



Burton
YOUTH
FOR CHRIST



***YOUNG PEOPLE'S
VOICE IN BURTON***

99 YOUNG PEOPLE.
ONE CLEAR MESSAGE:

MORE
IS NEEDED



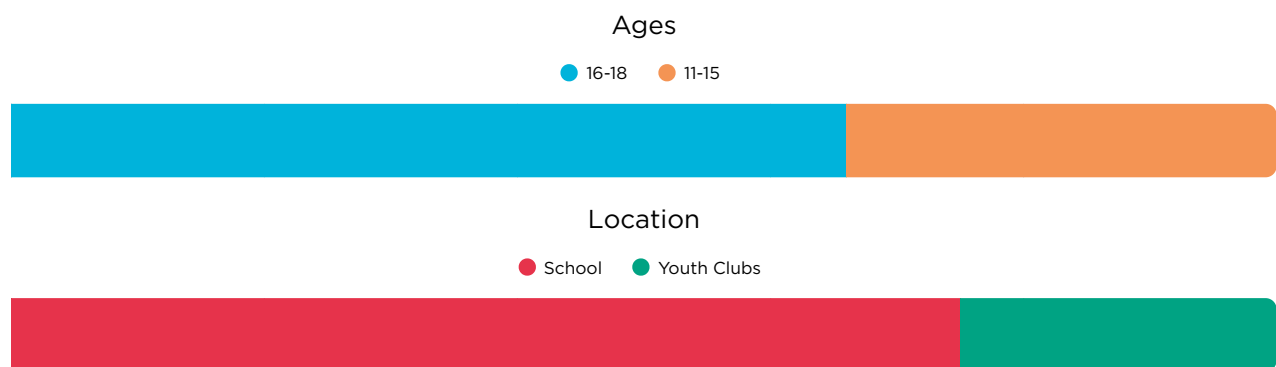
WHAT WE DID

We're one of several Innovator Organisations across Staffordshire carrying out participatory action research with young people as part of the Know Your Place Project. From November to December 2026, we gave all 11-18-year-olds who attend our youth clubs the opportunity to have their voices heard. We also expanded our reach by visiting a church youth group and a local sixth form.

We offered a wide range of creative ways for young people to share their thoughts and ideas. This included using our answerphone, Play-Doh, Lego modelling, Giant Tetris, sticky notes, and group discussions.

WHO WE SPOKE TO

We spoke to 99 young people within school and youth club settings, aged 11 to 18.



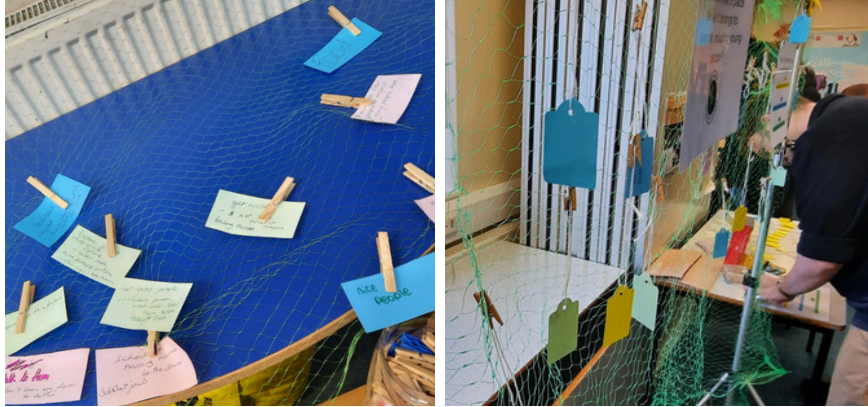
The Know Your Place project is one of nine community research networks taking place across the UK, funded by UK Research and Innovation and the Young Foundation. Uniquely, the Staffordshire project is the only one focused entirely on young people.

The network is being led by the Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services, in partnership with the University of Staffordshire. At the heart of the project is a steering group of young people from across the county, who developed the research questions and helped design how the project would work, ensuring young people's voices shaped the research from the very start.

Interested young people will come together to decide what action to take based on the findings, developing locally-based social action projects that aim to create real, local change. We want young people to truly see that their input has the power to make a meaningful difference for young people across Staffordshire.

QUESTION 1

What makes a place feel like it belongs to everyone, including young people?



We asked young people how different age groups can connect, feel included, and boost community spirit. They shared their ideas on colourful tags, which were then added to a communal "net of belonging" symbolising supportive connections.

