

# The Young People in Policymaking Fund

Learning from Year Two

2023-2024

common  
futures

Blaggrave.  
investing in  
young people

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# 1. Background and context

In spring 2022, Blagrave Trust established the Young People in Policymaking fund to support charities and non-profit organisations in England working with young people (aged 16-25) who have experienced social injustice. With the overarching aim of empowering these young people to influence policymaking processes that affect their lives, ten organisations were funded to pilot or continue initiatives which provide accessible and inclusive mechanisms for young people to be active participants in shaping policy, rather than passive recipients of decisions. “Policy” in the context of this funding encompasses activities such as introducing and implementing legislation, developing government guidance, engaging in consultations, and shaping funding decisions at both national and local levels.

In the Year One learning report we broadly categorised three types of organisations within the funded cohort:

- **Place-based ‘youth work’ organisations**, aiming to support the young people they already work with to strategically influence policy.
- **Issues-led campaigning organisations**, seeking to build the policy-influencing capacity and understanding of young people in their networks.
- **National service delivery and policy organisations**, aiming to embed youth voice in their policy work.

Common Futures was appointed as the programme’s learning partner. Our role has included facilitating reflection among funded organisations and producing insights to inform the wider youth, policymaking, and funding communities, including Blagrave Trust and its stakeholders.

We previously shared a report highlighting insights from the first year of the funding. This follow-up report captures key learnings from Year Two, drawn from activities conducted throughout 2024 with the ten funded organisations. These learning activities included:

- **Two in-person learning meetings** in May and October 2024. Attended by between one and three representatives from partner organisations, these meetings aimed to track progress and share insights from each project, foster collaborative exploration of a shared learning question, and address individual challenges through action learning sets.
- **Two online learning meetings** in March and July 2024, with the majority of time spent specifically on action learning sets to explore and share practice-based, policy, or personal challenges amongst the cohort.
- **1-to-1 conversations** with partner organisations who were unable to attend the learning meetings.
- **Regular online monitoring** of each partner organisation’s work, including reading newsletters, social media feeds, and scanning their websites for updates about the project on a monthly basis.

## 2. Learning insights: Creating influence and impact

Over the course of the second year of the funding, the partners have made significant progress in their policy influencing objectives. In Year One, the focus was more on establishing relationships with young people and defining policy influencing themes and goals. While this engagement continues to be iterative across most projects, the focus has turned to representing and showcasing young people's perspectives.

### Policy issues

In Year Two we have seen a more obvious distinction between partners who have chosen **policy issues which align with broader organisational advocacy priorities** (for example **Become's** focus on the needs of children in the care system; **We Belong's** work championing the needs of young migrants; and the **Challenging Behaviour Foundation's** and those with specific projects **informed or led by young people's interests** (for example **RECLAIM's** work on what young people want from high streets; **MAP's** work on accessibility in parks; and the **Centre for Education and Youth** and **The Warren's** focus on multiple issues chosen by young people).

Some organisations have chosen to focus on **policy topics that align with existing sector initiatives or broader policy trends**. **Leicestershire Cares** advocacy for care experience to be recognised as a protected characteristic was inspired in part by national campaigner Terry Galloway. They have localised this campaign by conducting research across Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland to community support for the change. Similarly, **POMOC's** work in Cambridge on renters' rights has capitalised on emerging developments within the local council and their established relationships with key stakeholders.

The snap **General Election** in summer 2024 brought both challenges and opportunities. In advance of the election there was notable uncertainty around how effective national influencing could be given the expected change of government; once the election was called, purdah restricted campaigning and engagement; and the post-election period saw shifting political relationships as MPs and Ministers changed roles, select committees and APPGs were reconstituted, and the new government announced its priorities.

Many of the organisations have used the General Election as an opportunity to refine and reiterate their policy asks and to build new relationships. For example, **Become** coordinated an open letter signed by over 80 care-experienced young people and produced a manifesto to support their advocacy efforts. **We Belong's** approach capitalised on the new government's to have a strong mandate in local constituencies. **MAP, Leicestershire Cares**, and others benefitted from the election of sector contacts and allies to political roles.

