Department for Culture, Media & Sport

Research and analysis

Evaluation of the UK Youth Parliament

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1. Executive summary

Evaluation approach

In 2023, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) commissioned IFF Research to deliver a process evaluation of the UK Youth Parliament programme. The evaluation focused on two years of delivery of the programme between April 2023 and March 2025.

The UK Youth Parliament is made up of circa 300 Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) aged between 11 and 18 years old. MYPs represent the views of young people in their local areas to government and national and local youth service providers. The key objectives of the programme are to engage young people in a UK-wide democratic process, enable them to voice their opinions on issues that matter to them and involve them in decision-making that will impact them. The programme also aims to support MYPs to develop personal skills, such as communication and campaigning and create new social opportunities for them. Key activities MYPs participate in include an Annual Conference and a House of Commons sitting.

Delivery of the 2023/2024 year of the programme, referred to in this report as Year 1, was conducted by the British Youth Council (BYC). Following their closure in March 2024, the National Youth Agency (NYA) took over delivery of the programme in May 2024, covering what is referred to as Year 2 in this report.

The aim of the process evaluation was to explore how the UK Youth Parliament programme was delivered between April 2023 to March 2025, how the programme was experienced by MYPs, decision makers and those involved in delivery, barriers and enablers to programme participation, perceptions of the UK Youth Parliament among young people and decision makers, and how successful the UK Youth Parliament has been in

delivering its objectives.

Several audiences were engaged, and research activities conducted, to carry out the process evaluation across the two years. Primary research was conducted with MYPs, young people who were not members (non-participants), stakeholders involved in the delivery of the programme and decision makers (such as councillors and MPs). The different data collection methods used were online surveys, qualitative focus groups, qualitative depth interviews and an online diary activity.

Evaluation questions

The evaluation aims were broken down into specific research questions:

> **Process evaluation questions**
> - How successful was UKYP in achieving its objectives?
> - Was the intervention delivered as intended?
> - How have the new elements of UKYP been incorporated into programme delivery?
> - Did the programme have enough resources, including staff time and capacity?
> - Were there any unexpected or unintended issues in the delivery of the intervention?
> - To what extent has the intervention reached all the people that it was intended to?
> - What worked well, or less well, for whom and why?
> - What could be improved?

> **Beneficiary questions**
> - How do young people feel their involvement with UKYP

has benefited their lives outside of the scheme? E.g. their professional or academic lives, on wellbeing or life skills?

- Are there parts of the programmes young people particularly enjoyed or found beneficial?
- Are there parts of the programmes young people enjoyed less or found less beneficial?
- What did participants want to get out of the programmes?
- What do participants feel could be improved?
- How do decision makers feel that their participation in the UKYP has impacted them?
- How has the programme helped participants engage other young people in democratic processes in their local areas, and to have their voices heard?

Enabler/barrier evaluation questions

- What are the characteristics of UKYP participants and how does this compare to the general population?
- How did the young people find out about the programmes?
- Did they have any support in the application process?

Key findings

Members of Youth Parliament

> Engaging with other young people who were passionate about the issues that affect them emerged as a key highlight of the UK Youth Parliament for MYPs.

MYPs expressed that they learned a lot from the activities they

attended as part of the programme, but emphasised for every activity how much they enjoyed speaking to other MYPs. Learning about the differences and similarities in issues faced across the UK and discussing approaches to these were key reasons for this.

> MYPs felt like their motivations for taking part in the UK Youth Parliament had been realised.

MYPs reported feeling like they had been able to represent the views of young people and make a difference in their local community or the UK, which were the two most common motivators given for joining the programme. MYPs also felt like they had had new experiences and some had engaged in discussions with policymakers.

> MYPs thought their skills had improved in a wide range of areas during their time in the UK Youth Parliament.

MYPs reported feeling more confident, determined and resilient than before they started the programme. Other key areas of skill development that emerged were communication and relationship-building, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving and critical thinking, campaigning and public speaking.

Non-participants

> Awareness of the UK Youth Parliament is low among young people, representing a barrier to participation and potentially impacting representation.

Only a quarter (26%) of young people indicated they had heard about the programme in an omnibus survey. Among those aware, the most common source of awareness was their school. Some stakeholders involved in delivery and decision makers suggested that awareness of the programme was heavily

dependent on what school young people attended, suggesting young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds were less likely to have heard of it. They thought this had a knock-on effect on how representative of young people the UK Youth Parliament is.

> Lack of political knowledge and confidence can be barriers to participating in the UK Youth Parliament for young people.

Young people not involved in the programme suggested they would feel intimidated to become an MYP because of lack of knowledge of politics or having to engage in public speaking. MYPs themselves suggested lack of confidence and not feeling good enough could impact desires to join the programme among young people.

Decision makers

> Decision makers suggested the youth voice[footnote 1] is important to them and there was some evidence of impact on decision-making, particularly at a local level.

Councillors suggested they listened to the voice of young people, both through the UK Youth Parliament, their local youth councils and other youth engagement and that there was evidence of this having an impact within their local area. They were less convinced of the impact of the UK Youth Parliament on a national scale. However, one decision maker suggested that the UK Youth Parliament manifesto is a key vehicle for change, as it means they can demonstrate to senior decision-makers what the youth view is in a range of areas as they arise for discussion.

Regional stakeholders

> Regional stakeholders involved in the delivery of the programme felt well supported by the National Youth Agency

> (NYA).

Regular meetings and open communication channels contributed to this feeling, as did practical workshops and training delivered by NYA to support regional partners through elections. NYA were also generally described as well organised, though some felt events could be planned or communicated more clearly in advance. Overall, their relationship with NYA acted as an enabler for most stakeholders to deliver the programme.

> Lack of funding acted as a barrier to programme delivery for some regional stakeholders.

Some stakeholders said they were restricted in the extent to which they could support MYPs to attend events or hold events themselves locally due to funding. Funding also had implications for the time staff had available for promotion and recruitment activities related to the UK Youth Parliament.

Recommendations

MYPs, decision makers and stakeholders all thought more work should be done to raise awareness of the UK Youth Parliament among young people. For example, through encouraging schools to raise awareness or communicating about the opportunity at a national level. Sharing evidence of the impact MYPs' participation in the UK Youth Parliament has had on decision making could also form part of this awareness raising. Increasing awareness could prompt more young people to engage with their elected local youth representatives, as well as improve the diversity of the UK Youth Parliament itself.

Engagement could also be improved by considering whether the way the UK Youth Parliament is framed is compelling to a broad range of young people. A shift in framing could alter perceptions that the programme is only suitable for young people interested in politics towards a perception that it is for any young person

who has opinions and views about the way things should be.

MYPs wanted more opportunities to engage with decision makers, particularly MPs, through the programme. Roundtables could be re-introduced to the programme to help increase MYP engagement with decision makers, as well as considering other discussion formats. Training could be provided to decision makers to ensure they know how to interact with young people safely and appropriately.

Other activities MYPs suggested they would like to be involved in, included more networking opportunities with young people in regions local to them, so they could work together on a regional level to campaign for change; and allocation to committees aligned with specific policy areas.

The national delivery partner (currently NYA) should continue to foster open communication channels with regional delivery partners. More detail about national events could be provided to regional delivery partners and MYPs further in advance to allow them to prepare.

Consideration could also be given to whether the funding allocated to each region provides equal opportunities for MYPs in those areas to engage with the programme.

2. Introduction and methodology

Background and context

In March 2023, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), commissioned IFF Research to undertake a two-year process evaluation of the UK Youth Parliament programme. This

evaluation covered a new round of the UK Youth Parliament funded by DCMS between April 2023 and March 2025.

The UK Youth Parliament is made up of approximately 300 Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) aged between 11 and 18 years old. MYPs are elected by their peers on the basis of manifestos they have put together, rather than on a party-political basis. All MYPs must be elected. Elections are held for the UK Youth Parliament, with the current term of office lasting two years. At the time of publication, 100% of Scotland, 36% of local authorities in Wales, approximately 70% of (upper tier) local authorities in England and 100% of parliamentary constituencies in Northern Ireland have elected MYPs[footnote 2]. The role of MYPs is to represent the views of young people in their local areas to government and national and local youth service providers. The UK Youth Parliament is DCMS' key mechanism for engaging with young people and ensuring their voices are heard in policy and decision making.

The UK Youth Parliament programme offers a range of opportunities for MYPs to conduct their roles. These include national activities, such as the Annual Conference and annual debate in the House of Commons, and YouthCons, which take place on a regional basis. MYPs are expected to proactively gather the views of young people within their local areas and to initiate and respond to opportunities to engage with decision makers throughout the programme. Some MYPs are selected to form a Youth Select Committee, through which young people conduct an inquiry, including oral evidence sessions with expert witnesses, and produce a Committee report.

The main objectives of the UK Youth Parliament programme are to:

- engage young people in a UK-wide democratic process
- enable young people to express their voices on issues that matter to them
- engage young people at an early stage in the development of

policy affecting them

- test specific government proposals and policy with young people

The British Youth Council (BYC) was originally appointed to deliver the 2023 to 2025 programme. However, BYC closed in March 2024 and the National Youth Agency (NYA) took over delivery of the programme in May 2024. The implications of this for the research and how results should be considered is explored in the section below.

Research approach

IFF Research carried out two years of evaluation of the UK Youth Parliament programme. Throughout this report, Year 1 is used to refer to the 2023/2024 programme delivery and Year 2 is used to refer to the 2024/2025 programme delivery.

The aims of the evaluation were:

- to understand how successful the UK Youth Parliament is in delivering its objectives
- to understand how the programme was experienced by programme participants
- to understand barriers and enablers to programme participation
- to understand the processes involved in managing and delivering the UK Youth Parliament
- to understand perceptions and attitudes of young people and decision makers regarding the UK Youth Parliament

These aims were further broken down into specific research questions (see Appendix A for the full list of evaluations questions, including sub-questions.

Process evaluation questions

- How successful was UKYP in achieving its objectives?
- Was the intervention delivered as intended?
- How have the new elements of UKYP been incorporated into programme delivery?
- Did the programme have enough resources, including staff time and capacity?
- Were there any unexpected or unintended issues in the delivery of the intervention?
- To what extent has the intervention reached all the people that it was intended to?
- What worked well, or less well, for whom and why?
- What could be improved?

Beneficiary questions

- How do young people feel their involvement with UKYP has benefited their lives outside of the scheme? E.g. their professional or academic lives, on wellbeing or life skills?
- Are there parts of the programmes young people particularly enjoyed or found beneficial?
- Are there parts of the programmes young people enjoyed less or found less beneficial?
- What did participants want to get out of the programmes?
- What do participants feel could be improved?
- How do decision makers feel that their participation in the UKYP has impacted them?
- How has the programme helped participants engage other young people in democratic processes in their local areas, and to have their voices heard?

Enabler/barrier evaluation questions

- What are the characteristics of UKYP participants and how does this compare to the general population?
- How did the young people find out about the programmes?
- Did they have any support in the application process?

Following a set-up phase in Year 1, the research methodology applied was consistent across Year 1 and Year 2. MYPs, young people who were not participants in the UK Youth Parliament, MPs and decision makers and delivery stakeholders were all engaged in the research.

Set-up phase

At the initiation stage of the evaluation, we conducted a document review and discussions with DCMS and delivery partners to understand how the programme has been and will be delivered on the ground. Examples of documents reviewed included the guidance for delivery partner applications for the UK Youth Parliament, British Youth Council's programme plan for 2023 to 2025 and their Key Performance Indicators. This scoping work informed the timings of the different fieldwork elements and participant recruitment strategies.

Research with MYPs

Three research activities were conducted with MYPs across both years. The cohort of MYPs interviewed was different in Year 2 than in Year 1, as elections were held for new MYPs ahead of Year 2.

- Survey – MYPs completed a 15 minute online survey exploring their experience of the programme. In Year 1, 54 MYPs (18% of all MYPs) completed the survey, in Year 2, 91 MYPs (30% of all MYPs) completed the survey.
- Focus groups – these focus groups provided the opportunity to dig deeper into what being an MYP has meant for young

people. In Year 1, we conducted 4 focus groups with 17 MYPs, in Year 2, we conducted 6 focus groups with 34 MYPs.

- An online diary exercise – this activity allowed for the collection of real-time, detailed insight into how MYPs experienced specific activities and also carried out their duties. The online diary was hosted on a platform called Recollective with 17 participants in Year 1 and 20 in Year 2.

Research with non-participants

Two research activities were conducted with young people who were not participants in the UK Youth Parliament.

