

Participation Board Report 2023/2024



**NATIONAL
CHILDREN'S
BUREAU**



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"My favourite part of being in the YRA group has been being able to visit the Houses of Parliament on two occasions as a representative of NCB and being able to sit on interview panels. Being a member of NCB for the last eight years has really helped me grow as a person. Thank you to all the wonderful staff for their help and encouragement over the years."

Young Research Advisor

Foreword

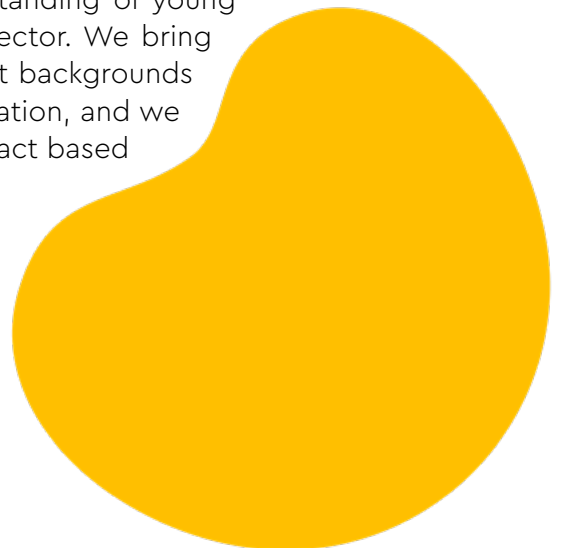
Young NCB

We are the Young NCB Advisory Group, and we advise NCB on different aspects of its work. We are a collaborative group, a big collection of ideas from across the country: we work together to get everyone's thoughts across and to bring fresh perspectives. We attend in-person meetings and share our views and opinions about the work of NCB. We also get involved in other opportunities, such as running events. We can help the charity because we have lived experience as young people, and we are massive advocates for other children and young people.

Being part of Young NCB is really valuable to us. It allows us young people to influence decisions made about issues that affect us. It's an opportunity to share ideas, to make a difference, and to develop important skills transferrable to all walks of life. We also get to meet like-minded people: we come from different places and backgrounds, but we can all share our views, and no-one gets judged. Being part of a group like Young NCB can pop the bubble you are in and bring fresh perspective.

We are the 'C' in NCB: this is a children's charity, and children and young people need to be at the heart of everything it does. By involving children and young people in its work, NCB is able to keep up-to-date with challenges and topics that are relevant to young people now. By understanding the needs and opinions of young people, NCB can improve understanding of young people amongst professionals working in the children's sector. We bring a range of ideas and perspectives to NCB from all different backgrounds which can only be a positive thing. We are the next generation, and we need to have our say – in letting us do this, NCB is able to act based on young people's voices.

This report is a summary of the participation activities that have taken place across NCB over the past year. For us, participation is about removing the hierarchy between decision makers and those who the decisions are made about. This report shows how NCB is working to enable children and young people to have their say and to knock down barriers between them and decision makers.





The voices and experiences of children and young people are at the heart of NCB, driving forward our specialist membership groups, our policy influencing work, and our engagement with the children's sector. We could not do the work we do as effectively as we do without the children and young people who advise us, who take part in our engagement work, and who so generously share their childhood experiences. As an organisation we strive to make every childhood better and part of the evidence we use to do so is given to us by children and young people themselves. I am extremely grateful to each of them, and proud of the children and young people's engagement work we have achieved across NCB this year.

NCB values what children and young people bring to our organisation, I believe NCB are sector leaders in supporting children and young people to engage directly with decision-makers at a strategic level. We support children and young people to directly influence change and be part of difficult conversations with leaders in local and national government. Participation in decision-making is a Right for all children and young people. We are committed to amplifying seldom heard voices and children and young people from minoritised communities.

At a time when children and young people arguably face more challenges to their wellbeing than ever before we are committed to increasing participation opportunities for all children and young people through our work. This year we have established two children's social care advisory boards through a Department for Education funded programme, creating opportunities for care experienced young people to be part of important conversations to shape social care reform. This is a successful outcome of the ongoing work our Policy and Social Care teams have been doing to ensure lived experiences are heard and valued within government.

Across NCB we continue to build our children and young people's participation work, engaging more seldom heard young voices and more diverse experiences. We have engaged with a record number of children this year, heard more diverse experiences than ever before, and we have been able to offer even more skills-building back to the children and young people in our advisory groups than in previous years. This widening of our engagement work will be a focus for the Participation team this coming year (and beyond), building on our successes and supporting more children and young people to be part of our work, to amplify their voices and experiences and to include them in guiding the agenda for change.

Joanna Carr
Assistant Director,
Participation

Our key achievements

The total number of children and young people we have engaged this year through our advisory groups and commissioned work is 1,302. This equates to over six children and young people for every member of staff at NCB.

Young people from across our networks met with the Children's Minister, the Department for Education (DfE) Permanent Secretary and the Education Select Committee, among many others – telling their stories directly and asking for change of those with the most power to act.

On behalf of the DfE, in December 2023 we launched two new Children and Young People's Social Care Advisory Boards to provide valuable input on the government's implementation of its children's social care strategy 'Stable Homes, Built on Love'.

Our FLARE group of children and young people, which also advises DfE, won The Children's Achievement Award at the Children and Young People Now Awards 2023.

Our Young Research Advisors worked with the University of Lancaster to develop a toolkit for researchers, health settings, and Integrated Care Boards on how they can work with primary-aged children when undertaking health research.

Our Young Anti-Bullying Alliance group created a series of short interview style videos to address the issue of banter being disguised as bullying.

In February 2024, we hosted the sixth Youth Voice Matters Conference. Over 110 disabled children and young people, and children and young people with special educational needs, came together to develop their participation skills and to discuss the impact it can have – the largest such conference in the country.

Our Turn to Talk is a podcast created, developed, and hosted by young people from across NCB's advisory groups and provides a space for our young people to set the agenda and discuss issues that are important to them. It had 550 downloads this year.

We launched an online art gallery to support care experienced young people to tell their stories. Young people submitted their artwork on the theme of "Home", with winners invited to a ceremony in London to recognise their creativity.



Our strategy for children and young people's participation

We often talk about children and young people being at the heart of NCB. As an organisation, our Forever Young value ensures we don't forget who is most important to NCB and the outcomes we have set out to achieve.