We have also observed organisations adapting their agendas in **response to evolving external circumstances**. For instance, **We Belong's** work initially aimed to hold the government to account for implementing a shorter route to settlement (reducing the timeframe from 10 years to 5 years) and to raise awareness among young people about their rights. However, when a 20% increase in visa fees for indefinite leave to remain was introduced in 2023, they shifted their focus to campaigning against unaffordable and unpredictable fee hikes, highlighting the risk of young people falling out of status. Their current campaign seeks to reverse these fee increases.

Additionally, the **far-right riots during the summer of 2024** has prompted some partners to review their policy work in this context. **We Belong's** work has been affected by the need to respond to urgent community needs by prioritising safety, resilience, and tackling the hostile environments faced by marginalised groups. Both **RECLAIM** and **The Warren** have led activities with young people which explore the rise of right-wing ideology and in particular the response of young men.

## Scope of influence

When considering their scope of influence, across the cohort the partners have targeted a broad range of policy makers. These include MPs, Ministers and civil servants at a national level, local authorities and planning committees, headteachers and schools, and various sector groups or issues-based committees. Some of these are targeted strategically, some based on existing relationships, and some approaches are opportunistic, for example arising from attending sector networking events to build connections.

Some projects have expanded their scope of influence to a dual strategy to influence both local and national policy. This may have stemmed from the uncertainty surrounding national policy outcomes ahead of the General Election, prompting a greater emphasis on local policy. In other cases, partners have started with a strategic focus on localised action to reflect needs and priorities of their communities, but have expanded to capitalise on emerging opportunities for national influence. *For example, MAP's Right to Play Campaign initially set out to target local authorities in Norfolk, but following a partnership with Play England has expanded its focus to Play Sufficiency legislation at an England-wide level. The Warren's work seeking to influence suicide prevention measures on highways was initiated because of its proximity to the Humber Bridge, but has extended to working with the Department of Health and Social Care to design a national programme for marginalised young people.*

## Influencing approaches

In the Year One learning report, we identified the following models deployed by partners to pursue policy change:

- **Starting with an issue identified by young people**, then targeting existing policy structures and levers in which to embed young people's priorities for change;
- **Brokering direct relationships between young people and policymakers**, so that issues and solutions could be defined and developed as a collaborative effort;

- **Ensuring accountability in the policy implementation process**, working with or directly targeting policymakers so that young people's interests are observed and upheld.

In Year Two, many of the partners have been increasing and diversifying their influencing tactics and methods by which they share young people's perspectives. These include:

- **Leveraging existing relationships**, usually held by adults within the organisation, with policy makers, and linking the work with young people into these channels. *Leicestershire Cares has brokered meetings between its Joining Up Joining In group of young people and officials at Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council and Rutland County Council. MAP's project on homelessness draws on relationships between its caseworkers and external organisations such as Shelter and the Purfleet Trust.*
- **Mobilising networks of young people** with calls to action, such as writing letters to MPs, to share power and create grassroots pressure on policymakers and give campaigns a clear mandate. *Become's work with young people has benefited from its existing adult-led relationships and in turn the young people's engagement helps develop relationships across the organisation, demonstrating a mutually reinforcing approach. We Belong has a dual focus of movement building and more traditional dialogue with policy makers, each of which lend weight and credibility to the other.*
- **Seeking opportunities to showcase young people's priorities**, for example at national forums, sector conferences or networking events. *The Challenging Behaviour Foundation has leveraged relationships through the national strategy group it hosts, and made presentations about their project at various conferences run by NHS bodies and disability charities. MAP has developed a partnership Play England through which young people will contribute to the 10-year strategy plan to bring play sufficiency legislation to government. The Centre for Education and Youth's Young Expert Citizens project includes a matchmaking element for 1-to-1 to include with policymakers, demonstrating a more targeted model.*

The election period also highlighted contrasting approaches to policy engagement, particularly between **traditional representative democracy methods** (influencing elected officials, parliamentary processes, and government-led initiatives) and **participatory democracy models** (mobilising and making direct change in communities) that many partners emphasised in Year One.