- Inclusion of questions on a young people's omnibus survey – Four questions were included in an online omnibus survey for young people aged 11 to 18. These questions addressed awareness of the UK Youth Parliament, interest in the programme and potential barriers. In Year 1, there were 1040 participants. In Year 2, there were 967.
- Focus groups – these groups covered perceptions, interest in and barriers to participation in the programme. In Year 1, 17 young people participated in 3 focus groups, in Year 2, 18 participated in 3 focus groups.

Research with MPs and decision makers

Two research activities were conducted with decision makers.

- Inclusion of questions on an MP omnibus survey – Four questions were included in an online omnibus for MPs covering awareness, engagement and perception of the importance of the youth voice.[footnote 3] In Year 1, 110 MPs responded, in Year 2 103 did.
- Depth interviews – due to recruitment challenges in Year 1 of the evaluation, these were only conducted in Year 2. A total of 8 interviews took place with councillors, a Member of the Senedd (MS) and an MP to explore attitudes to youth participation in decision-making and any impacts of this.

Research with other stakeholders

Depth interviews were conducted with stakeholders involved in delivering the programme to determine how this was done and any enablers and barriers to this. Eight interviews took place in Year 1 and Year 2.

Other data sources

Data from the House of Commons library and the census data held by the National Youth Agency were drawn upon to summarise the characteristics of current UK Youth Parliament members and the general population.

Table 2.1: Sample by research activity and audience

	Year 1	Year 2
Members of Youth Parliament	-	-
Survey	54	91
Focus groups	16	34
Young people who are not members	-	-
Omnibus	1057	967
Focus groups	17	18
Decision makers	-	-
Omnibus	110	103
Depth interviews	-	8
Stakeholders involved in delivery	-	-
Depth interviews	8	8

Analysis

At the start of the evaluation process, we created an evaluation framework, which listed all the research questions and the evidence sources that would provide insight related to each question. This was used to guide analysis as it clearly showed where we needed to triangulate different sources to establish an answer.

For each survey (participant, non-participant and MP) we produced a set of data tables that included responses for each survey question. The tables were set-up so that it was possible to see how different sub-groups of the overall population responded to each question. We tested for statistical significance of differences between Year 1 and Year 2.

Qualitative data was analysed using structured frameworks which were organised by key research questions and included a line for each interview making it possible to interrogate them within topic and across participant types.

Approach to reporting

This report presents findings from Year 1 and Year 2 of the evaluation. Research activities were originally meant to take place at a comparable time between Year 1 and Year 2 to allow for comparisons between the two years. However, the change in delivery partner in Year 2 meant there was a delay in starting programme activities, therefore it was not possible to carry out fieldwork at a comparable point in time. Throughout the report, Year 1 and Year 2 findings are only compared where deemed appropriate and the difference in context between the two years must be considered when drawing any conclusions about these. Sometimes differences between the two years may seem large,

but these do not reach the level of significance. This is likely due to small base sizes. Further information on the methodology and its limitations can be found in the technical appendix.

3. Delivering the UK Youth Parliament programme

This chapter draws on interviews with stakeholders to summarise their perspectives on delivering the UK Youth Parliament programme. The stakeholders we spoke to include those that work for local authorities delivering the programme and stakeholders from different organisations that deliver the UK Youth Parliament programme at a regional level. Due to the closure of BYC (British Youth Council) in 2024, this chapter will primarily focus on feedback on National Youth Agency delivery.

Working relationships

Generally, stakeholders we interviewed in Year 2 felt the National Youth Agency (NYA) supported them well in the delivery of the programme. This was largely due to the level of communication they received. Examples such as regional worker meetings held once a month made stakeholders feel they could discuss any updates and ask NYA questions, ensuring delivery partners felt up-to-date with upcoming events (for example, the annual conference and House of Commons sitting). These meetings made them feel like they had a strong relationship with NYA.

In addition, delivery partners felt they received a lot of support throughout elections for young people, stating NYA had provided workshops and training on topics such as media training to help promote the UK Youth Parliament and risk assessment. In turn, this training made delivery partners able to

support young people with campaigns and organise events themselves.

Stakeholders felt there was a lot more support and communication from NYA compared to previous years. One stakeholder felt all NYA communication was very professional and reassured them that things such as applications and events were well organised.

> "The elections we ran with the NYA were really successful. Everything…has been super professional."
>
> **Regional delivery partner**

Most stakeholders reported being happy with the support they received from NYA. However, some noted that the UK Youth Parliament events were not always planned and communicated to delivery partners or young people far enough in advance. Some stakeholders suggested this may be because delivery is still adapting from the previous delivery partner.

> "NYA (is facing similar issues as BYC) because of a few teething issues still with how events are run, and information coming out really late before events."
>
> **Regional delivery partner**

Enablers and barriers to delivering the programme

Stakeholders identified a range of enablers and barriers to

delivering the programme.

Enablers

- Stakeholders felt the level of funding they have been provided has made it a lot easier to deliver the programme to young people compared to previous years when they had less funding provided.
- The funding has allowed them to effectively run their events and ensure all the young people involved can attend through making sure they can afford travel and accommodation when events are further afield.
- The budget also allowed delivery partners and local authorities to better support young people to fulfil their roles, by funding the training they need to carry out their Member of Youth Parliament (MYP) roles. For example, some local authorities reported putting on training events for young people to help them with their communication and presenting skills, and also they took them on residential trips.

> "The fact there is now budget has made a big difference… we're able to go to all the events… I've got the staffing to really support the programme"
>
> **Regional delivery partner**

Another key enabler of programme delivery suggested by stakeholders was strong working relationships with NYA. Stakeholders felt NYA had brought a critical eye to some of the existing UK Youth Parliament processes, highlighting opportunities and solutions for improvement.

Barriers

Funding was also identified to be a barrier. Example provided

for when funding acted as a barrier included:

- Some stakeholders highlighted how the level of funding created restrictions on the scale of activities they were able to deliver. For example, some stakeholders felt there was not enough funding to put on all the local events they wanted to and to support MYPs to travel to attend events further afield.
- Relatedly, lack of time among staff (which was sometimes determined by funds) was a key perceived barrier to delivery. One stakeholder explained how the time needed to attend events meant youth workers did not have enough time for other activities, such as promotion of the programme and recruitment of new MYPs.
- More broadly, some stakeholders explained how they lacked capacity to deliver their UK Youth Parliament role in full, as the time they could feasibly allocate to the programme with funding and around other commitments was not enough.

Another key barrier to programme delivery perceived by stakeholders was a lack of diversity within the UK Youth Parliament. Some felt that only certain young people, such as those who went to good schools, could benefit from involvement in the programme. Stakeholders attributed this to a combination of funding and local authorities' resources, which were too restricted to do effective outreach to underrepresented demographics and areas. There was a feeling that the representation by area varied depending on the resources they had available.

4. UK Youth Parliament demographic and characteristic information

This chapter draws on data from the House of Commons library

and census data held by the National Youth Agency (NYA) to present the characteristics of UK Youth Parliament members and compare these to the general population.

Comparison between the UK Youth Parliament and total population

Table 4.1 compares data of the demographics of the whole population and young people against the census data held by the National Youth Agency for Members of the current UK Youth Parliament.

The demographic data was provided by the House of Commons Library. Whilst the data for the UK Youth Parliament is UK wide, the other data is for England and Wales due to comparison challenges with data with Northern Ireland and Scotland. See Appendix A for a full description of the data sources.

Table 4.1: Demographic data of the total population against the UK Youth Parliament census data

	Total population	Under 18s	11 to 17s	Members of the UK Youth Parliament
Sex (2023)	-	-	-	-
Male	49%	51%	51%	46%
Female	51%	49%	49%	52%
Not answered	-	-	-	3%
Ethnicity (2021)	-	-	-	-
Asian, Asian British or Asian	9%	12%	12%	18%

Welsh				
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	4%	6%	6%	7%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	3%	7%	6%	5%
White British	74%	68%	69%	53%
White: other ethnic groups	7%	6%	5%	3%
Disability (2021)	-	-	-	-
Disabled under the Equality Act	18%	7%	10%	11%
Not disabled under the Equality Act	83%	93%	90%	89%
Sexual orientation (2021)	-	-	-	-
Gay or lesbian	2%	-	-	9%
Bisexual	1%	-	-	9%
Other non-heterosexual orientations	0%	-	-	2%
Heterosexual or straight	89%	-	-	69%

Not answered	8%	-	-	10%

Source: ONS, Mid-2023 estimates of the population for England and Wales; ONS, 2021 census custom table builder (Variables on age, ethnicity, and disability); ONS, Sexual orientation, England and Wales: Census 2021, National Youth Agency, UK Youth Parliament Census 2025.

The comparison between the UK Youth Parliament census data and the general population suggests that MYPs represent a range of characteristics and experiences.

5. Awareness and understanding of the UK Youth Parliament

This chapter summarises awareness of the UK Youth Parliament and how the programme is perceived among Members of Youth Parliament, young people who are not participants, decision makers and stakeholders.

Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs)

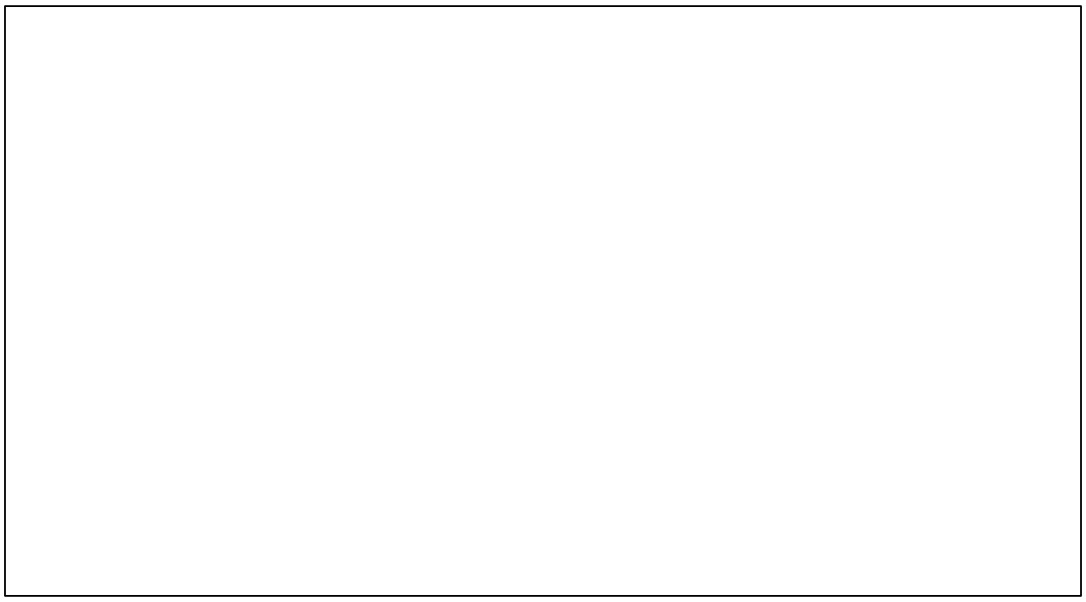
MYPs typically heard about the UK Youth Parliament from activities they were already involved in. As shown in Figure 5.1, in Year 2 the most common avenue MYPs initially heard about the programme was through their school or other educational institution (42%). The second most common source was their local youth council (31%), followed by social media (19%).

Between Year 1 and Year 2, there was an increase in the

proportion of MYPs finding out about the UK Youth Parliament through their school (22% in Year 1 compared to 42% in Year 2).

Figure 5.1 Where WYPs initially found out about the UK Youth Parliament programme

Use zoom on your browser to view.



D1: Where did you initially find out about the UK Youth Parliament? Base: Year 2 (91), Year 1 (54).

Promotional materials played an important role in enhancing MYP interest in the UK Youth Parliament. In both Year 2 and Year 1, most MYPs agreed that seeing the promotional materials made them interested in taking part in the UK Youth Parliament (61% in Year 2 and 64% in Year 1). This compares to 12% who disagreed in Year 2 and 8% in Year 1.

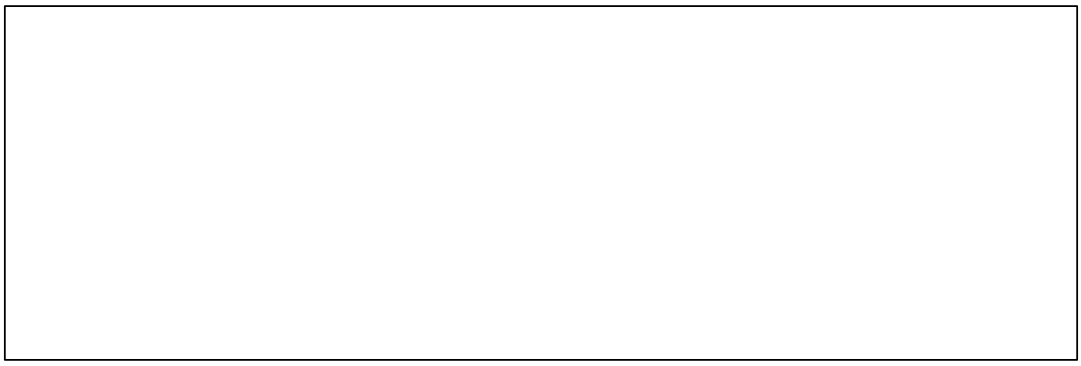
In line with survey findings, MYPs in focus groups tended to say they found out about the programme through school or through their local youth council. One MYP highlighted how their local youth council hosted a promotional event, whereas another saw videos produced by their local youth council around election time, which made them interested in participating.