As with our values, children and young people's voices and right to decision-making is at the heart of NCB's new [five-year strategy](#) setting out our promise to build a better childhood for all children and young people. Our strategy is driven by clear aims to improve the lives of children in England and Northern Ireland, and is underpinned by the clear Goals that set out how we will achieve these aims. Goal 1 is to Amplify the voices of children,

young people and their families, ensuring that we continue to build the networks and infrastructure within the sector to support more diverse voices with the most relevant experiences to join our projects and programmes.

We will also use the influencing power of NCB to advocate for wider changes to the way Government and society are structured so that we give children a greater voice at national and strategic levels. NCB has a really exciting platform to create changes to the way Government, professionals, companies and other bodies think and act, so that decisions that affect children and young people are never taken without them.

Barriers to participation

The positive outcomes when children and young people are involved in shaping change can be incredible, but engagement and opportunity is not always easy to come by. Across the children's sector our resources continue to be squeezed and funding for participation is severely lacking, adding to the already significant barriers children and young people individually face when trying to be heard. Financial constraints on families is the biggest barrier to participation and as an organisation we take steps to ensure that access to funds is not a factor in accessing participation opportunities. For example, we always cover travel and hotel accommodation upfront to eliminate financial burden, as well as providing appropriate meals in line with any dietary/medical needs.

Across NCB, we always work to understand any physical, sensory, neurodiverse, or mental health support needs of participants, using the knowledge to plan accessible and inclusive sessions. Sessions always include various way for young people to

contribute and are adaptable to meet support needs. We use a mixed methodology incorporating a range of group sizes, verbal discussions, apps, mixed media activities, written work, and play-based tasks. If any opportunities require use of computers/internet, then we support access to hardware and data to enable attendance to online meetings and access to materials to prepare for discussion topics.

Prior to any engagement, we ensure that children and young people (and parents/carers when appropriate) understand what they are committing to, what is involved, and reminded about informed decision making. It is important to remind children and young people that they have the choice as to when and how they participate, and of the value they and their lived experiences hold to influencing change.

Our long-term advisory groups

FLARE

FLARE, which stands for Friendship, Learning, Achieve, Reach and Empower, is a diverse group of disabled young people and young people with special educational needs (SEN), up to the age of 25 from across England. They work together to share their views and lived experiences with the Department for Education and other statutory and academic organisations, helping them create policies and services that disabled children and young people and children and young people with SEN need in order to achieve and live the lives they want.

There are 19 active members of FLARE, who meet six times a year at the Department for Education. FLARE members are passionate about ensuring disabled children and young people have an equal say in the policies and practices that affect them and their families. FLARE and our other young people involved in regional groups within the Department for Education-funded programme play a key role in ensuring the voice and experiences of disabled children and young people are fully included in this work.



"Being able to share my views in a safe space, and being able to hear other people's views has been a surreal experience."
FLARE member



"It's important that NCB listens to children and young people so that everyone's opinion is heard, and they can make the right services for people with disabilities."
FLARE member

Children and Young People Now Awards 2023

FLARE won The Children's Achievement Award at the Children and Young People Now Awards 2023.

The Children and Young People Now Awards celebrate the people and organisations working with children, young people and families, and the award provides recognition for those working to improve the lives of children and families.





Young NCB Advisory Group

The Young NCB Advisory Group has 19 active members. The membership includes young people aged 11 – 18, and disabled young people and those with special educational needs aged 11 – 25, living across England. Young NCB exists to steer and influence the work of NCB as a charity and to ensure that youth voice is embedded in our work at every level.

The group meets six times a year in person, at Mentmore Terrace. At meetings, the group engage in three sessions, planned and facilitated by the Participation Team. These sessions can be on any aspect of NCB's work that is put to them. Over the past year, Young NCB have carried out consultation work for six teams across the organisation, including Policy and Communications and the Social Care Team.

The group are also commissioned by external organisations who seek their advice and lived experiences. In the past year, they have undertaken work for IPSOS to support them to ensure young people can help shape integrated care and King's College London to help them produce an animation video to communicate how young people's administrative data is used in research.



FLARE members and staff at CYP Now Awards 2023



Young NCB members

"I have a role in decision making which makes me feel like I am helping others on a larger scale."
Young NCB member

"My favourite part about being a member of Young NCB is meeting a diverse group of passionate, kind people and discussing topics with them and then working actively towards a common goal of better outcomes and resources for young people like us."
Young NCB member

Young NCB Network

Young NCB is our wider network for children and young people who want to find out about the work of NCB and opportunities to engage in topics that are important to them. Network members have access to a monthly newsletter where we share information about upcoming opportunities the group can engage in. They can take part in our new Hot Topics events and find out more about our work across NCB. Young NCB is open to all children and young people aged up to the age of 18, or up to 25 for disabled young people or those with special educational needs. The network currently has around 200 members and is growing.

Young Research Advisors

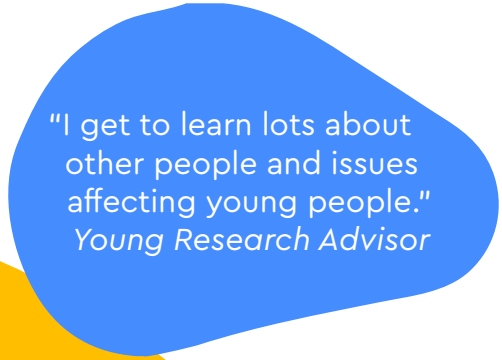
With 18 active Young Research Advisors, who range in age from 11 to 25, the group meets multiple times a year and advises researchers and academics on a wide range of research areas including education, health, and social care. Over the last year, the YRAs had the opportunities to advise researchers on all stages of research, from study branding through to advising on research methods. They advise researchers on key questions of participatory and inclusive research, such as who should be involved in the research, what questions should be asked, and how best to speak with children and young people.