A key point of discussion which arose during the learning sessions is the **balance between youth-led and youth-informed models**. Partners noted that purely youth-led approaches (whereby young people both make decisions on the policy agenda and lead on the implementation of influencing activities) can be challenging as young people cannot always manage entire projects or strategies on their own. In practice, young people may express their preferences or priorities, leaving adults to act on their behalf. Crucially, young people should have the choice to participate to the extent they feel comfortable. The focus of many of the organisations is on ensuring young voices are genuinely heard and their perspectives represented, even if adults take on the role of translating or championing their ideas. ***RECLAIM** have recently changed from being solely youth-led and now do not require young people themselves to lead the campaign even though they are the primarily impacted group, because the issues are very heavy. **We Belong** is also conducting a review of its youth-led model and whether this reflects the growing organisation.*

## Youth engagement and impact

Engaging young people remains central to all the partners. However, maintaining engagement over multi-year projects can be challenging. Many of the partners have employed **interactive methods to keep young people involved**, such as games, trips, field visits, and creative activities like co-creating communications and campaigning outputs.

When launching the fund, Blgrave Trust emphasised that achieving direct outcomes for young people was not the primary goal of funding. Nonetheless, **many partners view the process of working with young**

**people as equally important as the policy outcomes**. Several projects have explicit objectives to build young people's skills and confidence, nurturing leadership abilities to empower them as future changemakers. Regardless of the policy outcome, **normalising their involvement in policy discussions** and demonstrating to young people that their perspectives matter and they belong in decision-making spaces is a key component of many influencing approaches.

Partners reported positive growth among their young participants, including increased confidence in presenting ideas, expressing opinions, challenging decisions, and analysing policies. As well as equipping young people with valuable skills for future advocacy, **these skills also contribute to the immediate effectiveness of the projects** (for example when young people interact with policy makers in meetings).

## Communications tactics

Year Two has seen an increased focus amongst partners on producing content and communications collateral that raises awareness about young people's experiences. Showcasing personal stories is a powerful and emotive tool for both public engagement and advocacy. However, one challenge expressed by multiple partners is that the **styles and messages needed to reach policymakers differ significantly from those that engage young people and/ or mobilise support at the grassroots**. While young people favour creative, social media-friendly outputs, these may not resonate as effectively with traditional policymakers. Employing storytelling techniques adaptable across multiple platforms can help strike a balance between these audiences.

Some partners have highlighted the importance of **integrating storytelling with data** to maximise impact on policymakers. The challenge lies in ensuring stories are as credible, influential, and align with what target audiences perceive as meaningful evidence and data.

**Clarifying the purpose of different communication methods** and identifying who benefits from them is crucial. For example, the goal of

creating a film may be to support young people's self-expression, or to design something that will resonate with and influence decision makers. Understanding how different audiences engage with content is key to tailoring effective messages.

## The intersection with wider organisational infrastructure

For many partners, the involvement of young people in policy work has both drawn on and contributed to other areas of their organisations. One obvious area is where organisations draw on **established relationships with policymakers** and apply insights gained from other projects, to achieve impact. **The Challenging Behaviour Foundation** works with the local council and a local learning disability partnership board and have delivered training to involvement officers who work on the ground with local councils, social care services, and the service users, to ensure that they're including young people with additional communications and learning needs. CBF fed insights into the development of Kent County Council's most recent learning disability and autism strategy, making sure young people's voices and experiences are accounted for in this process.

Organisations that provide **advice and services to young people benefit from a two-way exchange**: insights from service delivery informs the policy work, while the policy initiatives encourage young people to engage and support advocacy efforts. **Become** has recruited young people from service users who are signposted to the policy group. **We Belong's** advice clinics are also an example of ensuring that policy ambitions are achieved through community engagement.

For some partners, **the involvement of young people in policy influencing has influenced wider organisational practices**. This may be youth voice and inclusion work in general, or the design and development of new programmes, as well as the ways young people are involved across the organisation.

## Partnerships and alliance-building

In Year Two, many of the partners have sought to extend the impact of their projects through partnerships, including those formed specifically for individual projects as well as longstanding organisational relationships that help promote and share project outcomes.

Not only do partnerships serve to **amplify the collective** voices of young people, collaborations with other organisations or alliances in the same sector can help shape practices which directly benefit young people. For example, **We Belong's** work has included information and training sessions for other organisations who may provide support to young migrants.



