being heard, highlighting the need for cultural change to ensure young people's voices are consistently valued.

What Success Looks Like

When discussing the future of youth voice, young people were clear about the factors that help participation succeed. Central to this was the importance of **safe, welcoming and inclusive spaces** where young people can speak openly without fear of judgement or stigma. Trusting relationships, strong communication and opportunities to connect with peers who have similar experiences were all considered essential.

Young people wanted participation opportunities to be accessible, flexible and community-based, with enough time for meaningful discussion and relationship-building. Free activities, local groups, youth clubs and events were highlighted as important ways of ensuring that more young people can get involved.

The strongest message was the importance of seeing that participation leads to **real change**. Young people want clear evidence that their views are being heard, taken seriously and acted upon. They called for genuine co-production, visible outcomes and

an end to tokenistic engagement. Participants emphasised that young people should be involved as equal partners in decision-making and that their contributions should help shape services, systems and policies from the outset.

Overall, young people's vision for the future is one where participation is inclusive, accessible and impactful. They want opportunities to share their views in trusted environments, alongside clear evidence that their voices are making a meaningful difference to the decisions that affect their lives and communities.

Plenary Discussion

During the closing plenary, members of the **Kids Advisory Panel** guided participants through the completed display and facilitated discussion around the key themes that had emerged throughout the day.

The group reflected on:

- The most important actions schools can take to improve inclusion.
- The positive participation experiences that appeared most often across the flowers.
- The barriers and concerns represented by the storm clouds.
- What youth voice success looks and feels like helping the tree to grow.

The activity provided a powerful visual representation of young people's collective views and experiences. It enabled participants to see how their individual contributions are connected to wider themes around inclusion, participation and system change.

Key Impact

The completed tree captured both the strengths and challenges identified by young people and demonstrated the strong connection between inclusive practice and meaningful youth voice. It highlighted that when young people are listened to, involved in decision-making and supported to participate, they can provide valuable insights into how services, schools and organisations can improve.

The plenary brought together the learning from all three sessions and ensured that the day concluded with a collective reflection on what is already working well, what still needs to change, and how young people's voices can continue to shape the future of inclusive education and participation.

Appendix

National Standards for Inclusion: Changes to be made - Leaves

- Don't underestimate us. Teachers should work with all young people to work with their brains and not against us.
- Teachers have real SEND training
- Training for SEND (especially for those who can't communicate for themselves)
- Teachers have real SEND training.
- Young person involvement and advocacy
- Teacher training that is mandatory, regular, coproduced and co-delivered by experts by experience.
- Better training on mental health and how to help young people.
- Training for YP on SEND.
- Co-production
- RESPECT between Teacher and Student.
- Not making assumptions that over stimulated people are aggressive.
- Treat student how you would have wanted to be treated as a student but maybe couldn't have. If you show respect then students show respect back to you hopefully.
- Changing teaching culture
- Making sure a timeline is put in place to help parents finding out what would be put in place to help their child mentally and And physically to make sure they don't feel isolated or alone
- More teacher training for all conditions and needs.
- Changing cultures
- changing culture
- Inclusive to everyone
- Social education and rest.
- Support that isn't aimed at individual people instead a whole group
- Patience Paying attention to mental health
- Young person involvement and advocacy
- Mental health
- Ensure that YP and internal provisions have access to the whole school curriculum and events
- reasonable adjustments overlay
- calm environment
- Teachers being respectful to students
- Being understood and feeling equal
- Having support in general English as an additional language/ in care, for all young children and young people.

Future of Youth Voice Barriers and Challenges - Clouds

- Lack of advertisement
- Pay much attention on policymakers and staff only and not enough attention on young people and service users themselves
- Lack of knowledge to what groups are out there
- Under pressure money/funding management
- Funding
- Being ignored
- Culture
- You're all young people's voices are being heard
- Lack of funding for participating groups/ travel activities workshops what's it called
- Do not have a group to go for my voice to even get heard
- I need my mum to bring me [if she could not bring me I couldn't go as I need support out in the community] to my participation group -North Tyneside SEND Youth Fareham
- -money - time- confident
- Lack of money/ not having time
- Helping other people doing more of this.

Future of Youth Voice Successes – Sun Rays

- Flexible, connection first communication
- The right to share your voice in a safe space,- safe from stigma
- Good communication within the group
- time to talk
- Meetings with people like me
- Having a safe space and someone I trust to talk to
- Success-diverse group of strong ,passionate advocates for positive change
- seen change of transport like a bus routes
- It about 5 minutes to drive [if it was further I wouldn't be able to go]
- Time management within the participating group to get projects done
- The community/ communication
- Our local authority isn't too bad so I'm happy with that
- Looking forward to new relationships and new topics
- Events across the country
- Youth clubs-trips-free clubs
- Affecting meaningful change
- Being heard and taken seriously
- proof That what we say makes a difference in society
- That it's free

- The change is visible
- no tokenism be like Norman Lamb MP
- The change actually getting made
- time to talk forum
- amazing
- Sustain industrial change by design
- Co-production
- Money
- Time
- Confident
- Help others

Flying the flag for youth voice: good practice principles - Flowers

- Trust people
- communicating at time to talk/its helped me/ its made me feel I wasn't alone/I felt cared for/helping me through my dark times/Becca help me feel calm/helping me find ways/listening to me/it's calmed me
- Not being in school for a while and going back to school and getting more support/a advocator/ a trusted person/ support/ schedule/ pre visits/ pre preparation/space to go when I'm overwhelmed/if need help with spelling and maths
- Solving the problem
- Good communication
- Kindness
- Bing listen to
- Respect
- Being on time
- Learning
- Time
- Visual ways of learning
- Understanding
- Extra help at uni lectures
- Acknowledge disabled joy
- Change the culture around disability
- We in government need to show we heard
- Big conversation /advocacy, talking to councillors /listen/ better timings/ good communications
- Comfortable space
- Kindness

- Perseverance
- Good problem solutions
- Good communications
- Ensuring young people's voices are included as equals from the start and not when decisions have already made
- Reasonable adjustments passion and development
- At impact I feel listened to. To enable this adults need to put effort in to build relationships and build trust with children
- Someone I trust
- advocate/ trusted adult
- courage we need adults and practitioners to stand up and change systems
- I can't do attitude instead of doing the bare minimum
- Show us
- Seeing change no matter how small or big.
- In school I was in art. My head teacher was always good. She was firm but fair, she kept me calm, she helped me behave, she was soft, she explains things through, she always gave me time, I always felt safe
- Staff training, if staff are trained, they know how to help me the best to get me to my best self and ability.
- A can-do attitude instead of doing the bare minimum.
- My class staff and tutor listen to my problems from the start.