Children's Social Care Advisory Boards

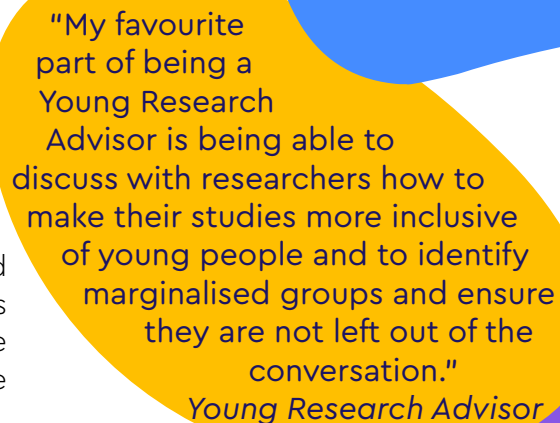
On behalf of the Department for Education, in December 2023 we launched two new Children and Young People's Social Care Advisory Boards to provide valuable input on the government's implementation of its children's social care strategy 'Stable Homes, Built on Love'.

The new Advisory Boards, with 10 members aged 11–17 and seventeen members aged 18–25, brings together those with lived experiences of the children's social care system in England to advise on ongoing reforms at a national and local level. The board's members include those who have had a social worker, those who are looked after or care leavers, unaccompanied asylum seekers, and children living in secure children's homes.

The Boards will initially run until March 2025, and members will attend three in-person meetings a year, as well as monthly online meetings.



"I get to learn lots about other people and issues affecting young people."
Young Research Advisor



"My favourite part of being a Young Research Advisor is being able to discuss with researchers how to make their studies more inclusive of young people and to identify marginalised groups and ensure they are not left out of the conversation."
Young Research Advisor



"I've been able to listen to lived experience and stories of other young people who have gone through similar circumstances. It's helped me feel like I'm no longer alone."
Social Care Advisory Board member



University of Lancaster

One of the group's highlights over the past year has been working with The University of Lancaster to develop a toolkit for researchers, health settings, and Integrated Care Boards on how they can work with primary-aged children when undertaking health research. The toolkit will be aimed at professionals working with disabled children and those with special educational needs aged 4–11. The group were asked to think about some of the ways the toolkit activities might look and how they might break down information for professionals to understand inclusive practice.

"I really liked learning about new things and found it very interesting so would love to do this kind of session again!"
Young Research Advisor

Young ABA advisory groups

This year, ABA have had two Young ABA groups, one England and Wales based (30 young people registered), and one NI based (24 young people registered). Both groups will work independently for in-person meetings, prioritising the needs of their nations, and come together online to share their work and collaborate on areas such as Anti-Bullying Week.

Young ABA gives young people the opportunity to share what is important to them when it comes to bullying issues, and contribute to our projects, programmes and campaigns. Both groups are provided with training opportunities such as social media marketing training, media training and anti-bullying training, and the chance to influence our annual Anti-Bullying Week campaign that reaches millions of children and young people across the UK. Young ABA meet online bi-monthly with the Anti-Bullying staff team. The young people are involved in the group for one year. At the end of the year, the group graduates and a new cohort are selected for the incoming year.

Living Assessments Groups

As part of the Living Assessments programme, commissioned by the Wellcome Trust in collaboration with the University of Cambridge and the University of Kent, we have two young Experts by Experience groups. One for care leavers, aged 18–25, and one for disabled young people, up to the age of 25. Across the two groups there are 12 active members. The groups meet up to four times a year each. During meetings, the young people share their lived experiences of social care to inform the academics' programme of work, for example to inform papers on mental health, as well as supporting NCB's policy influencing activities.

Bullying vs Banter Campaign

One of the groups' highlights from this year was creating a series of short interview style videos to address the issue of banter being disguised as bullying: <https://youtu.be/0VMYVPZVdJQ>

IASSN Children and Young People's steering group

The Information, Advice and Support Services Network's Children and Young People's Steering Group is made up of nine young people aged 16-25, who are disabled or have special educational needs and who are based in England. The group members have all previously accessed, or been involved with, their SENDIAS service.

The group's purpose is to work with the IASSN to support SENDIAS services to better meet the needs of children and young people, as well as ensure that the IASSN keeps the voice of children and young people at the heart of all we do; co-produced meetings are held bi-monthly. The aims and work of the group are agreed upon at these meetings and additional sessions and meetings are then held to complete the work.

"The NCB's participation model is like no other, a complete solidified platform of participation for young people is very difficult to find, so to have something like NCB is truly remarkable."
FLARE member

"My favourite part of being in YNCB is that I'm surrounded by people who have the same goal and interests as me which makes working with them very fun and useful."
Young NCB member

Sector Training

In June the group co-wrote and delivered online training to SENDIAS staff. The training, "How local services can include children and young people on their steering groups", was run over two sessions with 116 SENDIAS staff attending. It was also recorded and has since been watched a further 150 times.

"This was an excellent session. There were a lot of excellent take home points from it. The young people who led the session were so knowledgeable and confident in their delivery their passion for their involvement clearly came over."
Sector Training attendee

Post-networking Q&A at Youth Voice Matters Conference 2023





Young people taking the lead

Many teams across the organisation have delivered engagement and participation work this year, supporting our children and young people to take the lead in designing, creating and producing key parts of our work. Our sector-leading participation focus speaks to the rich skills building opportunities NCB creates for the children and young people we work with and the value the organisation places on being influenced by and responsive to youth-voice.

"How else do we help young people if we don't even listen to what they want and need?"
Young NCB member

"It's important that NCB listens to young people because it means we can help design the system we live in and have experience with."
Social Care Advisory Board member

Youth Voice Matters 2024

In February 2024, the Council for Disabled Children (CDC) hosted the sixth Youth Voice Matters Conference. Over 110 disabled children and young people, and children and young people with special educational needs, representing groups across England came together to develop their participation skills and to recognise the impact they can have when taking part in strategic participation.

This event is held annually as part of the Department for Education funded national programme Making Participation Work. Youth Voice Matters is a conference with a difference – designed and delivered by young people for young people. Each conference is co-chaired by a young person, with all key decisions made by FLARE, who also chose the theme each year: this year was the year of Action. Building upon previous events where workshops have explored what strategic participation can look like and developing young people's skills to

influence and be heard, this year focused on how we can put learning into practice. FLARE have a key role in co-designing the day, from the activities on offer, including networking opportunities and a fun stuff like a photobooth, to the workshops we host.