## 3. Common challenges and solutions

Through the group discussions and action learning sets\* held over the course of the year, we have heard about a number of common challenges and issues faced by the partners in delivering their projects and achieving influence. Many of these echo the challenges set out in the Year One learning report.

### Resource and capacity constraints

A number of partners have reported challenges with limited resources, capacity, and internal expertise to translate youth engagement into policy work. When projects launched in Year One recruitment challenges were common. Youth workers may face difficulties navigating the technical and complex nature of policy change, while those with a policy and campaigning track record may lack hands-on experience working with young people. This has remained an issue with organisations often relying on staff with transferable skills and the ability to upskill in post. Cuts to youth services and inadequate sector funding exacerbate this issue as there are limited budgets for training. Staffing churn is another common issue which disrupts relationships with young people and policymakers, making continuity and sustained impact difficult.

### Engaging and motivating young people in different contexts

Despite the interactive and creative methods deployed by many partners to engage young people, sustaining their engagement over

\*The action learning sets are private and confidential but at the end of each session each group identifies shareable takeaways.

multi-year projects remains a challenge. As projects evolve and new young people are recruited, maintaining a sense of community and using different engagement methods for different young people is key.

Frustration can arise if young people feel their contributions don't lead to tangible outcomes. Celebrating small wins and providing outlets for frustration, such as going on protests, can help keep participants motivated.

Partners also noted a challenge navigating the distinction between youth voice and young workers; there can often be blurred roles between youth participants or ambassadors, and young workers or paid representatives. Some partners warned that influence may diminish when young people transition into employment roles.

### Navigating uncertainty

Political uncertainty during the pre-election period made it difficult to secure firm commitments for policy change, while the post-election context has meant adjusting to new government objectives and cutting through political noise. Balancing short-term wins with the need to address larger systemic issues is a difficult balance, requiring patience and a long-term perspective which may be at odds with the tangible impacts which young people want to see to remain motivated.

Internal organisational change also presents uncertainty. Internal power dynamics and leadership transitions can disrupt team morale, collaboration, and stability. Participants told us that core values remain central during periods of organisational change is critical for maintaining stability and focus.

### Responding to community needs

Although their projects focus on influencing policy change, the partner organisations have a local or issues-based community whose needs and priorities they aim to serve. At times, a sharp focus on policy



impact can sit at odds with being adaptable and responsive to wider community need and adjacent issues which might affect minoritised or marginalised groups.

Balancing traditional advocacy and lobbying techniques with community power approaches which focus on grassroots mobilisation requires careful alignment to ensure both strategies are effective.

## Thinking ahead to project legacy

As we look ahead to the third year of the funding, many projects are nearing their final stages and considering questions around how learnings can be embedded at an organisational level. There may be a risk of some elements being co-opted without preserving the project's more fundamental aspirations.

Preserving and deepening relationships is another legacy objective, with some partners focusing on building local organising power, others cementing engagement with local and national policymakers, and others developing sector alliances to address shared challenges.

However, funding uncertainty makes it difficult to define the scope and ambitions for legacy, while rapid changes in the political and cultural context (from the aftermath of far-right riots of summer 2024 to the increasing cultural narratives around toxic masculinity) means it is tricky to predict the exact nature and need for policy work in the future.

# 4. Reflections on the learning programme

This final section reflects what we heard from participants on the learning programme itself, which content and activities they found useful in meetings, and how learning activities have contributed to impact. Year Three of the learning programme will be designed to reflect this feedback, with additional storytelling and communications support to reflect the completion of the projects and showcase successes.

## General content of meetings

Participants most highly value the action learning sets, thematic knowledge sharing, and informal networking opportunities in future meetings. They welcome the opportunity to learn about other organisations' work and network informally, with these aspects receiving consistently positive feedback. There is also interest in learning from external speakers and attending events beyond the cohort. While many participants are interested in peer-led activities or presentations by peers, the majority did not express interest or have capacity to present themselves.

Action learning sets received the most enthusiastic feedback, with participants appreciating the time and space to focus on specific challenges relating youth engagement, relationships with policymakers, and team dynamics. Most respondents reported having actionable takeaways and the format has been widely praised as a practical and effective learning tool.