MYPs generally indicated that joining the UK Youth Parliament was not a surprising or unusual thing for them to do. As shown in

Figure 5.2, before becoming a part of the UK Youth Parliament, three-quarters (75%) of MYPs in Year 2 had already imagined taking part in politically-engaged activities, such as politics in action, or other local and governmental youth programmes. Less than half agreed that their friends and family were surprised that they were taking part in the UK Youth Parliament, with 42% agreeing compared to 40% disagreeing. These findings were in line with Year 1 (63% agreed they had imagined taking part in politically engaged activities and only 37% agreed friends or family were surprised they were taking part in the programme).

Figure 5.2 Perceptions on joining the programme

Use zoom on your browser to view.



D3: To what extent do you agree that taking part in politically-engaged activities is something you had imagined yourself doing before you were part of the UK Youth Parliament? D4: To what extent do you agree that your friends or family were surprised that you are taking part in the UK Youth parliament? Base: Year 2 (91), Year 1 (54).

Non-participants

Awareness of the UK Youth Parliament was low among young people who were not participants of the programme. In Year 2, the young person's omnibus survey found that around a quarter of young people had heard of the programme (26%); nearly two-thirds (64%) had not heard of it. Nevertheless, this

represents an increase in awareness compared to Year 1, where 19% of non-participants were aware of the programme.

Among those who were aware of it, most heard about it from teachers or other staff at school or college (45%). Other common sources of awareness were friends or family members (17%) and social media posts about the UK Youth Parliament (14%).

Three-quarters (73%) of young people did not know anyone who is or was a Member of the UK Youth Parliament, which was consistent with Year 1 (75%).

In focus groups, most young people had not heard of the UK Youth Parliament. No young people suggested they had seen any promotional materials. Participants said they were surprised that they had never heard of the programme and that their school had not encouraged it. Some thought their lack of awareness might be due to their own lack of engagement in politics.

The few who were aware said that they heard about it through school and had positive perceptions of the programme. They highlighted how they thought MYPs could influence parliament as well as help young people in their social life. These young people thought the purpose of the UK Youth Parliament was to make a difference.

During focus groups, young people were shown promotional materials such as videos, tweets and posters for the UK Youth Parliament and asked what they thought it involved. Young people commonly highlighted how the programme seems to bring together like-minded young people who want to enact change, specifically for young people. Some participants thought the programme was for people who want to make a difference in their local area, more so than on a national scale. Participants expected the activities would take place at a local level, directly affecting those around them, rather than engaging with the whole of the UK.

Some young people thought the UK Youth Parliament was a way

of making the younger generation interested in politics. It was also common for participants to view the programme as being specifically for people already interested in politics.

> "It's a group of people who all want to change the way things are for young people and you're able to speak up more…because there's a big group of you."
>
> **Young person, non-participant**

Decision makers

During interviews, councillors typically shared that they became aware of the UK Youth Parliament when they became a councillor. The Year 2 MP omnibus findings showed that the vast majority (94%) of MPs were aware of the UK Youth Parliament in some way, consistent with Year 1 (95%).

In the Year 2 MP omnibus, around two in five (42%) MPs reported that they had been involved with MYPs engaging young people within their constituency. The second most common type of involvement was through the UK Youth Parliament House of Commons sitting (15%). In Year 1, 52% of MPs had been involved with MYPs engaging young people within their constituency, and the second most common mode of engagement was through UK Youth Parliament campaigns (18%). This is further supported by the qualitative interviews, where decision makers (particularly councillors) often said they became aware of the UK Youth Parliament through joining a committee which included youth voice or through MYPs themselves getting in touch with them or inviting them to an event.

Decision makers reported in qualitative interviews that their first impressions of the programme were usually positive. They felt

the young people they had engaged with showed real emotional maturity and were normally impressed with the level of knowledge and engagement from the young people. They felt it was a good way to get young people's voices heard while also engaging them in politics from an early age.

However, some decision makers felt that not many young people outside of the programme knew about the UK Youth Parliament or that it wasn't very representative of the wider youth population. Some even went on to say that it was not representative of all young people's voices due to the programme only attracting young people from areas with low deprivation or with high political engagement. Most decision makers felt that the UK Youth Parliament was predominantly made up of young people from middle class backgrounds that already had a background with politics due to family members being involved with it. They felt it was predominantly young people from high-achieving schools (i.e. exam results and university progression) who would know about it and get involved. However, a few decision makers flagged that this was an assumption based on their engagement with the MYPs, rather than something they had hard evidence on.

> "They tend to be quite engaged young people, confident, perhaps quite academic and ambitious, from sort of stable, comfortable backgrounds."
>
> **Councillor**

One councillor expressed concern that the UK Youth Parliament was not very representative of democracy, due to low awareness among young people, and felt MYPs were, in effect, chosen to do the job instead of being voted in. As such, they questioned whether the programme accurately captured young people's voice and did the job it was intended for.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders involved in the delivery of the UK Youth Parliament usually became aware of the UK Youth Parliament from previous roles they had that involved young people and young people's voice. This was usually through charity work or working with local authorities.

Most stakeholders' first impression of the UK Youth Parliament was positive. They felt it was a good opportunity for young people to get their voice heard and felt it would be supported by decision makers due to it mirroring government processes. They felt like it created a platform for decision makers and young people to talk about issues that are important to them.

Stakeholders also usually felt that it was an experience that offered a huge amount to young people, more so than any other youth-led programmes they had seen before. Most commonly the chance to go to the House of Commons was mentioned by stakeholders as they felt this was a really valuable experience for young people.

Not only did they think it would help with functional skills such as communication and presenting, but they also felt it helped young people with their social and emotional skills and helped them to develop wider knowledge of different communities by interacting with young people from all over the country.

6. Becoming a MVP

This chapter covers the motivations Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) had for joining the UK Youth Parliament, any perceived barriers to doing so and initial experiences of the programme.

Motivation to join the UK Youth Parliament

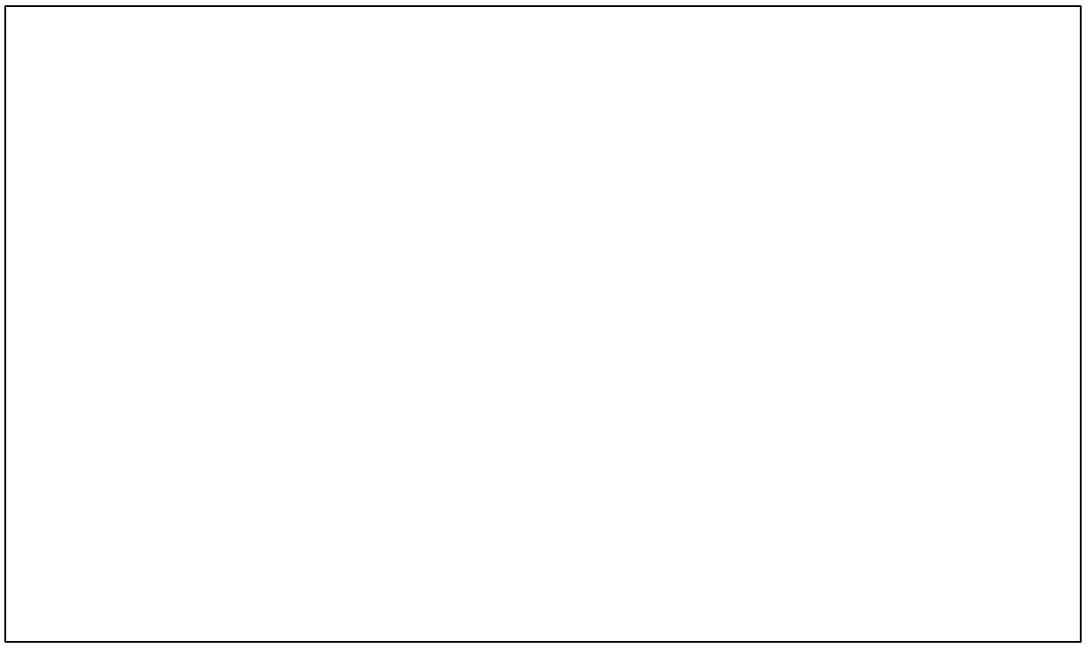
Members of Youth Parliament

MYPs had a range of motivations for joining the UK Youth Parliament. As shown in Figure 6.1, when asked to select the top three reasons for becoming an MYP, the most common responses were to represent young people's views (69% in Year 2) and to make a difference in my local community/the UK (65% in Year 2). These were also the top two responses in Year 1 (56% and 69%, respectively).

In Year 2, the third most popular reason participants gave was to have new experiences (27%), although this was closely followed by to engage in discussions with policy makers (26%) and to support future career prospects (25%).

Figure 6.1: Top three reasons for wanting to take part in the UK Youth Parliament

Use zoom on your browser to view.



E5: What, if anything, initially made you want to take part in the UK Youth Parliament? Please select your top 3 options. Base: Year 2 (91), Year 1 (54)

During focus groups, MYPs emphasised the importance of representing the voices of young people in their decision to join the UK Youth Parliament. MYPs especially spoke about being able to give a voice to those who are not represented. Those without a voice they wanted to represent were often community members in their local area, or young people in general.

> "To amplify the voice of young people and contribute to meaningful change in society."
>
> **Member of Youth Parliament**

MYPs also highlighted that the UK Youth Parliament was a unique opportunity. Members saw the programme as a way to engage in politics more directly by being in contact with MPs and decision-makers, which was an opportunity they would not be able to have elsewhere. MYPs explained that they expected that these opportunities would benefit them when applying to college or university.

> "I was told that it was a good opportunity and heard from alumni that it helped them get into university."
>
> **Member of Youth Parliament**

A few MYPs wanted to meet like-minded young people and make new friends who shared similar interests with them. They also explained how they saw joining the programme as an opportunity for personal growth by building confidence through activities such as public speaking.

Non-participants

During focus groups with non-participants, young people expressed an interest in the UK Youth Parliament. After being

shown the promotional materials, most young people suggested they would like to be or like to have been involved. The most common reasons for this interest were the unique opportunities they would not be able to access otherwise. MP roundtables, the House of Commons debate and collecting the views of young people were of specific interest; they saw these activities as a collective opportunity for voices in their local area to be heard. For example, running campaigns would get members of the public involved, as well as provide an opportunity to meet like-minded young people.

> "The house of commons thing really stood out to me because when else do young people actually get to go there? This would be their chance."
>
> **Young person, non-participant**

> "Being in a big crowd and going up to big places and trying to change the public opinion of stuff. I know sometimes it doesn't work but there's always a chance that what you say can make a massive difference."
>
> **Young person, non-participant**

Barriers to becoming an MYP

Young people who were not involved in the UK Youth Parliament highlighted perceived barriers to joining. One barrier commonly mentioned was feeling intimidated by the idea of taking part and having to engage in public speaking. They thought other members would be more confident than they were. Similarly,

some young people did not think they would have sufficient knowledge about politics to engage in the programme.

Time and money were also presented as practical barriers to being involved. For some young people, the cost of participating was not clear. They thought they might have to fund the travel involved in the programme themselves or even pay to participate and that they would not be able to do this. Others did not think they would be able to find the time to fit MYP activities around their regular schoolwork and activities.

> "I'm in Year 11 now and going into A-levels as well… so it would be difficult to fit in for me."
>
> **Young person, non-participant**

Members of Youth Parliament
During focus groups, MYPs suggested reasons why it might be difficult to join the UK Youth Parliament. One key reason provided was lack of confidence and not feeling good enough to represent their local area, as well as not having enough knowledge about politics to be able to understand the processes in the programme. Additionally, members were sometimes doubtful that they 'fit' the profile of those who commonly participate.

Another reason was a lack of awareness. MYPs expressed how there was not enough publicity around what the programme entails, and the impact participation can have. Generally, they felt young people were not aware of the opportunities available to them.

Stakeholders
Stakeholders generally did not think there were pronounced barriers for young people becoming involved with the UK Youth Parliament as they felt it was easy for them to access.