Young people consistently linked belonging to being known, included and cared for. 'People' definitely came out as the most important factor in helping young people feel they belong somewhere.

They also highlighted the importance of shared activities to connect with older people, such as visiting care homes, sports, volunteering, hobbies, games and community events.

YOUNG PEOPLE SAY:

BELONGING COMES FROM:

PEOPLE

Being known and included

RESPECT

Inclusive communication

SHARED ACTIVITIES

Opportunities to connect with others of all ages

SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

Feeling comfortable to be themselves

'If there were no raising voices, you could understand better, and it would make me want to talk to them (older people) more if I knew they wouldn't raise their voice.'

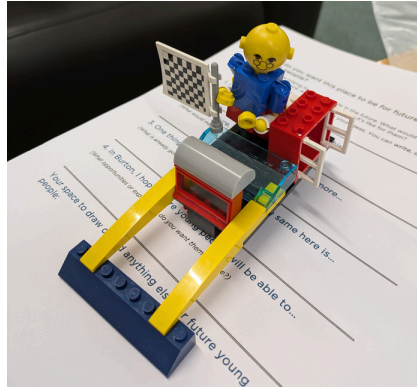
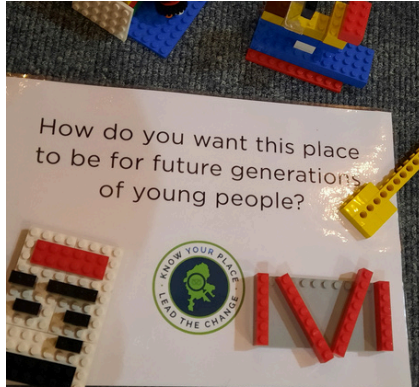
Young Person

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT

Young people think that belonging and connection is built through meaningful interaction, shared interests, and environments where young people feel comfortable, valued, and included.

QUESTION 2

How do you want this place to be for future generations?



We invited participants to imagine a town for future young people and share what they would like to see. Ideas were shared through building Lego models and completing prompt sentences such as 'One thing I would like to stay the same is..., I hope by the time you read this...'

Young people said they want more things to do, including sports, youth clubs, work experience, and safe places to spend time with friends. They also highlighted the importance of kindness, respect, and feeling accepted, with many raising concerns about bullying and discrimination.

Feeling safe was another key issue, especially in public spaces. Young people also shared concerns about vaping, drugs, alcohol, and crime in their communities.

**YOUNG
PEOPLE SAY:**

**A FUTURE
BURTON:**

**INCREASED
OPPORTUNITIES**
Leisure, Youthclubs,
sports, work experience

KINDNESS
Supportive and inclusive

SAFER SPACES
Particularly for girls

REDUCED RISKS
Less drugs, criminal
behaviour

'This car scoops up negativity - how people treat people from different countries, sexism and homophobia. I hope this is gone. The car would leave the kind people; leave positivity.'

Young Person

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT

Young people are seeking a future that combines opportunity, safety, kindness, and freedom from harm, creating a town where they can thrive and feel supported.

QUESTION 3

What things do you think young people should have a greater say on?



We asked young people to identify decisions that affect their lives and where they would like more influence. By placing stickers onto possible themes and making telephone recordings they reflected on questions such as: 'If you had more power, what would you change first?' and 'What should adults ask you about before deciding?'

Many participants said that educational decisions affect their lives the most, with health and leisure coming second. Key concerns included the stress caused by homework, the cost of university and transport, unfair treatment of people, and wanting more influence over education, politics, religion and employment.

Overall, participants wanted young people to have a stronger voice and more fairness in decisions that shape their lives.

YOUNG PEOPLE SAY:

WE WANT A GREATER SAY ON:

EDUCATION

Homework, subjects, post 16 choices

HEALTH

LEISURE

Accessibility

TRANSPORT

Cost

'If I had more power - the amount of homework 'cause it's very stressful.'

Young Person

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

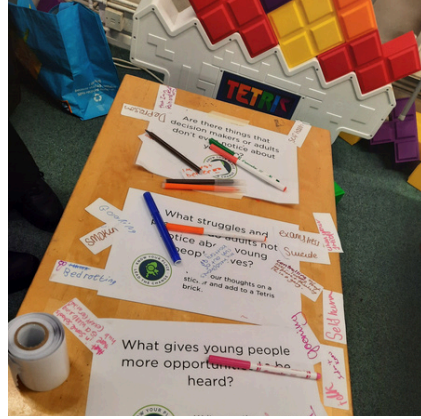
Young Person

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT

Education and health are the two strongest priorities, supported by wider concerns about affordability, fairness, and having a genuine voice in decisions that shape their futures.