## Learning goals and key questions

Participants are keen to enhance their skills in developing influencing strategies, communications, and network building. They also expressed

the desire to increase knowledge and understanding of national politics in the context of the election, local and devolved authorities' operations and challenges, and exploring effective community organising. Some participants voiced a desire to improve engagement with diverse young people (including SEND and those with safeguarding needs). Strengthening contingency planning in light of potential external cuts to youth services, and defining the legacy of projects, were also raised as goals by participants.

## Impact of the learning activities

The majority of participants reported that the meetings promoted them to reflect on methods for making policy changes and improving youth engagement, as well as personal skill development. Some also noted reflections on internal operations, though this was not a primary focus of the meetings.

## Annex A

# About the funded organisations and their work

## Become

Become's Gone Too Far campaign brings together a group of care-experienced young people to advocate for keeping children in care close to the people and places that matter most to them. 5-6 young people from across the UK have been consistently involved, participating in online meetings every 2-3 weeks and coming together for key events, such as a film screening in Parliament of a video they produced. The group is also undertaking activities such as a research trip to Stockport, deepening their understanding and connections to the issues they are campaigning on.

The campaign has fostered a supportive and trusting environment where the young participants have grown in confidence when sharing their care experiences and speaking to people in power. While the campaign topic was pre-determined before their recruitment (based on previous engagement with different young people), the group has played a significant role in shaping its execution, engaging in activities such as writing letters to MPs, which have directly resulted in meetings with key decision-makers. The group has developed a strong rhythm in delivering clear, compelling messages during meetings with politicians and built capacity to undertake media appearances and speaking engagements.

In terms of the scope of policy influence, the project has focused primarily on influencing national politicians to drive systemic change that all local authorities must implement. Young people have met with MPs and Ministers including Stuart Andrew, Minister for Youth and Equalities; Helen Hayes, Shadow Minister for Children and Young People;

and David Johnston, Minister for Children. Some of these meetings were secured through activities which the young people directly executed, while others came about as a result of Become's existing organisational relationships.

During the election period, Become coordinated an open letter signed by over 80 care-experienced young people, created a manifesto addressing their needs, and produced an accompanying video to amplify their message.

Become also has another ongoing campaign called #EndTheCareCliff, which highlights the need for a homelessness safety net for young people leaving care. Beyond these projects, young people have also supported Become's broader work, such as the APPG for Children with Care Experience on corporate parenting and contributing to consultations on advocacy for children in care.

## Challenging Behaviour Foundation

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation (CBF) continues to drive its What Matters to Me campaign, which works with young people who have severe or profound learning disabilities and are primarily nonverbal. The project has recruited 11 young people across Kent, Sussex, and southeast London, facilitated through partnerships with a children's hospice and a post-16 education provider. CBF also works with one young person individually in their home. Activities include one-to-one interactions in familiar settings, group engagement days bringing together young people from different environments, and focus groups involving family members and carers, with the young people present.

Small-scale influencing activities have included working with schools to transform outdoor spaces into sensory areas, offering direct benefits to the participants. CBF's policy focus also seeks to influence wider systems. They are working with local councils and learning disability partnership boards, delivering training to involvement officers to ensure young people with additional communication and learning needs are included in service design. Insights from the project informed Kent County

Council's most recent learning disability and autism strategy, addressing the gap where those with complex needs are often excluded. CBF has also presented at the Council for Disabled Children conference and the national strategy group meeting, broadening their influence. These efforts have aimed to ensure that the voices of young people with severe learning disabilities are not only heard but are actively shaping local and national policy conversations.

Young people have contributed in various ways to the project's final output, a multimedia report that highlights effective strategies for engaging young people with severe learning disabilities, influencing pathways, and insights on transitioning from children's to adult services. CBF has centred its influencing activities around various launch events for this multimedia report, from an event for participants and their families and local council representatives, to launch for MPs to share the campaign's findings.