However, a few stakeholders felt that there were barriers for the MYPs, such as some areas being more supported than others. Depending on the local authority, some areas might have more youth workers and a bigger team to support the UK Youth Parliament, while others might only have one or two youth workers. With fewer youth workers, their budgeted time could be taken up by events and the time it takes to travel to them. Along with this, they felt that some young people would not be able to attend all the events due to limitations on what the local authority could afford in terms of travel costs, particularly if events are far away.

One stakeholder mentioned that they felt like pressures from schools and multiple mock exams could be a barrier to MYPs, and that they might struggle to balance their time for the UK Youth Parliament and school.

Initial experience of being an MYP

In both Year 1 and Year 2, the majority of surveyed MYPs[footnote 4] said they did not require any support or help to apply to the UK Youth Parliament (82% in Year 2 and 78% in Year 1). Among the 11% who did in Year 2, they most commonly received help from school or their youth leader.

Nevertheless, during focus groups, MYPs described receiving support from different sources. Throughout the election process, MYPs felt very supported by their family and friends, as well as their schools and youth workers. Some examples of support received from their youth workers included receiving help with their campaign or with writing speeches. They also received support with their applications and manifestos from former or current MYPs during events such as information evenings.

> “There was an information evening where the past

MYP came and shared what they did to campaign, and how they came up with what they were going to do."

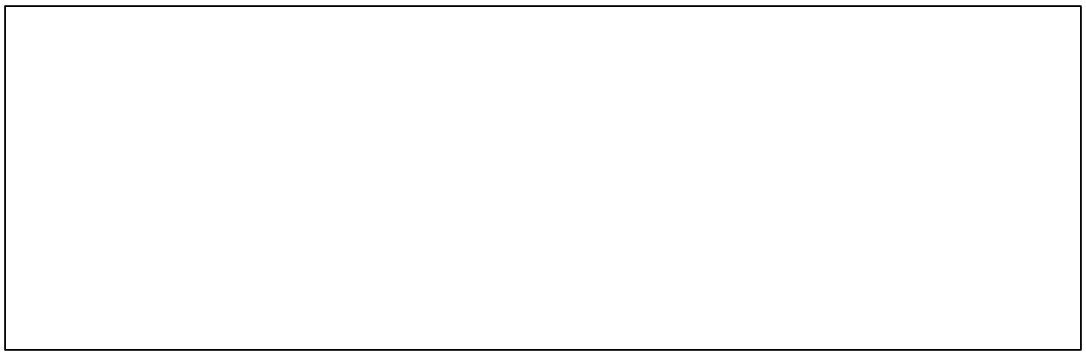
Member of Youth Parliament

When asked what the most important factor in being able to take part in the programme was, online diary participants ranked support and encouragement from their local youth council/local council as the most important factor (55%), followed by support and encouragement from their school (20%).

After being elected, MYPs attended training sessions to prepare them for their role. More than three-quarters (78%) of survey respondents reported completing a training or induction session delivered by the National Youth Agency (NYA). As shown in Figure 6.2, the majority of those who completed or attended a training or induction session agreed that it sufficiently prepared them for their role as MYP (86%).

Figure 6.2: Impact of NYA training on preparedness for role as MYP

Use zoom on your browser to view.



A7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The training I participated in from NYA sufficiently prepared me for my role as an MYP. Base (All those who attended a NYA training or induction): Year 2 (71)

During focus groups, MYPs often reported feeling nervous at

the start of the programme, but that this feeling eased over time. The NYA-delivered training was described as useful as it clarified what their role was. MYPs also highlighted that they found the training useful as it clearly outlined the rules around social media use and gave them the opportunity to ask questions. This was viewed as particularly helpful as it allowed them to get beyond the basic information in the handbook to explore other areas that they were less sure about.

> "At the start, I was obviously very nervous…but as it got on, eventually I got more and more confident. Now, I feel pretty capable."
>
> **Member of Youth Parliament**

A few MYPs suggested they did not receive any training and this made them feel like they were 'thrown into' the experience, and left to figure it out by themselves. A few said they received guidance from their school but would have still preferred more direct training from programme staff about their role.

MYPs generally felt supported in their roles and confident carrying these out. Most MYPs agreed that they felt supported in their role as an MYP (74%), however one-fifth did not (20%). When asked if they felt confident in their ability to undertake their role as MYP, the majority agreed (82%). However, during focus groups, a few MYPs said they would have liked more training on how to start and run campaigns.

> "I think the training was extremely helpful because it clarified the role a bit more. I think what was most helpful…was the annual conference, because I felt that I learned more about how the programme works and met up with different people."
>
> **Member of Youth Parliament**

7. Experience of the UK Youth Parliament programme

This chapter focuses on the delivery of the UK Youth Parliament programme and the experience of Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs).

Overall view on activities

In Year 1 and Year 2, MYPs attended a range of different activities. Due to the change in national delivery partner in May 2024, at the time of the members survey, delivery of the Year 2 programme was not as far along as the Year 1 programme. Therefore, direct comparisons between activity attendance in Year 1 and Year 2 have not been made in this report.

In Year 2, the most common activities for MYPs to have engaged in since April 2024 were: annual conference (69%), local / regional / national meetings and events (67%), manifesto and policy development (59%), engaging young people in my local community (57%) and Make Your Mark ballot (54%). Over a third of MYPs had engaged in a YouthCon (37%) or campaigning (37%).

This is consistent with findings from the online diary study and MYP focus groups. During the online diary study, when asked to reflect on activities they had participated in during the last month on two separate occasions, the most commonly mentioned were:

- collecting views of young people (65% in October 2024, 63% in December 2024)

- attending a national event, like the annual conference (60% in October 2024, 32% in December 2024)
- campaigns (50% in October 2024, 32% in December 2024)
- speaking to an MP in their local area (50% in October 2024, 42% in December 2024)

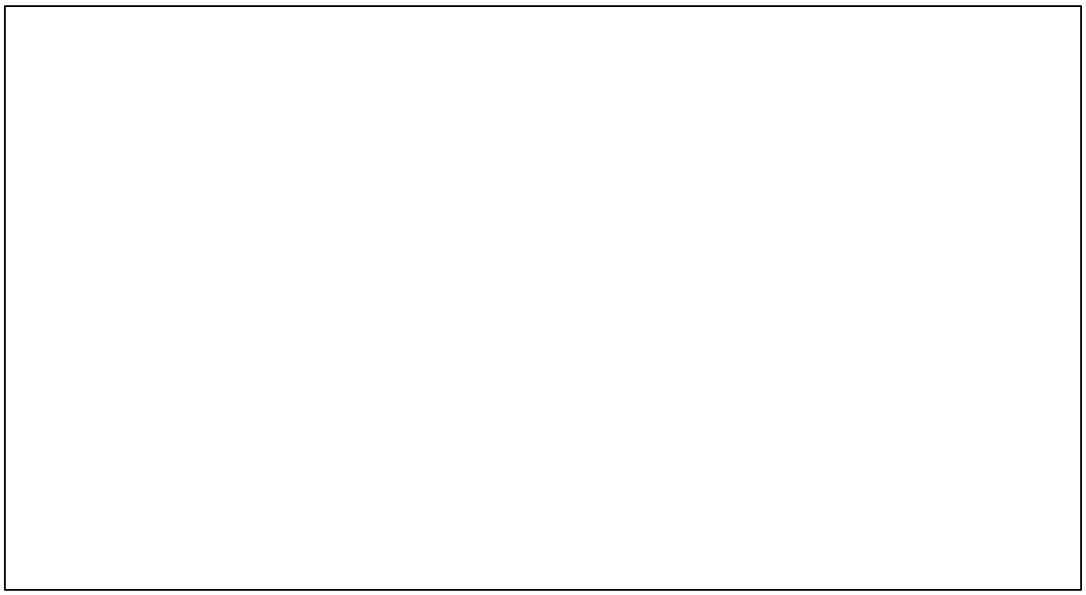
In focus groups, almost all MYPs said they attended the annual conference, and a few mentioned they had attended other meetings and events such as the Children in Wales event and a climate conference.

As shown below in Figure 7.1, MYPs were most likely to select the annual conference as one of the activities they enjoyed the most – more than three-fifths (61%) did. Experiences of the annual conference are discussed in depth further into this section (see Annual Conference).

MYPs also reported to have enjoyed engaging young people in their local communities (39%), local/regional/national meetings and events (29%) and manifesto and policy development (29%). This is likely related to the fact these were the most commonly experienced activities. In Year 1, the activities participants were most likely to select they enjoyed the most were annual conference (50%) and the House of Commons sitting[footnote 5] (44%).

Figure 7.1: Youth Parliament activities MYPs enjoyed most.

Use zoom on your browser to view.



E1. Which activities do you enjoy most about taking part in the UK Youth Parliament? Base (All those who took part in more than one Youth Parliament activity): Year 2 (83), Year 1 (50).

Views on UK Youth Parliament activities

Annual conference

MYPs from the focus groups and the diary study described the annual conference as engaging because it allowed them to exchange their views with other MYPs. The annual conference also gave MYPs the opportunity to network with MYPs from other regions, which allowed them to learn about the work they were doing too. MYPs also felt welcomed at the event by the staff there and they thought the event was well-timed and fit well into their regular schedules, as it occurred during the half-term holidays.

Whilst MYPs felt the annual conference was a positive experience, a few MYPs who were not able to attend would have liked more support from their local council to help with the cost of travelling to the conference. Other MYPs thought the annual conference could have been longer as they felt it was rushed and not enough time was given to discuss everything. For instance, some MYPs said on the last day of the conference

they briefly discussed policy statements and that more time could have been allocated to this activity. A few MYPs from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland said they were elected not too long before the annual conference was held, which meant they were initially unsure about what their role at the conference would entail. They noted this became clear to them after they spoke to other MYPs. The delay in MYPs being elected was largely due to the timing of the elections in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in Year 2.

Whilst some felt the annual conference was a great way for them to develop their public speaking skills through debating, others were frustrated they were not given the opportunity to speak in their groups. They felt there were too many members in their group, which meant they were not given a public speaking role.

Roundtables with ministers/senior civil servants

Roundtables with ministers and/or senior civil servants were not a part of the UKYP grant for the National Youth Agency (NYA) in Year 2 but were part of the grant for the British Youth Council (BYC) in Year 1. In Year 2, three-quarters (75%) of MYPs said they did not attend a roundtable or workshop with ministers and/or senior civil servants; only six MYPs said they had. This is likely due to the delay starting programme delivery in Year 2. As six MYPs is a low base size to draw any findings from, this sub-section will only discuss findings from Year 1 in relation to roundtables and workshops.

In Year 1, since April 2023, half of MYPs who had been invited to do so (11/21, 52%) attended at least one roundtable or workshop with ministers or senior civil servants. Around a third (35%) of these roundtables or workshops were held remotely, while a quarter (24%) were held in person (the remainder were mixed). In cases where roundtables or workshops were held in person, these most commonly took place in the South-West (27%) or London (27%).

MYPs thought they had adequate time to prepare for the roundtables or workshops. Among those who attended a

roundtable or workshop, three quarters (76%) felt they were given enough notice ahead of these (compared to 18% who felt like they did not receive enough notice). Slightly fewer (71%) felt they had the opportunity to contribute to the preparation for roundtables and workshops with Ministers or senior civil servants as seen in Figure 7.2 below.

The main topics MYPs discussed with ministers and/or senior civil servants in the roundtables and workshops were:

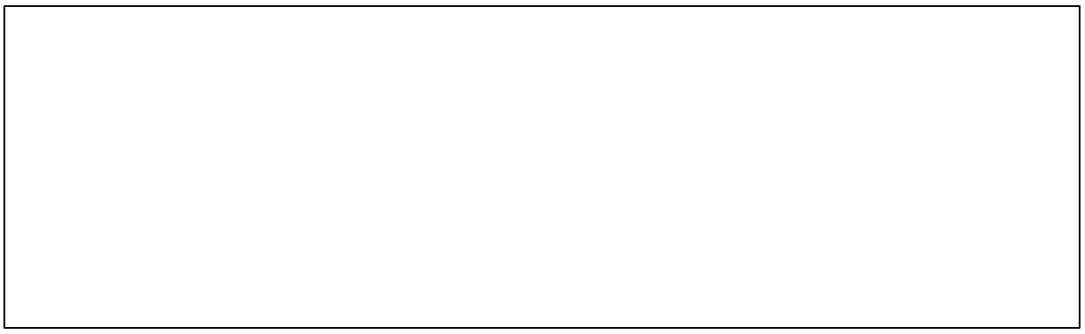
- Education (67%)
- Mental Health (47%)
- Environmental Improvement Plan (33%)
- Climate change and COP27 (33%)
- DCMS Youth Services (27%)
- Dormant Assets and Youth Funding (20%)

However, MYPs were less positive about the impact of their involvement. Only two in five (41%) felt they had the opportunity to share their views during these roundtables. In the Year 1 focus groups, MYPs mentioned the roundtables felt tokenistic because after the meetings had finished, there was no follow up on what was discussed or any actions that would take place because of what was discussed. One in four (24%) agreed the same Ministers and senior civil servants attended the roundtable events and workshops.

