

# YOUTH SUMMIT IMPACT - 2026



## IMPACT SNAPSHOT

**165**

Young people in attendance

**16**

Schools & colleges represented

**43**

Organisations attended

# Who are PIE & L!STEN?

PIE is a **Stockport-based social enterprise dedicated to empowering young people to shape the future they want through community and education focused initiatives.** In collaboration with Stockport Council, PIE **established the L!STEN steering group in April 2023** to ensure youth voices are represented in local decision-making. Since its inception, L!STEN has led numerous projects and events, including the annual Youth Summit, summer wellbeing events, and the Stockport Youth Awards, providing platforms for young people to discuss key issues such as employment, transport, safe spaces, and education. The group's impact has been widely recognised, most notably when it received the **"Dame Mary Perkins British Citizen's Youth Group Award"** at the House of Lords in 2025. L!STEN also engages directly with local MPs and council members to influence policy, while offering members meaningful opportunities to develop confidence, leadership skills, and a sense of purpose. **Through its work, PIE and L!STEN continue to strengthen Stockport's youth offer, fostering a more inclusive and empowered community of young people.**



## History of the Youth Summit

Over the past three years the Stockport Youth Summit has grown steadily in scale and reach, becoming bigger and more impactful with each consecutive event. **The summit is now, in the majority, youth-led – from planning and organisation to presenting on the day – ensuring that young people are at the centre of every part of the experience.** It began as an effort to bring together young people from all areas of Stockport so that a full range of voices could be heard in one room, with broad representation across the borough. **In 2026 this commitment to inclusion has deepened further, with participants from special schools and home-educated backgrounds contributing to make the summit even more representative of the diverse youth population.**



FOCUS FOR 2026

# YOUTH OFFER

WHAT WE DID BEFORE THE SUMMIT

In Stockport, we have worked hard to create an inclusive youth offer for young people, with activities, clubs, and opportunities to learn new skills and gain valuable experience. We work closely with community organisations to reach into different areas of the borough and ensure our offer is inclusive. However, we know there is more we can do. Through the development of **L!STEN**, we now have the opportunity to place young people truly at the centre of designing and delivering our offer – *making it with them, for them*. Our ambition is for Stockport to be the best place to grow up, and for this to be realised, young people must be at the heart of the decisions and services that impact their lives.



Over the past year, we have undertaken extensive work to understand the needs, priorities, and expectations of young people, and how they want adults to work alongside them. We carried out two surveys, each receiving responses from over **1,500 young people**, including those with additional needs and disabilities, home-educated young people, care-experienced young people, and young people from a range of backgrounds and communities across Stockport.



Young people have told us about the importance of strong, trusting relationships with the adults around them, and how having people who genuinely care and show an interest makes a significant difference to their lives. We are using this feedback to directly shape our new **Coproduction Charter** – a shared set of values and commitments for adults working with children – and to influence our **Social Care Reforms**, which set out a new way of working with families who need help and support. Their insight is also guiding the development of our new **Youth Offer**, ensuring it is accessible, relevant, and reflective of the needs of our community.



Our Youth Offer survey identified several key themes that influence how young people access activities and support: **safe spaces, travel, accessibility and inclusivity, communication, and work experience and employment opportunities**. These themes formed the basis of our **Youth Summit**, where workshops and activities were designed to explore these issues in greater depth and gather ideas for improvement. All feedback and insight gathered from young people is now feeding into our **Youth Advisory Board**, which will drive the development of our new and improved Youth Offer and ensure it meets the standards that young people expect and deserve.



We are genuinely excited about the journey ahead and look forward to working in partnership with young people and with **L!STEN** over the next year to co-create meaningful change.



# OVERALL FINDINGS



Across all workshops at the Summit, several consistent and interconnected themes emerged:

## 1. Young people are ambitious – barriers are structural

Young people are **motivated** to develop skills, gain work experience and engage in activities. However, **participation is often shaped by structural barriers** such as transport challenges, affordability, unequal access to networks, confidence and social anxiety, SEND accessibility gaps and limited awareness of opportunities. The key issue identified is not disengagement, but the **visibility, accessibility and equity of opportunities**.