QUESTION 4

Are there things that decision makers or adults don't even notice about your life?



We explored the pressures and struggles adults may overlook and ways young people could be heard. Young people responded by writing on Tetris blocks, highlighting unseen challenges and identifying factors that give them a stronger voice in decisions affecting their lives.

The most common issues were overwhelming academic and future pressure, alongside stress, emotional exhaustion, depression, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts. Many also described strong social pressures around fitting in, identity, friendship, social media, racism, grooming, and pressure toward harmful behaviours.

Young people said they feel more likely to be heard in open, supportive environments, including clubs, sensitive school discussions, stronger mental health support, wellbeing hubs, creative discussion formats, and 1:1 conversations that reduce peer pressure.

YOUNG PEOPLE SAY:

ADULTS DON'T NOTICE:

PRESSURE

Academic, peer and social

EMOTIONAL TIREDNESS

Mental health

RISK EXPOSURE

Racism, grooming, criminal activity

'Adults just say, 'it's all because of your phones.' They think we're like robots on our phones, but we don't want to talk as we're overwhelmed by everything going on.'

Young Person

'We're never given the chance to talk, except here.'

Young Person

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT

The responses showed young people found it much easier to describe the struggles adults overlook than the opportunities they have to be heard.

QUESTION 5

What would a safe and inclusive community look like for you?



Activities included placing arrows on maps of Burton, to indicate safe and unsafe spaces along with using Play-Doh to create shapes representing their ideas. This encouraged reflection on 'where' and 'what' makes you feel safe or unsafe and how communities could be more inclusive.

Many associated safe places with home, school and other places they know. Safety was linked to being with friends or people you feel safe with as well as local places that felt safe and positive.

In contrast, young people described feeling unsafe in places associated with night-time, unfamiliar people or anti-social behaviour. Environmental risks were identified, such as certain traffic areas, rivers and parks that are run down.

**YOUNG
PEOPLE SAY:**

**A SAFE AND
INCLUSIVE
COMMUNITY
COMES FROM:**

TRUSTED
PEOPLE

WELCOMING,
ACCESSIBLE,
AND LOOKED
AFTER SPACES

'Places we can go freely
without feeling
uncomfortable.'

Young Person

'Community is about the
people who you enjoy
spending time with.'

Young Person

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT

Young people connect safety and inclusion with familiar relationships, welcoming community spaces and environments that are well maintained and accessible to them.

AREAS OF CHANGE:

From the research young people have given clear priorities



Create more opportunities and youth-friendly spaces.

Safe, welcoming, and affordable places to socialise, explore hobbies, and try new activities.

Stronger relationships and inclusive communities.

Build positive peer and adult connections, encourage intergenerational engagement, and reduce bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

Improve safety, wellbeing, and mental health support.

Address unsafe spaces, antisocial behaviour, and environmental risks, while providing mental health services, wellbeing hubs, and opportunities to speak openly.

Give young people a greater voice and influence.

Involve young people in decisions about education, health, leisure, transport, and community life, ensuring their opinions are heard and acted upon.

YOUNG PEOPLE SAY:

WE WANT MORE

OPPORTUNITIES
AND YOUTH-
FRIENDLY SPACES

CHANCES TO
BUILD POSITIVE
RELATIONSHIPS

FOCUS ON
SAFETY,
WELLBEING, AND
MENTAL HEALTH

OPPORTUNITIES
FOR YOUNG
PEOPLE TO BE
HEARD AND
INFLUENCE THE
DECISIONS THAT
AFFECT THEIR
LIVES

IN SUMMARY, THE WORD THAT CAPTURES WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE ASKING FOR IS “MORE.”

Burton Youth For Christ is a locally embedded charity with a heart to support children and young people reach their potential. We do this by working within three areas: School, Church and Community.

Our offer includes open access youth clubs, school wellbeing programmes, a listening service, mentoring, chaplaincy, residentials, a pop up prom dress shop, town wide youth events, holiday activities, leadership training and volunteering opportunities.

Our motivation comes from our Christian faith, but our services are open to all young people, regardless of their faith or cultural background.

burton.yfc.co.uk

Know Your Place is delivered in Partnership with