In the Year 2 diary study and focus groups, no MYPs specifically mentioned participating in roundtables with ministers / senior civil servants, though some expressed that they would like to.

Figure 7.2: MYPs view on the roundtables and workshops

Use zoom on your browser to view.



C6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that you were given the opportunity to contribute to the preparation for roundtables and workshops with Ministers or senior civil servants? C8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: Base (All those who attended roundtables): Year 1 (17).

Conversations with decision makers

In Year 2, around half of MYPs (52%) said they engaged in roundtables, workshops or conversations with local councillors. A third (34%) said they had engaged with Members of Parliament in the same way (MPs). Fewer MYPs said they had engaged with Metro Mayors (8%), Members of Scottish Parliament (MSPs) (4%), Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) (3%) or Members of the Senedd (MSs) (2%).

The main topics MYPs discussed with decision makers were:

- Youth engagement programmes, including the UK Youth Parliament (27%)
- Crime and Safety (20%)
- Roles and impacts of MPs or decision makers (15%)
- Transport (15%)
- Youth Services (13%)
- Education (11%)

Some MYPs from the focus groups and diary study said they had met with and spoken to their local MP or councillor about issues they felt impacted young people and the local community. Some said they had scheduled meetings with their

local MP and they planned to discuss their local campaign.

A few MYPs who had met with their local MP or councillor felt they had a positive experience; one MYP from the diary study said their discussion resulted in a collaborative agreement to address the needs of the community together by exploring ways to ensure young people's voices were heard and their concerns addressed. This MYP also said they proposed an initiative that would promote better wellbeing practices within their local community.

Despite this, only one-third (32%) of MYPs had participated in workshops or roundtable formats with decision makers in their local area in Year 2. Roundtables with decision makers were not part of the grant provided to NYA to deliver the UK Youth Parliament programme. MYPs from the focus groups and diary study said they felt they did not have enough opportunities to engage with key decision makers and wanted more of an opportunity to engage with them. Whilst some attempted to reach out to MPs via email or letter, they did not usually receive a response and expressed it should be made easier to get into contact with decision makers and arrange meetings. One MYP suggested a collective event, where multiple MPs could attend, which would allow MYPs more of an opportunity to engage with decision makers.

Around one in five (19%) MYPs reported having engaged in roundtables, workshops or conversations with UK wide, regional or national bodies and institutions. Among these MYPs, the most common organisation to have engaged with was a Local Government Association (41%). Other national bodies and institutions MYPs engaged with included, Politics Project Day, Safeguarding Report 2024, Citizens Aid, UK Parliament, Youth Focus North West, MyBnk, Save the Student, Food for Learning campaign and Mindmate, all at 6%.

The main topics MYPs discussed with regional or national bodies and institutions were Mental Health (41%), Education (18%) and Crime and Safety (12%).

Very few MYPs from the focus groups and diary study participated in roundtables, workshops or conversations with UK wide, regional or national bodies and institutions. One MYP said they engaged with an organisation to discuss some work they had done around financial education for young people.

Some councillors we spoke to were not clear who the MYPs for their local area were as they normally interacted with members of the local youth council in the area as a whole group. This meant that specific insights on how they found engagement with MYPs could not be separated from their perceptions of interacting with the youth council in general. Among those we did speak to that described engagement with MYPs specifically, they said that they had no difficulties with engaging with MYPs and attending the meetings and events they have been invited to. They felt the only barrier would be time and other commitments they may have had but felt like this can be overcome with more notice.

Most of the decision makers we spoke to felt like the MYPs were prepared to take on their role, they were not aware of what training they had, but from the experience they had, they felt like MYPs had a good understanding of what their role required. However, one decision maker felt like the MYPs in their area lacked understanding of how politics works in practice, so did not feel they were sufficiently trained. They formed this view based on their perception that the MYPs in their area were chosen, rather than having to be elected, because there were so few who were aware of the opportunity in their area.

> "It's only a very select group involved in the Parliament… It's a status thing to go on and be part of Youth Parliament, and very few people know anything about it, so therefore nobody has actually prepared a CV to be voted on."
>
> **Councillor Youth Select Committee**

In Year 1, only one surveyed MYP was a member of the Youth Select Committee and attended Youth Select Committee activities. Due to this low base size in Year 1, this sub-section will only draw on Year 2 findings.

Seven of the MYPs who completed the survey were members of the Youth Select Committee. Over half (57%) of Youth Select Committee members attended at least one Youth Select Committee activity, with the remaining 43% saying they attended two. Most Youth Select Committee members (57%) felt they were given enough notice ahead of the activities.

Positively, all Youth Select Committee members agreed they had the opportunity to share their views during the Youth Select Committee activities. Generally, MYPs from the focus groups and diary study who were members of the Youth Select Committee enjoyed their experience. Some found being able to visit the Houses of Parliament a key highlight. MYPs also felt being a member of the Youth Select Committee allowed them to feedback the opinions of young people to decision makers, which meant young people's voices were heard. MYPs felt this allowed them to make a difference.

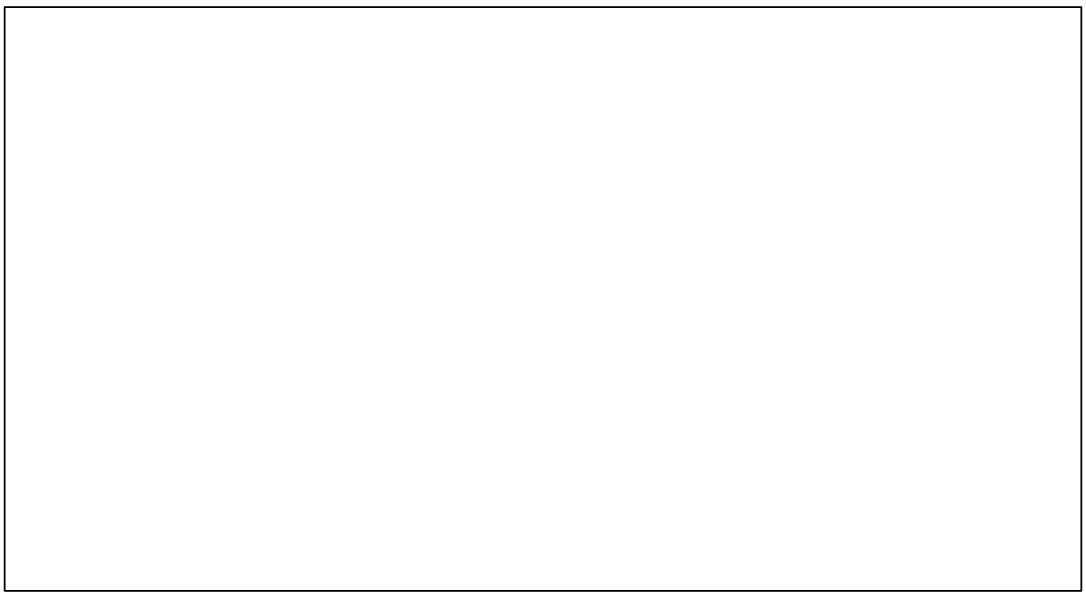
Most MYPs (71%) agreed they had the opportunity to contribute to the preparation for Youth Select Committee activities. A few MYPs from the focus groups said they were given the opportunity to prepare before meetings, for instance, the type of questions they might be asked. MYPs felt the support they received to prepare for the Youth Select Committee was sufficient. This included NYA briefings to Youth Select Committee members on the activities they would be doing and the type of questions they should expect from decision makers, as well as more general support like travel and hotel arrangements.

Reflections on the programme

Figure 7.3 below presents the reasons MYPs gave in the member's survey for why they enjoyed the activities they took part in. The main reason MYPs enjoyed the activities in Year 2 was because it allowed them to meet new people and make new friends (74%) and also to learn from others (60%). In Year 1, meeting new people and making new friends was also the most common reason given for enjoying activities (60%), followed by young people's voices being heard (53%) and taking part in debates/votes (42%).

Figure 7.3: Reasons why MYPs enjoyed the activities

Use zoom on your browser to view.



E2. What did you enjoy about these activities? Base (All those who selected the Youth Parliament activities they enjoyed the most): Year 2 (82)

During focus groups, meeting new people and making friends emerged as a key highlight of the UK Youth Parliament for many MYPs. A few MYPs said they had made close friends as a result of meeting people at the activities and events. Others said the activities allowed them to learn from others, for instance one MYP said they learnt about a different culture whilst a few others said they were able to learn about what other MYPs were working on in their local areas. Despite finding the training sessions useful, these were most commonly identified as the

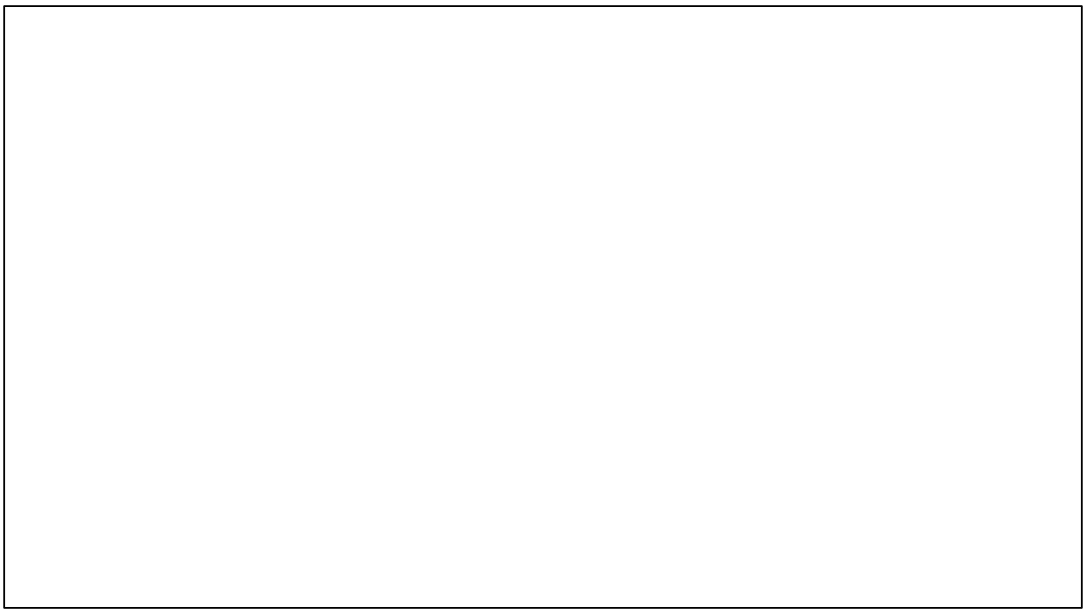
least enjoyable activities by MYPs.

When asked what would improve their experience of the UK Youth Parliament, over a third (36%) said they had not been an MYP long enough to say. Among the remaining participants, there was limited consensus about what the key improvement would be (as shown in Figure 7.4). The most common answer was better support and guidance in Year 2, with 16% suggesting this. During focus groups, some MYPs felt like the training they received was not extensive enough and others reported not receiving any training, which may suggest this survey finding. There was also a desire expressed by some MYPs for more direct guidance as well as support around running campaigns.

MYPs also would have liked to have spent more time with each other and decision makers. Just over one in ten (14%) suggested they wanted more events or interactions with other MYPs, while slightly fewer (8%) wanted more interaction with MPs and decision makers. MYPs felt more exposure and face time with decision makers would help them to understand how decision makers can help them to make a change, which would in turn allow MYPs to make more of an impact in their role. Some MYPs felt more exposure to those in power would help young people's voices to be heard more. In the focus groups, some MYPs said they would have liked more opportunities to develop their public speaking skills, whilst a few others said they wanted more of an opportunity to understand political processes.

Figure 7.4: Areas of the Youth Parliament programme that could be improved

Use zoom on your browser to view.



E4. What do you think would improve your experience of the UK Youth Parliament? Base: Year 2 (91)

Barriers to participating in programme activities

Over half of MYPs (59%) in Year 2 felt nothing prevented them from participating in the programme, which was not significantly different to Year 1 (43%).