## 2. Transport and safety are foundational issues

Transport was identified as a **major barrier** to participation. Young people reported feeling unsafe when travelling, particularly at night or on public transport, and highlighted concerns about poor lighting, overcrowded buses, unreliable routes, accessibility challenges and travel costs. These issues can **limit young people's** independence and affect their ability to **access work experience, activities and opportunities**.

## 3. Inclusion and SEND require system-level attention

Young people and stakeholders highlighted the need for **stronger approaches to inclusion**. Challenges included lower expectations for neurodiverse young people, limited accessible placements, and gaps in SEND awareness among providers and transport staff. There is a clear need for **inclusive planning** that maintains equal expectations while ensuring appropriate support and accessibility.

## 4. Confidence, networks and role models matter

Access to opportunities is often influenced by **confidence** and personal networks. Young people without existing connections can be disadvantaged when applying for work experience or employment. **Building communication skills, providing networking opportunities and showcasing diverse role models** were identified as important ways to improve access and aspiration.

## 5. Communication is a critical enabler

Young people consistently reported that they are often **unaware of the opportunities available to them**. Communication was described as inconsistent or not reaching them effectively. Young people highlighted the need for clearer, more youth-friendly communication and better use of trusted channels such as schools and digital platforms.

## 6. Safe, welcoming and flexible spaces increase participation

Young people emphasised the importance of **safe, welcoming environments** where they feel comfortable participating. They value **flexible spaces that allow social interaction while also providing quieter areas** when needed. Access to warm indoor spaces and inclusive creative or digital activities was also seen as important for encouraging engagement.

## 7. Shift from consultation to co-production

Young people expressed a strong desire to **play an active role** in shaping decisions and initiatives that affect them. Rather than simply being consulted, they want **opportunities to contribute** ideas, influence projects and participate in meaningful decision-making within their communities.

**Young people are ready to engage, contribute and lead – the challenge is ensuring systems are accessible, inclusive and designed *with* young people, not just *for* them.**



# TRAVEL SAFETY

- ☀ Young people highlighted that feeling unsafe when travelling, particularly on buses at night, is **a major barrier to participation**, and improving lighting, supervision, affordability and the overall travel environment could significantly increase their confidence and access to activities.

## What young people said

Young people shared that **feeling safe when travelling, particularly at night, is a major concern**. Public transport was a key focus, with many describing buses and travel routes as environments where they often feel unsafe.

Concerns included poor lighting, overcrowded buses, intimidating behaviour from other passengers, and unclean environments. Quiet or isolated buses were also reported to increase feelings of vulnerability. Some young people said these experiences affect whether they feel comfortable travelling to activities, particularly in the evening.

## Key insights

- Travel safety significantly affects young people's confidence to travel independently.
- Experiences on public transport play an important role in whether young people feel safe travelling.
- Concerns about travelling at night can reduce young people's willingness to attend evening activities.

## Why this matters

**Travel safety is a foundational issue: when young people do not feel safe using public transport, it limits their independence and reduces access to education, employment, and social opportunities.**

## What young people want

- Safer travel options, especially in the evening.
- Better lighting and safer waiting areas at bus stops.
- More buses and stops to reduce overcrowding.
- Wardens, cameras or clearer supervision on public transport.
- Cleaner and more welcoming transport environments.
- Affordable or free evening travel to support access to activities.

## Calls to action

1. **Share young people's feedback** internally at the council, and with relevant local stakeholders, to incorporate insights into service planning and strategic reporting.
2. **Explore partnership opportunities** to improve safety on and around public transport and develop youth-led social action initiatives.
3. **Develop educational workshops** and activities that empower young people to advocate for safer and more accessible transport options.

# WELCOMING & INCLUSIVE DEBATE



The Welcoming and Inclusive Debate revealed that young people are keen to participate and have a **strong appetite for inclusive, varied and meaningful opportunities**.

However, engagement is **significantly limited** by transport barriers, affordability, accessibility gaps, safety concerns and poor awareness of what is available.



## What young people said

Young people shared that they want to take part in more activities but often **do not know what opportunities are available**. Communication about the youth offer does not always reach them clearly. Uniformed groups such as cadets, scouts and sports clubs were the most commonly accessed activities. However, young people showed **strong interest in creative activities**, gaming, volunteering and employability opportunities, which they felt were less visible. **Transport, cost and accessibility** were frequently raised as **barriers**. Young people also highlighted the need for more **inclusive opportunities** for SEND, neurodiverse and disabled young people, and environments that feel safe and welcoming.