"My highlight of being part of FLARE is definitely chairing the Youth Voice Matters Conference with Amanda."
FLARE member

Youth Voice Matters Conference 2023





YVM visual minutes

"Hot Topic" events

We have delivered two Hot Topic events this year, both co-produced and co-delivered by the Young NCB Advisory Group. Our first, "Young NCB on Healthy Relationships" coincided with the celebrations of NCB's 60th Anniversary in November 2023 and was attended by professionals and young people who are supporting improved education of healthy relationships in schools. The second event was hosted by Young NCB in April 2024 and shone the light on how young people are impacted by how mental health is discussed, supported, treated, represented and taught to young people and professionals. Over 20 organisations and 15 young people joined Young NCB at the event to be part of the conversation.

The aim of the Hot Topic events is to give Young NCB members a platform to discuss issues that are important to them with people who have the power to influence decision-making in that area. They also provide a platform for young people to build skills and confidence and to amplify the voices of other young people.

Young NCB are involved in every stage of planning, development, and delivery of the events, supported by members of NCB staff. They choose the topic, create aims and vision for the event, design the session plan, and chair and facilitate the event.

"Really great to share ideas and opinions on how mental health support can be improved and hear about people's experiences from all around the country."
Hot Topic event attendee

"What an amazing group of young people! I definitely have a better understanding of what young people themselves feel would support them better."
Hot Topic event attendee

Event flyer





Anti-Bullying Week 2023

The Young ABA groups co-designed key aspects of the national Anti-Bullying Week 2023 campaign, including the theme, logo, campaign manifesto, social media content, promotional videos and resources for schools. As part of this, the group was also able to feed into a campaign to government, asking people to contact their MP about the need for anti-bullying teacher training.

There were six group meetings across the year: three face-to-face and three online. These meetings included activities and discussions with the young people to get their opinions, input, and feedback about various aspects of the campaign, and then to plan and create the content together.



ABW23 social media post

You can watch the ABW23 Call to Action here:

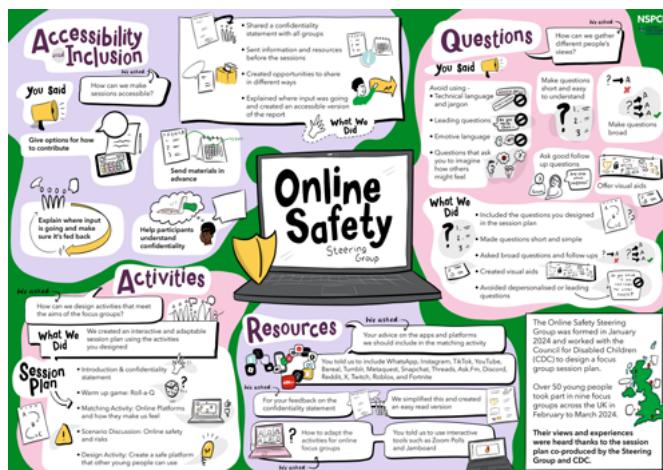
<https://youtu.be/0vWCg2EIEYY>

Online safety co-design steering group

Earlier this year, the Participation team, commissioned by NSPCC, created a steering group of 6 lived experience autistic young people, aged 14-24 to help co-design the project's engagement plan to hear autistic young people's experiences of online safety.

This was a great opportunity for NCB to work closely with autistic young people who have been participants in our Young NCB and FLARE groups to develop their own engagement skills. Across two meetings they helped us to develop accessible activities, lines of enquiry, and safe approaches to encourage autistic young people to share their experiences. The steering group also informed the methods used to prepare

Online safety steering group



participants to take part in focus groups and understand confidentiality, as well as helping them understand informed participation and what to share with focus group facilitators.

The session plan co-produced by the steering group was used in nine focus groups across the four nations, through which the views of over 50 autistic young people were heard. The creative, engaging and adaptable nature of the session plan was crucial to ensuring the overall success of the project.

Our Turn to Talk

Our Turn to Talk is a podcast created, developed, and hosted by young people from across NCB's advisory groups, networks, projects, and programmes. Any of our young members can put themselves forward to create a podcast on a topic of their choice. They are supported by staff members as much as needed to develop their topic, content, and presentation.

The podcast provides a space for our young people to set the agenda and discuss issues that are important to them. It also provides a space for information sharing and is a resource for other young people.

This year, we have published 4 episodes on topics including:

"The Importance of Inclusive Language" and "Experiences of Education as an Autistic Person". Additionally, two young people also produced the "60 Years of National Children's Bureau" episode with Dame Christine Lenahan, to celebrate the organisation's anniversary.



Our Turn to Talk logo

You can listen to all episodes of the podcast here: <https://our-turn-to-talk.zencast.website/episodes>

"It's important that NCB listens to young people because as a children's charity having young people's voice and opinion at the centre is vital to doing the best work they can. Young people know youth issues best as we ourselves witness and experience them. NCB listening to young people further empowers their voice, reminding us of the importance of our views and lets them reach a wider demographic. YNCB is great opportunity and group that is vital to NCB as it allows young people to gain and nourish skills they may not know they had like debating topics, communication in different groups, being analytical and decisive."

Young NCB member

"I've been able to listen to lived experience and stories of other young people who have gone through similar circumstances. It's helped me feel like I'm no longer alone. I look forward to regularly meeting everyone each month and working together with our lived experiences to change policy."

Social Care Advisory Board Member



Engagement work across the teams

There has been a diverse range of engagement work which has taken place across the organisation this year. This is a brief overview of some of the projects which have involved children and young people voice and influence in different teams and themes.

"People shouldn't be able to make decisions about our present or future lives without us. I believe that NCB has done really well at listening to us."
Social Care Advisory Board member

"NCB's focus is on young people and issues affecting them. It cannot perform this function effectively, if it ignores young people and what in their view matters to them."
FLARE member

Sector support in Northern Ireland

LINKS

Over the past 8 years, the National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF) has worked with NCB in Northern Ireland to deliver the LINKS network of support to over 140 organisations grant-aided through its Empowering Young People's Programme. This programme of work is now coming to an end, but this year has seen some key engagement successes, including:

Internship

LINKS supports a paid internship opportunity for young people aged 16–24 years. In January 2024 we welcomed Saorla White, our latest Intern to

the Belfast-based team. Our intern is supported by a line manager and a mentor who has received ILM training in Mentoring and Coaching, so that their individual learning and development plan can be fulfilled.