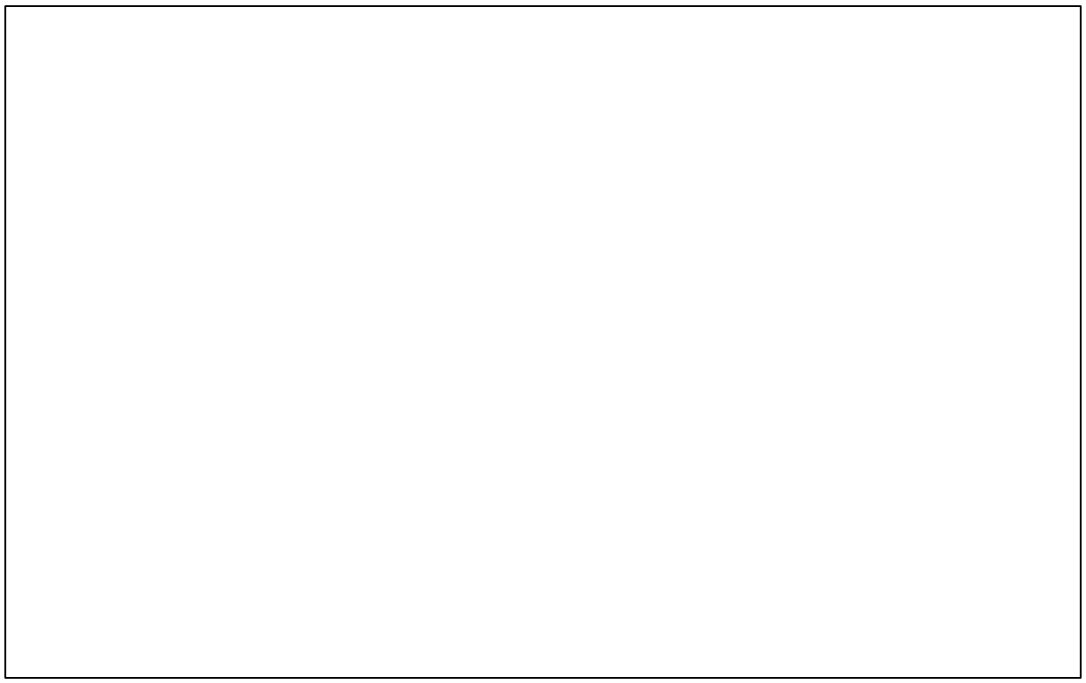
As shown in Figure 7.5, the barrier MYPs were most likely to agree they experienced in Year 2 was not having a friend or relative taking part in the programme (41%), which was lower than in Year 1 (59%).

The location of the events was also an issue for MYPs in both Year 2 and Year 1. MYPs suggested the location where events were being held was too far from where they live (37% in Year 2, which was lower than the 59% in Year 1) and that the location where events are being held was difficult to get to (31% in Year 2 and 33% in Year 1). Some MYPs from the focus groups, especially those from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, expressed that the location of events like the annual conference, held in London, was quite far for them to travel. Some also said they lived in areas that had poor transport links, and this affected their ability to travel to events. One MYP said because they were under 16 years old, they needed someone to supervise them whilst they travelled to some events, however they often

struggled to find supervision. A small number of MYPs felt they were too busy with paid work or volunteering to participate fully (7%).

Figure 7.5: MYPs agreeing to each statement related to barriers

Use zoom on your browser to view.



E7. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about participating in Youth Parliament activities. Base: Year 2 (91), Year 1 (54).

A small number of MYPs also experienced accessibility barriers. A few MYPs felt that their accessibility needs were not met by the National Youth Agency (NYA) or local event organisers (7%) or that their needs were not met by their local authority (2%). This is in line with Year 1, where 9% agreed their accessibility needs were not met by the British Youth Council (BYC). That said, no MYPs felt that their health condition or disability prevented them from taking part in the UK Youth Parliament.

8. Impact of the UK Youth Parliament programme

This chapter summarises the impact of the UK Youth Parliament programme on young people and decision makers.

Aligning with expectations

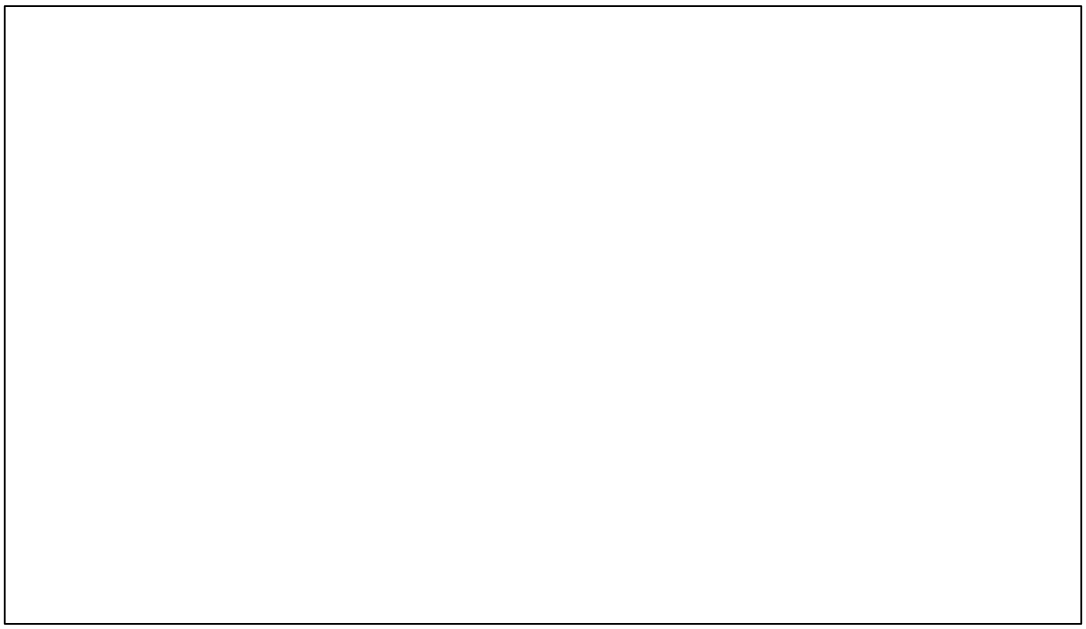
The majority of Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) felt like their motivations for taking part in the UK Youth Parliament had been realised. As shown in Figure 8.1, over two thirds (68%) of MYPs felt like they had been able to represent young people's views (the most common motivator for joining the UK Youth Parliament). Slightly fewer (61%) felt like they had made a difference in their local community or the UK (the second most common motivator). Agreement that other motivations, such as to support my future career prospects (74%), to have new experiences (68%) and to engage in discussion with policymakers (54%) had been achieved was also high.

To account for the potential impact of the delay in Year 2 delivery beginning, and the fact that in Year 2, there was a new cohort of MYPs who had only been in their roles for a short amount of time before participating in evaluation activities, a new answer option was added to the survey question on meeting motivations. This was "I have not been an MYP long enough to say". MYPs who selected this answer option were then asked how likely it would be for them to achieve this during their UK Youth Parliament involvement. Looking at the top two motivators, for representing young people's views, 14% selected "I have not been an MYP long enough to say" (of these, 100% thought it was likely they would achieve this during their UK Youth Parliament involvement), while 17% selected this for making a

difference in their local community (of these 90% thought it was likely they would achieve this during their UK Youth Parliament involvement). Despite the addition of these answer options, levels of agreement that motivations had been achieved were not significantly different in Year 2 than in Year 1.[footnote 6]

Figure 8.1: Agreement among MYPs that their motivations had been met (top 5 motivations shown only)

Use zoom on your browser to view.



E6 To what extent do you agree or disagree that you achieved the following since taking part in the UK Youth Parliament. E6b Based on your experience so far, how likely, if at all, do you think it is that you will achieve this during your participation in the UK Youth Parliament. Base: Varies per motivator, see chart.

During focus groups, MYPs mentioned having engaged in a number of activities in line with their motivations to joining. Examples included collecting the views of young people, including through Make Your Mark, speaking with young people within their school or conducting surveys in public places, hearing from guest speakers during events like the Annual Conference and YouthCons and gaining new experiences. Youth Select Committee members in particular emphasised their experiences at the House of Commons and their

engagement with parliamentary groups as being very impactful for them.

Lots of young people suggested their favourite part of the UK Youth Parliament so far was interacting with other MYPs. They frequently highlighted that they enjoyed hearing about the opinions of or challenges faced by young people in different areas of the UK and from different backgrounds. Despite not being the most common motivator to join identified in the survey, engaging with other MYPs emerged from the focus groups as a standout opportunity for learning and something they really enjoyed.

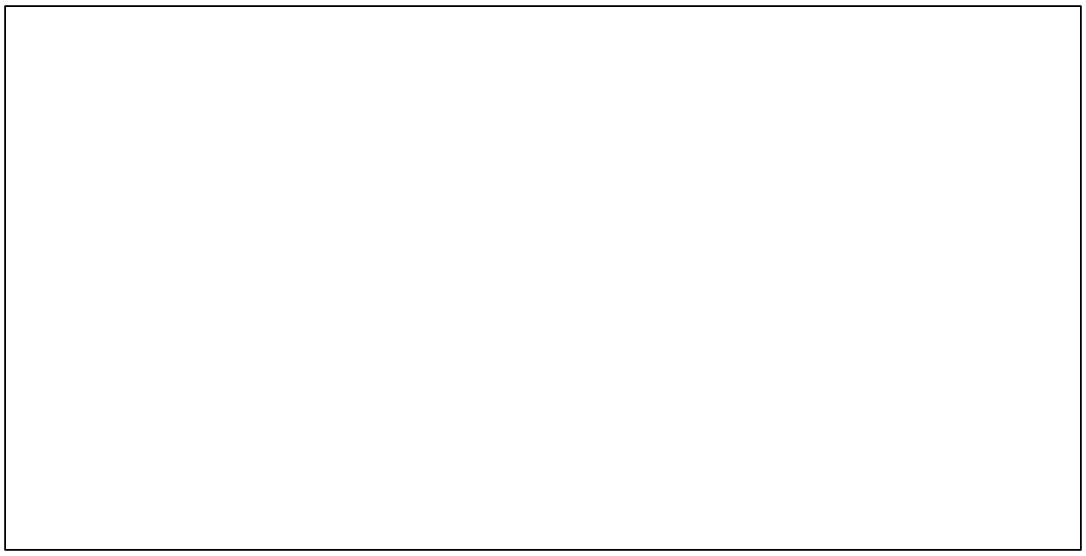
Skill development

MYPs reported having improved across a range of skill areas. As shown in Figure 8.2, the majority of surveyed MYPs felt like their skills in communication (85%), teamwork (82%), leadership (78%), problem solving (78%) and, to a slightly lesser extent, creativity (64%) had improved.

The proportions of MYPs agreeing they had improved was significantly lower in Year 2 than Year 1 across all skills, except teamwork skills. However, this is likely due to the later start of the Year 2 programme. In Year 2, MYPs were given the option of selecting whether they had “not been an MYP long enough to say” whether that skill had improved. Among those selecting this option, the majority felt it was likely they would improve in this skill during their UK Youth Parliament tenure.

Figure 8.2: MYP measure of improvement across skill areas

Use zoom on your browser to view.

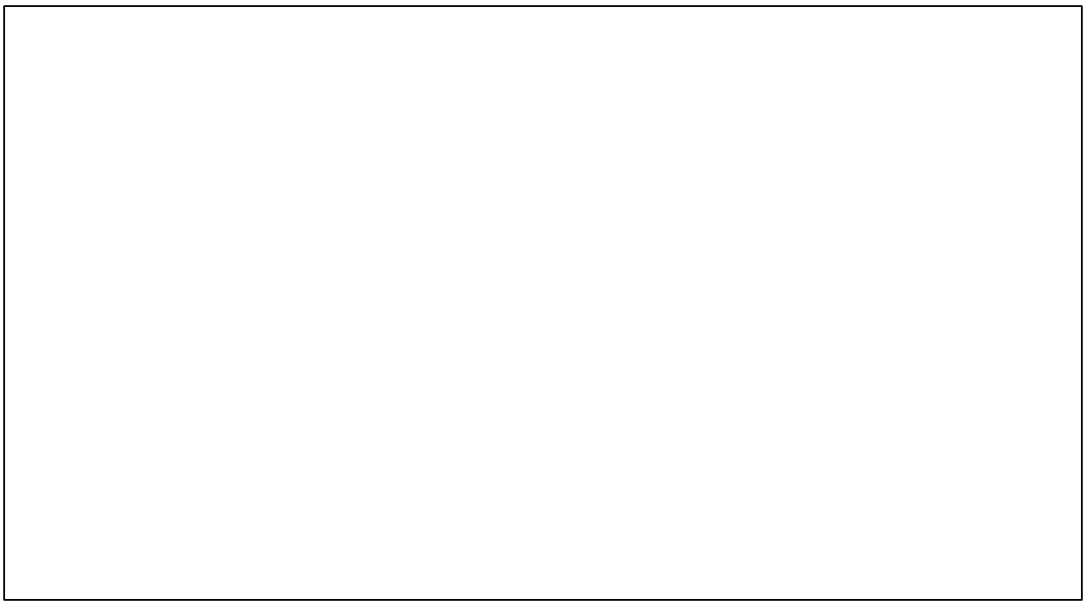


F1: Since you started the UK Youth Parliament programme, how much do you think you have improved the following skills? Base: Year 2 (91), Year 1 (54) F1a. How likely, if at all, do you think it is that you will improve in the following during the programme? (Base differs by skill)

MYPs also felt they had developed in other ways. The majority of MYPs felt more confident (74%), determined (69%) and resilient (64%) than before they started the programme (shown in Figure 8.3). Slightly fewer (57%) agreed they felt more prepared to join the workforce. The differences between Year 1 and Year 2 were not significantly different.