## Key insights

- Communication gaps mean many young people are unaware of opportunities.
- Transport barriers (cost, safety and accessibility) limit participation.
- Financial barriers prevent some young people from taking part.
- There are limited inclusive opportunities for SEND and neurodiverse young people.
- Young people want more varied activities and a stronger voice in shaping services.

## Why this matters

**If communities and opportunities are not welcoming and inclusive, some young people will continue to feel excluded from spaces designed to support them.**

## What young people want

- Clearer communication about local opportunities.
- Affordable or free activities that consider hidden costs like travel.
- Safer and more accessible transport.
- More inclusive opportunities for SEND and neurodiverse young people.
- A wider range of activities, including creative, digital and volunteering opportunities.
- More chances to influence decisions and shape youth provision.

## Calls to action

1. **Explore borough wide funding opportunities** to ensure youth provision is accessible and inclusive for all young people.
2. **Improve awareness and promotion** of youth opportunities through stronger communications, visibility and outreach.
3. **Develop quality assurance approaches** with partners to ensure youth provision is welcoming, inclusive and responsive to young people's needs.
4. **Aim to strengthen youth voice** and co-production in decision making.



## FEEDBACK FROM WORKSHOPS:

# SAFE SPACES



Young people are not disengaged – they are looking for **safe, comfortable, flexible spaces** and better awareness of opportunities, especially during colder months when going out feels less appealing.

### What young people said

Young people highlighted the need for **safe, warm and welcoming spaces** where they can spend time with friends in a relaxed, low-pressure environment. Many expressed interest in tech-free spaces that feel cosy and calm, with the option to socialise or step away for quiet “breathing space” if needed. **Seasonal barriers** were also discussed. Cold weather and dark evenings reduce motivation to go out, particularly when home is not always a calm or supportive space. Young people also suggested exploring trusted locations such as schools, for example keeping canteens open after hours for food, homework and social time.

A key issue raised was **low awareness of activities** already happening across Stockport, suggesting that improving communication could quickly increase engagement.

### Key insights

- Young people want safe, relaxed and welcoming environments.
- Cold weather and dark evenings reduce participation in activities.
- Many young people are unaware of existing opportunities across Stockport.
- There is a preference for flexible, low-pressure spaces rather than structured programmes.
- Spaces should support both social interaction and quiet time to support wellbeing.

### Why this matters

**If young people do not have safe, affordable places to spend time, their wellbeing, sense of belonging and community connection are affected.**

### What young people want


- Warm, safe & welcoming spaces to spend time with friends.
- Low-pressure, flexible environments where they can relax and socialise.
- Opportunities to step away for quiet time when needed.
- Accessible indoor spaces, particularly during winter months.
- Improved promotion & clearer information about activities already available.

### Calls to action

1. **Share insights** from young people with strategic groups and partnerships to inform planning and decision making.
2. **Ensure learning is embedded** across youth provision, including holiday programmes, warm spaces initiatives and youth engagement services.
3. **Develop guiding criteria** for future youth funding and programmes that prioritise safe, inclusive and accessible spaces.

## FEEDBACK FROM WORKSHOPS:

# COMMUNICATING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT THE OFFER

 Young people said **communication needs to be short, visual, authentic and youth-led**, using engaging content and trusted channels like schools to clearly promote opportunities and make them more visible to young people.



### What young people said

Young people highlighted that communication should be short, engaging and authentic. They prefer **visual, entertaining content such as short videos or eye-catching posts** rather than long or information-heavy messages. Content under 30 seconds with minimal text was seen as the most effective. Authenticity was a key theme. Young people said they are **more likely to engage with content that features real people**, especially other young people, rather than formal or scripted messaging from adults. Humour, relatable storytelling and visually dynamic content were seen as far more engaging. Young people also explained that social media is mainly used for entertainment, meaning **information needs to feel natural** within those spaces rather than like advertising. Schools were highlighted as an **important and trusted place** to share information, particularly for young people who are not active on social media.