"I have seen an enhancement of my skills in administration, research and networking. My experience at NCB has to date been truly invaluable in pursuing a career after university in the voluntary sector."
*Saorla White
(LINKS intern)*

What Works roadshow

The LINKS Young Peoples Advisory Group exists to consult on the design, delivery and review of the LINKS' work. Over the past 18 months, the LINKS team has been reaching young people through their existing youth groups, as part of the "What Works Roadshow". We have visited groups to gather evidence on what works when involving young people in the design, delivery and review of NLCF-funded work. To date, we have spoke with 34 young people, aged 11–25 years to explore the key themes of successful participation work.

"What's really cool about this is that every single person gets to champion something that they're passionate about."
Young Person attending a focus group

Special Educational Needs & Disability

Bury Improvement Plan

Bury Council commissioned the Council for Disabled Children to explore with disabled young people and those with special education what they think are the key ingredients to happy, healthy and safe lives.

36 children and young people joined the three engagement sessions, helping us create a list of strategic outcomes for young people in Bury, which have been used to create a plan for supporting education and health teams, parents and carers, and children and young people to work together to improve the lives of children and young people.

Hammersmith and Fulham

The REACH programme supported Hammersmith and Fulham Borough Council to ask children and

young people in the borough to share what the local authority's SEND vision and strategic outcomes means to them in day-to-day life. Through 2 focus groups, we engaged 13 disabled children and young people and children and young people with special educational needs to explore what makes life happy and healthy, and if their experiences were reflected in the local authority's strategic vision and outcomes. We used the feedback gained to inform and shape a multi-agency session, which allowed Hammersmith & Fulham to develop an outcomes-based data dashboard, with indicators which embed children and young people's voice throughout.



Poster chosen by focus groups

National Keyworking Evaluation

The national Learning Disability and Autism Keyworking Function was rolled out in April 2022. The overarching aim of the Keyworking Function is to improve the outcomes and experiences of autistic children and young people and/or children and young people with learning disabilities. The function aims to provide those at high risk of being admitted to mental health settings or who are inpatients, with prompt and co-ordinated care.



Our Participation team was commissioned by NHS England's Arden and Greater East Midlands Commissioning Support Unit (AGEM) to take part in the National Keyworking Evaluation and carry out direct engagement with children, young people, parents and carers who had interacted with the service to understand if the programme has made a difference to high-risk inpatient admissions. The Council for Disabled Children was commissioned for their skills in engaging seldom heard voices as this particular group of children and young people have significant barriers to engagement, including non-verbal communication, severe social, emotional and mental health support needs, and previous trauma through engagement with professionals.

The direct engagement phase of the evaluation took place between January and September 2023. The engagement consisted of semi-structured interviews and activities with children, young people, parents, and carers. These interviews were focussed on discovering whether the programme helped children, young people, and families to feel safe and secure, informed and listened to, and involved in decision-making regarding their care and support. The team took an extremely proactive and flexible approach in how the interviews were conducted in response to the varied and complex communication and support needs of the children and young people involved. The Participation team was supported in this work by the involvement of a lived-experience associate who carried out interviews with the support of staff, and a panel of young experts-by-experience who helped design the lines of enquiry.

The Participation team submitted a report to AGEM, which presented the words and experiences of the children and families who were interviewed

and made recommendations about how to best support them going forward. The report was well received by AGEM and gave voice to the views and experiences of a group of extremely seldom heard children and young people.

"The keyworkers manage to sort of like push, I mean, like, not force, but sometimes just nudge the other support systems to, like, help a bit more."
Young Person interviewed as part of the Keyworking Evaluation

"I think getting help early, as early as possible, is a good idea for people who struggle with stuff, because the sooner you solve them, the sooner you help the problem, the more likely it is to go away."
Young Person interviewed as part of the Keyworking Evaluation

Social care

Public engagement online art gallery

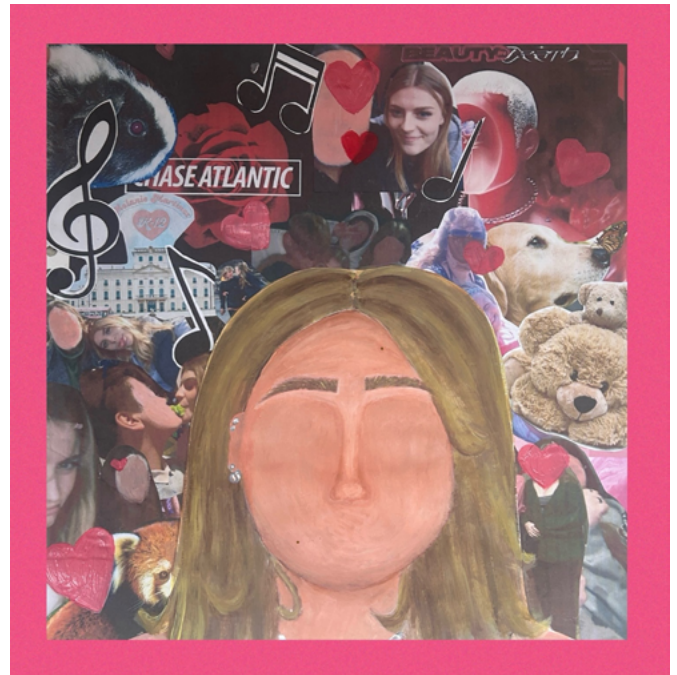
Our Policy and Social Care teams launched an online art gallery to support care experienced young people to tell their stories. With the first theme of "Home?" and what it means to children and young people themselves, a number of young people submitted their artwork, with winners invited to a ceremony in London to recognise their creativity.

You can see our "Home" gallery, as well as submissions on our new theme of "Identity" here: gallery.ncb.org.uk

Mental health & wellbeing

Sharing Shapes

186 bereaved children and young people took part in the Sharing Shapes activity for Children's Grief Awareness Week. They submitted drawings on the theme of who can support them in their grief, including friends and family but also thinking more widely to support from services, schools and creative activities. Their Shapes of Support were knitted together virtually to make a giant mural or quilt representing the support that grieving children are getting, and aiming to encourage others to reach out for support.