Figure 8.3: Agreement with attitudinal statements related to skills

Use zoom on your browser to view.



F2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement. Base: Year 2 (91), Year 1 (54). F2a: How likely, if at all, do you think it is that the programme will improve personal traits (Base varies by statement)

During focus groups, MYPs were enthusiastic that they had improved across a range of skills. In addition to the skills listed in the survey, skills identified in the focus group included: relationship building, campaigning, knowledge of political processes, confidence, public speaking, critical thinking. Some MYPs explained that even if they thought they already possessed some of these skills prior to participating in the UK Youth Parliament, they still improved in them.

> "I was able to look at motions, look at prompts and then I was able to think for myself. How do you solve this? What could be the possible benefits or drawbacks?"
>
> **Member of Youth Parliament**

> "Assemblies before seemed really daunting, but now it seems just very easy for me to take part in."

Member of Youth Parliament

Members of the Youth Select Committee (YSC) commented on the skills they had developed through this experience specifically. Examples reported by YSC members included team building, understanding questioning e.g. how to oppose a question or get an answer to an unanswered one, time management and coordination, and understanding how decision making happens.

Future plans and engagement in democratic processes

When asked about their future plans and engagement in democratic processes, almost all MYPs (95%) said it was likely that they will vote in the UK general elections when they turn 18, with none saying they will not vote. Moreover, most MYPs agreed it was likely that they will take part in social action after the UK Youth Parliament programme ends (87%).

During focus groups, members highlighted how their engagement with the programme has made them aware of the importance of being involved in the democratic process through actions such as voting.

Those who were unsure said it was due to there not being a political party that represents their political opinions rather than not being willing to vote. Most members explained they would have already been keen to vote, but that the UK Youth Parliament has shown them that their vote does make a difference and that it is a way for them to create change as well as challenge ideas they might agree with. Of those eligible to vote in the Welsh Parliament (Senedd), Scottish Parliamentary or Local Government elections, a minority had already voted (13%).

When discussing the effect of participation on education or career prospects in focus groups, many MYPs highlighted that even though they might not be interested in going into politics, participation has helped them figure out which skills they would like to further develop and possible career opportunities.

> "I don't necessarily want to go into politics, but it's kind of helped… I've always had an urge to do something to help people and I felt like this pushed it along a little bit more."
>
> **Member of Youth Parliament**

Policy development

Most of the decision makers we spoke to suggested that the youth voice was important to them in their decision making at a local level. They generally felt that young people were becoming more represented within policy development, and that UK Youth Parliament campaigns would be listened to and implemented within reason. They noted not all campaigns can be upheld but those that can will be listened to. One decision maker gave the example that in their area they had taken out junk food adverts to promote healthier eating as a result of a UK Youth Parliament campaign. However, some decision makers felt that the young people's voice was not important to all, and not everyone would listen to and represent them in policy making.

One decision maker suggested that the impact of the UK Youth Parliament may not be obvious because it leads to incremental change. They outlined the importance of having written evidence of what young people want, for example through the UK Youth Parliament manifesto, as it meant it could be referred to when putting forward the concerns of and priorities for young people

to more senior decision-makers e.g. ministers.

Stakeholders were not sure how much impact the UK Youth Parliament was having on central government policy. They felt it could be tokenistic and young people were not always listened to. However, they felt that young people were being listened to by their local council more, and with the National Youth Agency (NYA) taking over, they felt there was the potential for young people to be more represented in policy development.

Stakeholders did feel like through the UK Youth Parliament an effort was being made to listen to young people's voices and meant more decision makers would want to engage with them.

9. Suggested improvements

This chapter outlines the improvements participants suggested to the UK Youth Parliament programme. It focuses specifically on ideas for new opportunities that could be offered as part of the programme or new ways of thinking about it.

MYPs

One of the most common suggestions from Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) was improving awareness amongst non-participants and decision makers, both of the UK Youth Parliament in general, but also the work it does. MYPs emphasised that they would like more young people to be aware of the UK Youth Parliament as it could encourage them to engage with their elected representatives more and emphasise that they have a way of having their voice heard. MYPs also wanted to raise awareness of the work they do.

> “I believe that there definitely needs to be more promotion surrounding this… not only is it an incredible achievement for the young people going, it’s…something that young people should know about in general…[they] don’t know that young people their age are going into Parliament and actually debating the issues and topics that they care about.”
>
> **Member of Youth Parliament**

More opportunities to engage with decision makers was a common suggestion among MYPs. For some, this stemmed from the fact that they do not always respond to requests directly from MYPs themselves. Some suggested wanting to be involved with roundtables specifically, while others suggested general get-togethers of multiple MPs and MYPs.

MYPs expressed a desire for more events. Some wanted more opportunities to connect with MYPs from across the UK due to the enjoyment they got from the annual conference. However, others wanted more local events and more opportunities to create local networks of MYPs to drive local change.

Some MYPs expressed a desire for specific committees to be introduced to the UK Youth Parliament. Then MYPs could sign-up for committees related to their interests and interact with decision makers on that topic specifically.

One MYP mentioned ensuring there were equal opportunities among regions to attend events and that each region should receive the same funding. Another MYP wanted more evidence of the impact their work was having.

Decision makers and stakeholders

Decision makers suggested a range of improvements for the UK Youth Parliament. The most commonly mentioned improvement was funding and resourcing. They felt if the UK Youth Parliament had more funding, then it could be advertised to more young people to create more awareness of it. They felt if it was advertised more then it could become representative of the voice of more young people.

A few decision makers mentioned that they felt politics should be taught in schools at a more overall level, so that young people could have a better understanding of it and then may be more encouraged to get involved with the UK Youth Parliament.

Some decision makers also felt like the UK Youth Parliament had an image that it was only for those that have an interest in politics and who know about politics. Instead, they felt like it needed to be communicated to young people as being for anyone that has opinions and cares about issues affecting them and young people around them. They felt this would really change the image of the UK Youth Parliament and would then appeal to more young people and encourage them to get involved.

One view shared by decision makers was that it is important for decision makers to be trained in how to appropriately engage with young people. Decision makers suggested that in order to protect young people, meetings needed to happen in appropriate settings.

One decision maker felt that the UK Youth Parliament should not just be another version of the current UK parliament system and should instead encourage young people to think outside of the box on how the system could work differently.

Stakeholders also had a range of suggestions of improvements. From feedback they have had from the young people involved themselves, they said they wanted it to be more joined up with other areas across the UK. They reported that their favourite bit was when they get to interact with other young people that live in

different communities to them, even if it is just online. They feel as if they really get to learn about young people that may be different to them and it is something they really value as they get to make new connections with new people.

Similar to decision makers, stakeholders also felt that there should be more education around the UK Youth Parliament. They felt that it needs to be emphasised that it is not just for young people that already have a detailed knowledge about and interest in politics. They felt if the image around what the UK Youth Parliament is changed, it would encourage more young people to get involved and also give those whose voice may not currently be represented a chance.

Finally, most stakeholders felt that to really help improve the UK Youth Parliament, more funding would be needed for local authorities so that they can focus on things like recruitment and make sure they can fund young people in that area to get involved and go to events.

10. Conclusions

> Evidence suggests that the UK Youth Parliament is delivering on its intended goals to engage young people in a UK-wide democratic process and enable them to express their voices on issues that matter to them.

Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) emphasised throughout the research that they learned from and enjoyed discussing issues that matter to them with other young people from across the UK. They were especially interested in hearing the differences and similarities between the challenges they each faced. However, during the annual conference, some MYPs felt like they were unable to cover the specific issue they wanted to discuss, due to the limited time available.

> There is less evidence to confirm that young people are engaged at an early stage in the development of policy affecting them or that specific government proposals and policy are tested with them.

Some decision makers, primarily councillors, suggested that the voice of young people is listened to at a local level and gave concrete examples of when change had occurred upon the request of young people. They were also enthusiastic about the need to and potential for the youth voice to have a greater impact on a national level. One decision maker said that the manifesto developed by the UK Youth Parliament is a vehicle by which the voice of young people can contribute to policy change. It means there is clear evidence for what young people want that can be brought to the attention of senior decision makers when relevant issues are up for debate.

> Stakeholders involved in the delivery of the programme thought their delivery experience improved in Year 2.

Stakeholders described the National Youth Agency (NYA) as communicative and organised. They felt supported, for example through training received during the election period and the communications shared about upcoming events. Some stakeholders felt like they received sufficient funding. However, others felt they lacked time and resources to accompany MYPs to national events and also to organise events locally. Some stakeholders also suggested they would like to hear from NYA about the national events further in advance so they had more time to plan.

> MYPs enjoyed the UK Youth Parliament experience and felt it provided them with unique experiences and opportunities for growth.

MYPs were given the opportunity to enhance personal skills and attributes, such as confidence, teamwork, public speaking, relationship-building and political knowledge. The training offered by NYA provided clarity on their role and how to carry this out. Events, such as the annual conference and YouthCons gave them the chance to engage not only with other MYPs but also decision makers. Building on this, MYPs expressed that they would like more structured opportunities to engage with decision makers, particularly MPs.

> Awareness emerged as a barrier to engagement in the UK Youth Parliament.

MYPs, stakeholders and decision makers all referenced a lack of awareness among young people of the programme, which was corroborated with findings from the young person's omnibus. There was a perception among stakeholders and decision makers that awareness was linked to the schools young people attended, and those that attended other schools were excluded from the process. Lack of awareness also posed challenges for MYPs as it meant they felt young people in their area did not know that they could use the UK Youth Parliament to share their views and needs.

Recommendations on how to improve the UK Youth Parliament programme

Delivery (recommendations for the national delivery partner, currently NYA)

- Continue to foster open communication channels with regional delivery partners to ensure collaborative delivery.
- Consider whether more detail about national events can be communicated to stakeholders further in

advance.

- Consider whether the funding allocated to each region provides equal opportunities for the MYPs in those areas to engage with the programme.

Engagement (recommendations for the national delivery partner regional and local delivery partners and the programme funder)

- Prioritise awareness raising activities among young people to improve general knowledge about the programme.
- Consider whether the way the UK Youth Parliament is framed is compelling to a range of young people, for example, change perceptions that the programme is for those interested in politics towards it being for those who have opinions and views about the way they think things should be.
- Provide and promote evidence of the impact MYPs' engagement in the UK Youth Parliament has had on decision making.

Activities (recommendations for the national delivery partner and programme funder)

- More structured engagement with MPs, such as roundtables. Activities like this could include a range of MPs and MYPs with different perspectives to promote a balanced discussion.
- Facilitate networking between young people in similar regions, so they can work together on a regional level to campaign for change.
- Consider whether there are equal opportunities to attend local or regional events, such as YouthCons, across all MYPs.
- Consider whether MYPs could be allocated to committees focused on specific policy areas and then given the opportunity to engage with decision makers

in parallel committees.

- Consider sharing guidelines with MPs and decision makers on how to interact with MYPs in a safe way.

11. Appendix A: Technical Appendix

Evaluation questions

Process evaluation questions

- How successful was UKYP in achieving its objectives?
- Was the intervention delivered as intended?
- How have the new elements of UKYP (outlined in the background information) been incorporated into programme delivery?
- How have the roundtables/workshops with Ministers/senior civil servants been delivered?
- How has the Youth Select Committee been delivered?
- How has a wider network of young people taking part in the programme been achieved?
- How has increased outreach to young people that don't take part in the programme been achieved?
- How has joining up with existing Select Committees and All Party Parliamentary groups been achieved?
- Were there enough resources, including staff time and capacity?
- Were there any unexpected or unintended issues in the delivery of the intervention?