### Key insights

- Young people prefer short, visual and entertaining content. Too much text or information leads to disengagement, particularly for young people with shorter attention spans.
- Authenticity and youth voices increase trust and engagement.
- No single platform works for everyone, so content should be adaptable across channels.
- Schools remain a trusted and consistent communication route.
- Young people are highly aware of online safety and scams, so communications must feel credible and clearly branded.

### Why this matters

**If young people do not know what opportunities exist, they cannot access the support, activities and pathways designed for them.**

### What young people want

- More short, visual content such as videos and graphics instead of long text.
- Authentic content featuring real young people that feels relatable and trustworthy.
- Opportunities shared both online and through schools so more young people hear about them.
- Clearer promotion of opportunities and simple ways to get involved.

### Calls to action

1. **Strengthen collaboration** with communications teams to improve how opportunities and services are shared with young people.
2. **Explore new communication methods and platforms**, including youth-led media and digital engagement, and clear communication streams with local schools.
3. **Develop coordinated communications approaches** with partners to ensure consistent and accessible messaging – including ensuring schools and colleges are linked into relevant comms.



# JOBS & EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Young people are **ambitious and understand the education routes** into careers, but their access to work experience and employment opportunities is shaped by confidence, networks, transport, cost and inclusion barriers, highlighting the need for **more accessible, visible and equitable pathways** into the workforce.



## What young people said

Young people shared that **confidence, networks and access to opportunity strongly influence their ability to gain work experience and employment**. Many felt opportunities can depend too heavily on who you know, meaning those with family contacts or professional networks often have an advantage. **Barriers** highlighted included limited or inconsistent work experience opportunities, transport costs, lack of confidence, and unequal access depending on school or background. Young people also raised concerns about the lack of accessible placements for disabled and neurodiverse young people. Despite these challenges, young people showed strong ambition and awareness of education pathways, and expressed interest in gaining hands-on experience, volunteering opportunities and career exposure.

## Key insights

- Access to work experience is influenced by confidence, networks and adult support.
- Work experience opportunities can be limited or inconsistent across schools.
- Transport costs and safety concerns affect access to placements.
- Inclusive opportunities for SEND and disabled young people are limited.
- Young people value practical experience alongside academic learning.

## Why this matters

**If young people cannot access meaningful work experience, they cannot develop the skills, confidence and networks needed to succeed in the future workforce.**

## What young people want

- Expand work experience, paid work opportunities and volunteering opportunities, especially for under-16s, not just post-16.
- Increase career education and exposure through skills sessions, tasters and career insight talks, to gain workplace experience BEFORE before having to choose qualifications.
- Ensure opportunities are inclusive and accessible for all young people.
- Remove barriers to participation, including transport, cost and communication gaps.

## Calls to action

1. **Strengthen coordination between partners** through the NEXT Gen project to improve access to work experience opportunities for young people.
2. **Align work experience pathways with wider employability and transition initiatives** across education and community sectors, including developing stronger links between education, youth sector and work and skills team.
3. **Ensure wider stakeholders are involved** in school careers clusters to develop a clear, shared action plan for work experience and ensure it is communicated effectively to all schools and partners.

## FEEDBACK :

# ROUND TABLE - MAPPING OUT THE YOUTH OFFER

Feedback from young people highlighted both the opportunities currently available and the improvements they would like to see across digital and physical activities. Young people showed strong interest in learning new skills, being active and connecting with others, but many felt that opportunities are not well advertised or easy to find.



## WHAT EXISTS

### Digital Offer

In terms of the digital offer, young people recognised existing opportunities such as free computer access in libraries, school learning platforms, online support services and some digital clubs. However, awareness of these opportunities is low and resources can be limited.

### Physical Offer

For the physical offer, young people highlighted activities such as sports clubs, parks, gyms, youth groups and libraries. Despite this, many felt that access can be limited due to cost, age restrictions and lack of variety.

### Cross-Cutting Themes

Several themes appeared across both areas. Young people strongly emphasised the need for **better communication** about what opportunities exist, more **safe and welcoming spaces**, and **greater access** to equipment, resources and affordable activities. There was also a clear call for more **inclusive opportunities for home-educated young people**, including equal access to clubs, volunteering and learning programmes.



## WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE WANT

Young people said they would like more coding clubs, IT learning sessions, digital creativity activities and online spaces where they can find opportunities, connect with others and access youth-focused information.

They asked for more youth clubs, affordable sports and creative activities, safe spaces to socialise, and better facilities such as lighting, toilets and study spaces.

**Overall, young people are eager to engage in activities and develop skills, but improving awareness, affordability, access and inclusive opportunities would significantly increase participation.**

# NEXT STEPS

Based on consistent feedback across all workshops, **three clear priorities** stand out for LISTEN's youth voice, advocacy and system improvement work next year.

## 1. Fair Access to Opportunities & Work Experience

Young people are ambitious and want meaningful opportunities, but access is uneven. Many feel work experience and wider opportunities depend too heavily on parental networks, confidence or where they live and go to school. Placements can be limited, inconsistent or inaccessible, particularly for disabled and disadvantaged young people.

### **Why this matters:**

Equitable access to work experience, volunteering and leadership pathways is critical for building confidence, employability and long-term independence.

### **What LISTEN could do:**

Conduct a youth-led review of the local work experience offer | Gather feedback from peers about barriers to placements | Co-design clearer "routes into opportunity" guidance for schools | Feed recommendations into NEXT GEN and Preparing for Adulthood workstreams | Host youth-led employer roundtables to share lived experience | Develop simple guidance for young people on how to prepare, apply and advocate for placements.

**This positions LISTEN as a bridge between young people, schools, employers and the council.**

## 2. Youth Communication & Visibility of Opportunities

A major finding across workshops was that young people often don't know what is available. The issue is not always lack of provision — it is lack of visibility and effective communication. Messaging is often described as too long, too formal or unrelatable.

### **Young people want:**

Short, engaging, youth-led content | Clear, simple messaging | Better use of schools (bulletins, tutor time, screens) | QR codes linking to trusted information | Real young people featured in communications.

### **Why this matters:**

If young people cannot see opportunities, they cannot access them. Improving communication could have one of the fastest impacts across the borough.

### **What LISTEN could do:**

Act as a Youth Comms Advisory Panel for the Youth Offer | Co-create short-form content with the Comms team and media staff | Develop a "Youth-Friendly Comms Guide" for council services | Test and review messaging before it is shared publicly | Work with schools to improve how opportunities are promoted | Help design a youth-focused newsletter or digital bulletin | Use Community Reporting to amplify youth-led stories.

**This theme enables all other priorities by improving reach and trust.**

## 3. Safe and Accessible Transport & Spaces

Transport was repeatedly identified as a barrier to participation in work experience, activities and evening opportunities. Young people raised concerns about safety at night, overcrowding, cost, poor lighting and accessibility challenges.

### **Why this matters:**

Transport directly affects access to opportunity. If young people do not feel safe or cannot afford to travel, participation drops — especially for those already facing disadvantage.

### **What LISTEN could do:**

Lead structured conversations with TfGM and TravelSafe teams | Develop a youth-led social action campaign on transport safety | Gather lived experience evidence to feed into JSNA and service planning | Advocate for safer stops, clearer safety information and affordable travel | Co-design confidence-building resources for travelling independently | Support borough-wide youth petition or consultation work.

**This gives LISTEN a visible advocacy role with real policy influence.**

Across all workshops, **young people are not disengaged** — they are navigating barriers linked to **visibility, safety and unequal access**. By focusing on these three themes, LISTEN can tackle the structural issues that most directly limit participation across Stockport, while strengthening youth voice, co-production and young people's role as agents of change.

# THANK YOU TO ...



- + Tim Bowman - Director of Education, Work and Skills, Stockport Council,
- + RTime Youth Network,
- + Workshop Delivery partners - including TFGM, Make Build Grow, Stockport Council and Sector 3,
- + All of our partner schools and colleges who attended,
- + L!STEN Youth Alliance steering group,
- + All young people who attended,
- + The events team at Stockport Town Hall.

Special thanks to our sponsors for the goodie bags:

**Medicare 365, Tower Transit and WJ UK**



✦ **GET INVOLVED** ✦

If you'd like to get involved, check out our website or contact us:

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