Submission on theme of "Identity" by Amy, 17

You can find out more about Children's Grief Awareness week here: <https://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/about-cbn/childrens-grief-awareness-week>

Shape of Your Support mural, 2023



Young People's Survey

During Children's Grief Awareness Week, the team launched surveys aimed at both children (5 – 12) and young people (13 years +), asking them to rate or rank a very short set of statements. There were 27 children and 22 young people who responded – a brilliant response rate for a sensitive topic – and their responses have been incorporated into a manifesto for the bereavement sector, with clear recommendations that would improve the support for bereaved children, young people and adults.

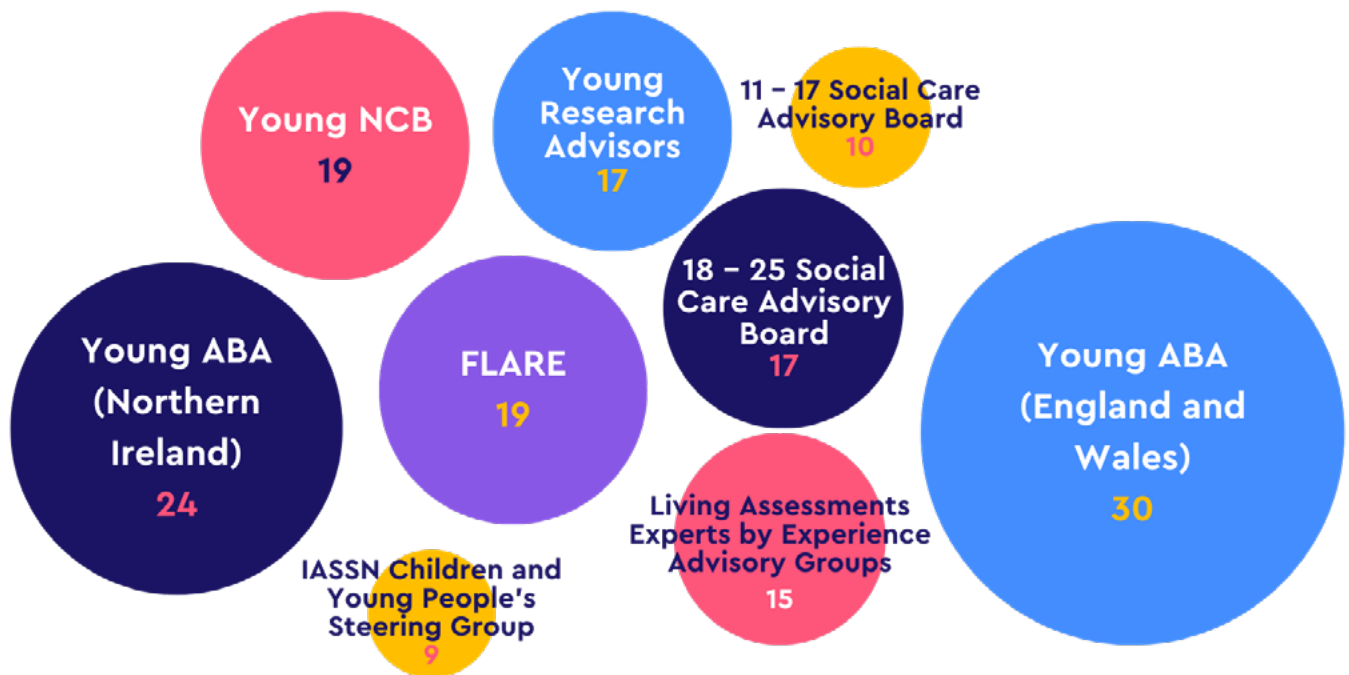
There were lots of important recommendations from children and young people, who emphasised the importance of strong signposting and accessibility of support. Overwhelmingly, those who responded felt it that everyone should be able to get help to talk about their feelings and cope with their grief if they need it.

The findings of the survey can be found here: <https://nationalbereavementalliance.org.uk/latest-news/whats-important-to-you/>



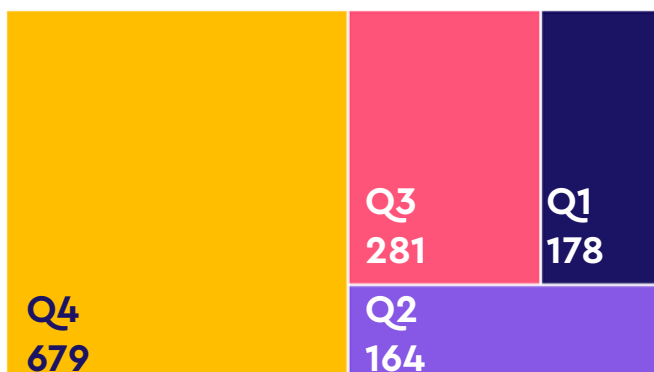
Statistics

Number of members in each group



Total numbers

The total number of children and young people we have engaged this year through our advisory groups and commissioned work is **1302**. In this period, children and young people were mostly engaged in policy development activities, attending and contributing to events, and taking part in focus groups. They were also engaged through contributing to training, and taking part in campaign and recruitment activities.



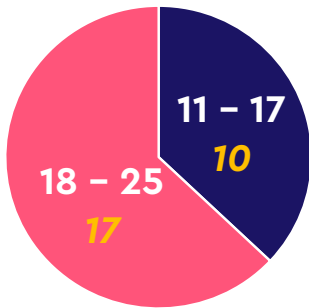
Children and Young People we engaged with, per quarter

Demographic data

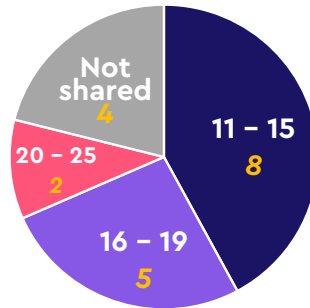
We do not have demographic data for all our advisory groups at the moment. We are working on this to make sure that we are collecting this information more consistently going forward across our groups. However, we have collected this data for our Young NCB, the Living Assessments Groups, and Children's Social Care advisory boards.