- To what extent has the intervention reached all the people that it was intended to?
- What worked well, or less well, for whom and why?
- Did the required time commitments act as a barrier to participation?
- What could be improved?
- What can be learned from the delivery methods used?
- Could the intervention have been procured and delivered for less cost?
- How did external factors influence the delivery and functioning of interventions?
- How did external factors influence the attitudes and behaviours of target groups?

Beneficiary questions

- How do young people feel their involvement with UKYP has benefited their lives outside of the scheme? E.g. their professional or academic lives, on wellbeing or life skills?
- Are there parts of the programmes young people particularly enjoyed or found beneficial?
- Are there parts of the programmes young people enjoyed less or found less beneficial?
- To what extent have the new elements of the programme made a difference to the impact of the programme on participants?
- What did participants want to get out of the programmes?
- Do they feel they got this?
- What do participants feel could be improved?
- How do decision makers feel that their participation in the UKYP has impacted them?
- Has it changed their perception of young people or changed how they make policy?

- How has the programme helped participants engage other young people in democratic processes in their local areas, and to have their voices heard?

Enabler/barrier evaluation questions:

- What are the characteristics of UKYP participants and how does this compare to the general population?
- What groups are underrepresented?
- How did the young people find out about the programmes?
- Did they have any support in the application process?

Research limitations

Although this report draws on multiple sources of primary and secondary data, it is still subject to some limitations:

- **Change in delivery partner between Year 1 and Year 2 of the evaluation.**

The change in delivery partner in Year 2 meant there was a delay in starting programme activities and therefore evaluation activities could not take place at a comparable time across both years. This means direct comparisons between Year 1 and Year 2 were generally not possible and any comparisons made had to be considered within this context.

- **Representativeness of MYP survey.**

IFF Research did not have direct access to invite Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) to the research themselves. Out of the approximately 300 MYPs, only n=54 engaged in the Year 1 survey and only n=91 engaged in the Year 2 survey, which means findings may not be representative of the range of opinions held by MYPs.

- **Base sizes.**

Due to the lower participation in the survey seen in Year 1, it was sometimes difficult to establish the scale of change on certain metrics between Year 1 and Year 2, as even large changes were not necessarily statistically significant.

- **Self-selecting nature of engagement in research activities.**

Participation in all research activities was done on a voluntary basis. MYPs that participated may be more likely to be 'engaged' members and have motivations to take part in research, introducing bias.

- **Interviews with decision makers and stakeholders form a small sample.**

Only 8 stakeholders and 8 decision makers were interviewed and therefore their views are not necessarily representative. In addition, the majority of decision makers that were interviewed were councillors and so a qualitative exploration of MP perceptions is limited.

Survey with Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs)

The survey with Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) operated as a census that gathered information about the key demographics of members of the UK Youth Parliament programme, activities MYPs participated in and metrics that measured the skills MYPs gained.

In Year 1, the delivery partner, the British Youth Council (BYC), informed MYPs about the survey at programme events and followed up with MYPs via email where possible. BYC also posted a QR code on Twitter, which allowed MYPs to access the survey. In Year 2, the delivery partner NYA informed MYPs about the survey programme via email and through WhatsApp

channels. For MYPs under the age of 16, parental consent was collected prior to survey completion. In addition to the initial invitation that NYA shared with MYPs, NYA also sent two reminders to MYPs via email and text. 0 shows the region and age breakdown of MYPs who participated in the survey in both years.

Table 11.1 MYP survey demographics

Demographic description	Year 1	Year 2
Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland	2	19
England	46	72
16 to 18 years old	47	63
11 to 15 years old	7	21

Focus groups with Members of Youth Parliament

Focus groups were used to dig deeper into what the experience of being an MYP has meant for young people throughout their engagement with the programme. Young people were recruited to groups on the basis of shared characteristics, including age, nation and membership to the Youth Select Committee (full details in 0).

In both Year 1 and Year 2, the majority of recruitment to focus groups was done through the survey with MYPs. During the survey, MYPs were asked if they would be interested in participating in a focus group and asked to share their email address. IFF then reached out to MYPs who had opted in to the research via email to invite them to a specific focus group based on their eligibility for these.

In Year 2, one focus group was dedicated to members of the Youth Select Committee. Recruitment for this focus group was done through NYA. NYA reached out directly to members of the Youth Select Committee via email and WhatsApp to invite them to the focus group. MYPs contacted IFF directly to opt-in to this focus group.

Table 11.2: MYP focus group participation

Focus group description	Year 1	Year 2
Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland	5	6
England	3	6
Minority ethnic group	4	7
16 to 18 years old	4	5
11 to 15 years old	-	5
Youth Select Committee	-	5

Diary study with Members of Youth Parliament

The diary study was used to gain a detailed in-the-moment insight into the experience of MYPs. The diary was hosted on a platform called Recollective, which MYPs were able to access via the internet or through an app. MYPs involved in the diary study were asked to complete an activity every two weeks over a period of three months.

In Year 1, MYPs were invited to complete an online screener which was developed by IFF Research. This screener allowed MYPs to opt into the diary study and also collected parental

consent for those aged under 16. A link to the online screener, along with an invitation email was circulated to MYPs by the delivery partner, BYC. Once MYPs had completed the online screener, IFF Research invited them to take part in the diary study. In Year 2, the delivery partner NYA reached out to MYPs to explore who was interested in taking part in the study. NYA collected names, contact details and parental consent (for those aged under 16) of interested MYPs, and this was shared with IFF Research who then invited these MYPs via email to take part in the study. In both years IFF Research maintained email communication with MYPs throughout the duration of the study and notified MYPs through the platform when an activity was live and ready to complete.

In Year 1, 15 MYPs completed the diary study and in Year 2, 20 MYPs completed the study.

Table 11.3: Diary study demographics

Focus group description	Year 1	Year 2
Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland	1	2
England	14	18
16 to 18 years old	1	9
11 to 15 years old	4	11

Focus groups with non-participants

Focus groups were conducted with young people who were not MYPs to explore their awareness and perceptions of the UK Youth Parliament, as well as explore any barriers to participating. Young people were screened to make sure they had at least some interest in politics and current affairs and/or thought it was

important for young people to have a voice in decision making. Young people were recruited to focus groups based on their age (full details in Table 11.4).

The same approach to recruitment was taken in Year 1 and Year 2. Mojo Fieldwork, a market research company specialising in qualitative fieldwork, screened and recruited participants on behalf of IFF Research. The focus groups were then conducted by IFF Researchers.

Table 11.4: Non-participant focus group participation

Focus group description	Year 1	Year 2
11 to 15 years old	8	8
16 to 20 years old	7	5
21 to 25 years old	7	5

Omnibus with non-participants

An omnibus for young people run by Childwise, called the Childwise Playground Buzz was used to understand awareness of the UK Youth Parliament among young people. The data was weighted by age and gender.

In 2023, 1057 young people aged 11 to 17 responded to the survey. Fieldwork took place between September and October 2023. In 2024, 967 young people aged 11 to 17 were engaged in the online interviews. Fieldwork took place between September and October 2024.

Depth interviews with decision makers

Depth interviews were carried out with decision makers to explore their perspectives of and interactions with the UK Youth Parliament.

No interviews were completed in Year 1 due to challenges identifying decision makers who had been engaged with the UK Youth Parliament. In Year 2, MYPs were asked during the survey and the Annual Conference to share examples of decision makers they had spoken to. Desk research was then conducted to find contact details in order to invite them to an interview. Email and phone were used to reach out to decision makers.

Omnibus with MPs

An online omnibus run by YouGov among a representative sample of MPs was used to understand awareness of the UK Youth Parliament among MPs. Results were weighted by party, gender, electoral cohort, and geography to give a sample that is representative of the House of Commons.

In 2023, the survey ran from 6th September to 2nd October and 110 MPs responded. In 2024, the survey ran from 27th to 29th November and 103 MPs responded.

Depth interviews with stakeholders

Depth interviews were conducted with stakeholders, including regional delivery partners and stakeholders within local authorities, who supported delivery of the UK Youth Parliament programme. These interviews explored their views on delivery, the programme itself and potential impact of it.

We use the same approach for Year 1 and Year 2 for recruitment. DCMS provided contact details of relevant delivery partners and IFF contacted them over email to arrange an

interview.

Demographic and characteristic data of Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) [footnote 7]

Comparison between the UK Youth Parliament and total population

Table 11.5 compares data of the demographics of the whole population and young people against the census data held by the National Youth Agency for Members of the current UK Youth Parliament.

The demographic data was provided by the House of Commons Library. Whilst the data for the UK Youth Parliament is UK wide, the other data is for England and Wales due to comparison challenges with data with Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Table 11.5: Demographic data of the whole population against the UK Youth Parliament census data

	Total population	Under 18s	11 to 17s	Members of the UK Youth Parliament
Sex (2023)	-	-	-	-
Male	49%	51%	51%	46%
Female	51%	49%	49%	52%
Not answered	-	-	-	3%
Ethnicity (2021)	-	-	-	-
Asian, Asian British or Asian	9%	12%	12%	18%

Welsh				
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	4%	6%	6%	7%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	3%	7%	6%	5%
White British	74%	68%	69%	53%
White: other ethnic groups	7%	6%	5%	3%
Other ethnic group	2%	3%	3%	14%
Disability (2021)	-	-	-	-
Disabled under the Equality Act	18%	7%	10%	11%
Not disabled under the Equality Act	83%	93%	90%	89%
Sexual orientation (2021)	-	-	-	-
Gay or lesbian	2%	-	-	9%
Bisexual	1%	-	-	9%
Other non-heterosexual orientations	0%	-	-	2%

Heterosexual or straight	89%	-	-	69%
Not answered	8%	-	-	10%

Sources: ONS, Mid-2023 estimates of the population for England and Wales; ONS, 2021 census custom table builder (Variables on age, ethnicity, and disability); ONS, Sexual orientation, England and Wales: Census 2021, National Youth Agency, UK Youth Parliament Census 2025

Male and female population
This data comes from the Office for National Statistics' mid-2023 population estimates for England and Wales.

Population by ethnic group
This data comes from the 2021 census for England and Wales. Respondents were asked to tick a box or write in a response giving their ethnic group under one of several broad headings.

Data on ethnicity is self-identified, although in many cases children's census forms will have been completed by their parents or guardians.

Population by disability
This data comes from the 2021 census for England and Wales. Respondents were asked a two-part question, intended to match the definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010. Respondents were asked whether they had any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more. People who said they did have one of these conditions and also said that it limited their activities in some way, were classed as disabled.

As with the ethnicity data, data for many children will have been based on their parents' or guardians' responses.

Population by sexual orientation

This data comes from the 2021 census for England and Wales. Respondents were asked about their sexual orientation and were given the option to identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, straight/heterosexual or a different sexual orientation.

The 2021 census question was only asked of people aged 16 and over, so it isn't possible to provide figures for the population aged under 18.

There aren't any official UK statistics on the sexual orientation of under-18s. More recent UK-wide estimates are available based on the Annual Population Survey, and the ONS' latest report on this provides a breakdown by age band. In 2022, around 3% of the UK population aged 16 and over identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Percentages were higher in younger age bands. In the 16 to 24 age band, this percentage was 9%.

Additional data[footnote 8]

NYA also collected deprivation data as part of their census of the UK Youth Parliament. Deprivation was tracked using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), which tracks a variety of different measures and criteria to rank neighbourhood areas based on their relative deprivation, from the most deprived to the least deprived. These neighbourhoods are then divided into 10 equal groups (or deciles) according to their deprivation rank. An IMD Decile of 1 means that the area is in the most deprived 10% of the country, while a Decile of 10 means they are in the least deprived 10%. For IMD data, the postcodes collected from MYPs were used to find the relative IMD for that area. Due to some postcodes being invalid or not being included in the IMD studies, some responses were excluded from the IMD data.

Table 11.6: Deprivation data

	Count	Percentage
Deprivation- IMD Decile for all areas	-	-
1	18	9%

2	13	7%
3	23	12%
4	27	14%
5	18	9%
6	11	6%
7	17	9%
8	22	11%
9	31	16%
10	20	10%

1. Youth Voice refers to the distinct ideas, opinions, attitudes, knowledge, and actions of young people as a collective body. Definition from: What is youth voice? ↩
2. Source: National Youth Agency. ↩
3. Youth Voice refers to the distinct ideas, opinions, attitudes, knowledge, and actions of young people as a collective body. Definition from: What is youth voice? ↩
4. 91 MYPs completed the survey in Year 2, and 54 completed the survey in Year 1. ↩
5. In Year 2, the House of Commons sitting did not take place within the timeframe of the evaluation. ↩
6. Please note that even differences that might look large do not reach the level of significance, likely due to small base sizes. ↩
7. Taken from a report by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. ↩
8. Source: National Youth Agency UK Youth Parliament

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