As these forms are anonymous and optional, the information we can present does not show a complete picture for any of our groups but does give insight into the makeup of these. Fifteen out of 19 of our Young NCB members have completed NCB's equity, diversity and inclusion forms. There are two Children's Social Care Advisory Boards: seven out of ten members of the 11 – 17 group and 9 out of 17 of the 18 – 25 group have completed these. For the Living Assessment Groups, 14 out of 15 have disclosed this information.

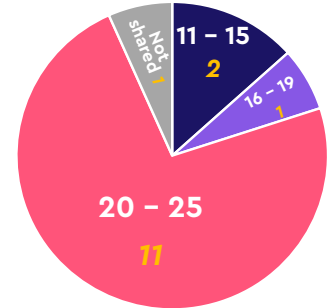
Age range



Children's Social Care Boards

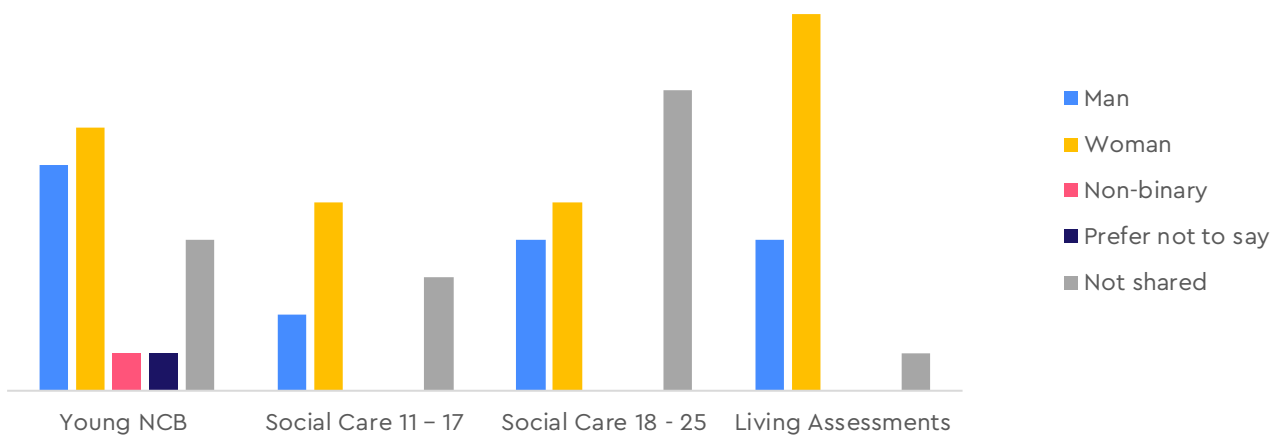


Young NCB

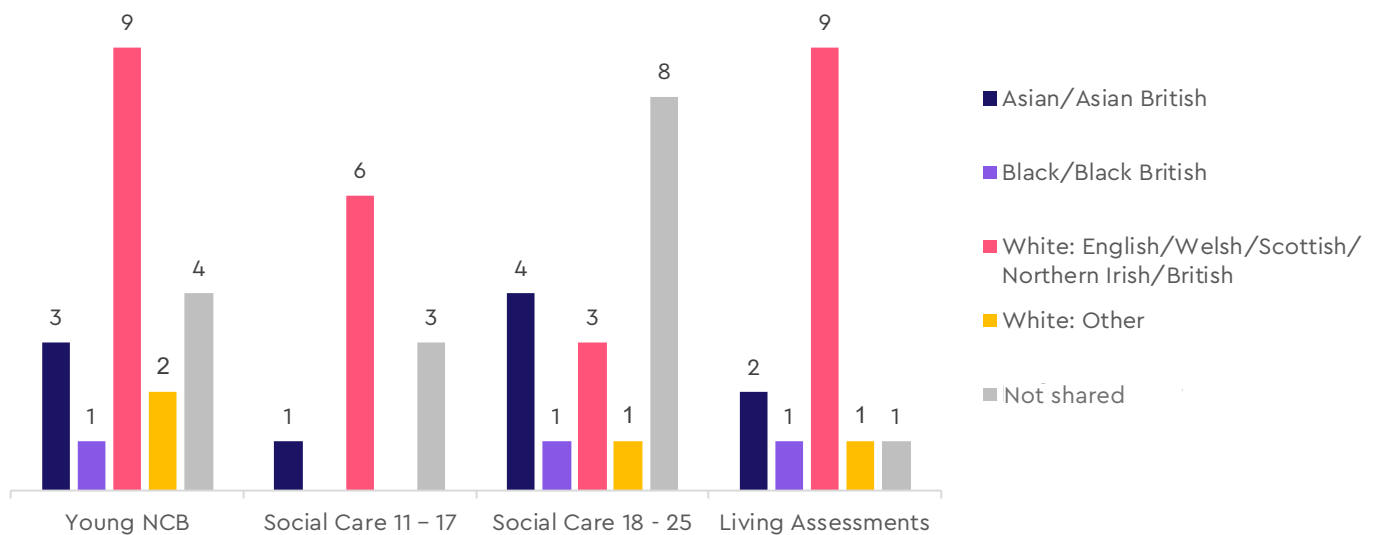


Living Assessments groups

Gender identification



Ethnicity





New members this year

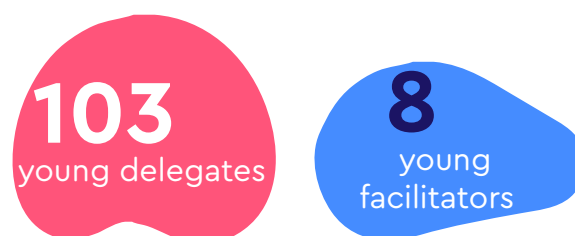
We have seen a lot of interest from young people to join our groups this year, bringing new voices into the work of NCB.



Young people involved in Children At The Table



Youth Voice Matters Conference 2024



"Our Turn to Talk" podcast downloads



Most popular episodes this year:

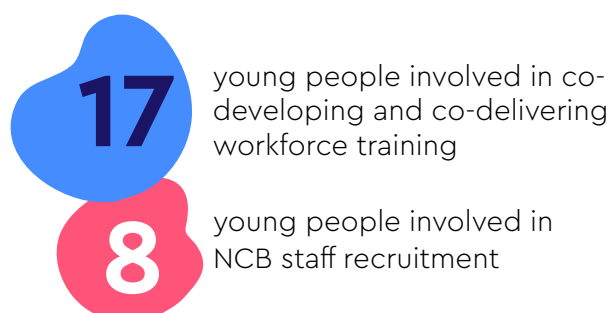
127 downloads
Experiences of education as an autistic person
July 2023

82 downloads
Making SEND everyone's business
July 2023

66 downloads
The importance of inclusive language
November 2023

Young people in Government meetings

Lords Public Services Committee Roundtable	3 young people
Education Select Committee	2 young people
FLARE roundtables with the Children's Minister	7 young people
Meeting with DfE's Permanent Secretary	3 young people



Testimonials

Zach, FLARE member

The reason why I enjoy being part of FLARE is because of the people, the environment, and I feel like I can be myself and grow. Also, I love making change. Because when I was younger, I was quite revolted, and I hated injustice. So being able to make a change in a bigger scale where you're not just advocating for your local place, but for the country, is great. It's also where I want it to be in the future, so it's a step to get there.

I've been with NCB for eight years. They've seen me grow as a person and take initiative. They have seen how I'm able to captivate a room, just by making people smile and laugh and telling them my stories. Being with NCB has taught me to have compassion, to listen more, to think, and to think outside the box. It's a place where I can share my opinions and passions and people will listen. And just it's just given me a level of confidence in myself and in my capacity as a young person with SEND. I'm now able to articulate what I want, my needs, my ambitions, and my objectives.

It's also just so nice to be in a place where you feel loved, you feel wanted, and even though I'm going into my last year of FLARE, I want to continue. I want to [be] making change at a biggest scale. My dreams are to be in Parliament, and being a part of this group has given me a lot of courage within myself.

I've enjoyed even doing stuff outside of my NCB advisory group. I've participated in so many things, like the Anti-Bullying Alliance, the panels, the different conferences, and ceremonies. But the thing that I enjoy the most is just sharing my knowledge with everyone and getting the opportunity to do that on a bigger scale. I get to represent children with SEND, but also, I represent a whole set of neurodiverse young people.

The one event that I can vividly remember is the Youth Voice Matters conference, leading the manifesto workshop because I felt like it was a big part of something. I'm from London and just being out in Birmingham and doing stuff out there is so cool because you get to see a different part of England. Also, to have the chance for everything being facilitated for you and adapted, it's just amazing. It was also beautiful how you are with people you trust, and you get the opportunity to work with different young people and see different mentalities and how we can facilitate each other.

It's so important to include young people because young people can bring a perspective on what's new and what's important. Our generation is changing, and England is diverse, but it still isn't as inclusive as we want it to be. Children still have to adapt to the mainstream white, male society. We have to accommodate their needs, but they won't adapt to us, which is very difficult. So, this opportunity gives us a voice to make that change.

That's why it's so important for organisations like NCB to listen to young people. They help create the system for young people, so it's their duty and obligation to listen to us. And if we can have things that are facilitated, then more young people can, despite their class, race, ability, have a platform or voice to share their opinions or be heard, or feel like they're placed to belong.



Troy, Young NCB member

I enjoy being part of the Young NCB advisory group because it's so special to have your voice heard as a young person. You get to share your lived experiences, but also empower young people through using your voice and tackling issues that we face. We come together as a group to make NCB the best it can be for young people and for the next generation of young people to get involved in making a difference.

It also creates skills and opportunities for me to showcase my talents, skills and contributions, as well as those of other young people. Through being part of an advisory group, you very much get to build leadership skills, because in a way we're all leaders in the group. You also get to develop skills in decision making and teambuilding. You get to build skills in yourself, like knowing yourself. Even skills you wouldn't think about, like maths and English come together as part of meetings.

I joined YNCB last year and it was an important part of my journey to becoming an ambassador. Last year, I was trying to figure out where I wanted to go with my participation journey. Joining the group really made a big difference because it gave me a skill and it gave me a voice. It really enabled me to empower myself and identify myself as being a young leader. It also made me start to think about why young people are so important nationally. It got me thinking about how the decision makers need to listen to

us young people because our voice matters and we shouldn't feel silenced. Joining YNCB made me want to reach out for more opportunities, to more youth voice groups, and start helping other people to really show their talents and skills. I wanted to tell other young people, 'it's ok, you are going to stand out and you are going to have a voice, you just need to go for it and don't give up because by you having a voice it changes the world to be a better place.'

Through YNCB, I've taken part in advisory group meetings, and I've had lots of other opportunities. I've taken part in a webinar about neurodiverse young people in sport. I written blogs and produced podcasts. I took part in an event led by young people about healthy relationships. I enjoy taking part in these opportunities because it helps me develop skills

and gives me things to put on my CV. It also gives me a platform to have a voice and to raise issues I want to change. It's hard to choose a favourite experience, because I love every part of it! But I must say, I enjoyed doing a podcast I did for the 60th anniversary of NCB. I really enjoyed talking about and really celebrating that achievement.



It's so important for NCB to listen to young people because we have lived experience, and we know what's going on in the world – we understand things that sometimes professionals might not understand. It's vital to listen to us because we're the next generation of young people who are going to have jobs and careers. So, it's important that we have a voice, and we can use it to help decision makers to actually get it right, so that we are able to have happy and healthy lives.

NCB is very inclusive. I have a learning disability and NCB has really helped by trying to understand me and my needs. The staff always send me out agendas early and support me during the sessions, so that I don't get overwhelmed when I'm doing things.

I think that young people add a lot to NCB as an organisation. We add a sense of humour! We add a lot of ideas, as well as collaboration and leadership. We also add ourselves, who we are as individuals. We all come together as a group, and we all have the same goal, which is to make NCB a place where young people can have a voice. The staff work so hard to make us young people grow and have a voice, as well as to make us feel inspired and included. They really want us to have a say and for us to be involved in decisions.

Being part of YNCB has given me a purpose in my life to work out where I want to go and where I want to be. If I didn't do YNCB, I don't know where I would be at or what I would be up to really. It's given me the skills and opportunities to go and follow my dreams. I want to make a difference to people, to inspire people, to be an activist and to challenge MPs and professionals and show that listening to young people makes things better. I think it's given me a way forward.



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CHILDREN'S
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ALLIANCE



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COUNCIL
FOR DISABLED
CHILDREN



SCHOOLS'
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