## Centre for Education and Youth

CFEY's Young Expert Citizens project completed a second cohort this year. The young experts are all young people from East Sussex who have lived experience of navigating public services and systems, from the care system, to homelessness, to having neurodivergent needs in the education system. They received almost 120 applicants for 20 places with the interview process hearing lots of young people's stories about accessing support and the challenges they have faced. The training phase for the young experts focused on bringing the group together, teaching them how to do research, and how to do so safely and ethically. After training, young people were supported to go out and do 10 individual peer research projects.

As with last year, after conducting their peer research, the young people were then paired with a senior changemaker in the service or policy area they want to influence.

## Leicestershire Cares

Leicestershire Cares is engaging care-experienced young people with a peer research initiative that aims to effect change across three local authorities. The project has trained three cohorts of young people in basic research skills, equipping a total of 11 individuals, nine of whom regularly attend weekly sessions, engaging in discussions and exploring various research topics.

The project has sought to influence three local authorities - Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County, and Rutland - on the recognition of care experience as a protected characteristic. By engaging senior leaders and service managers, and facilitating occasional direct meetings between young people and council representatives, Leicestershire Cares has successfully contributed to these councils recognising care experience as a protected characteristic.

The young people have also worked on a film project to highlight the challenges faced by care leavers and raise awareness of being care-experienced and are working on a publication of their stories entitled 'My care Journey'

## Mancroft Advice Project (MAP)

MAP is working with young people in its youth clubs to advocate for accessible play spaces through the Right to Play campaign. Over the first year of the project, youth engagement fluctuated, but a dedicated group of 6-8 young people from the Kings Lynn and Thetford areas engaged during their weekly 2-3 hour MAP youth group sessions. This has since grown to over 30 young people from all over Norfolk working on the campaign.

As part of the campaign, young people visited local parks to assess accessibility barriers and travelled to Exeter and Colchester to see what accessible play can look like when it's done properly. They've also spoken to Leeds City Council, the first council in England to enact play

sufficiency legislation, to learn how councils can help make sure play spaces work for everyone, and worked with companies that design accessible play equipment. These activities have informed their work encouraging Norfolk County Council and other local authorities to prioritise accessibility by listening to the experiences of both able-bodied and disabled children. Norfolk County Council has since signed a charter for the Right to Play, and some of young people are also actively participating in local planning committees.

The campaign has also expanded nationally. MAP now has a seat on Play England's National Play Strategy committee, providing young people with a platform to influence national discussions on accessible play. Young representatives attended a Play England conference and later hosted a visit from the organisation's Chief Executive to discuss a 10-year strategy to improve play opportunities for young people everywhere.

## POMOC

POMOC's work centers on empowering young migrants through community organising and policy influencing, led by three young coordinators in Cambridge, Birmingham, and Liverpool. In

In Cambridge, the focus has been on a storytelling project with ESOL students at Cambridge Regional College under the theme 'Finding a Home in the UK'. Monthly events provide young migrants with a platform to share their experiences with renting and discuss common challenges, fostering a sense of collective identity and power. The sessions have included contributions from a City Council housing advice representative and external speakers from organizations like Citizens Advice, offering practical guidance alongside a space for storytelling.

Young people's stories will be summarised and showcased in a booklet addressing themes such as the meaning of home for young migrants and the barriers they face. This booklet will be distributed to policymakers and migrant communities across the UK, aiming

to amplify migrant voices and inspire systemic change, building on POMOC's previous successes in advocacy through storytelling.

## RECLAIM

RECLAIM's Young Policymakers project supports working-class young people in Wigan and Bolton to drive localised policy change. Two cohorts of 6–10 young people meet monthly for colearning sessions, fieldwork, and trips to inspire their policy goals. In the first year, participants explored a range of local issues and campaign priorities, while the second year has narrowed the focus to the future of high streets.

Participants have conducted surveys to gather insights into young people's experiences of high streets. They have used a mix of conventional and creative influencing approaches, from submitting evidence to the House of Lords Select Committees on the built environment and the future of high streets, to creating a short, animated video.

Field trips have served to deepen their understanding of the issues and inspire ideas. These included visits to several town centres in Greater Manchester, the Museum of Science and History, and Salford's Working-Class Library and Archive to learn about the experiences of minority groups such as Gypsy and Traveller communities.

RECLAIM has also partnered with OddArts to utilise legislative theatre, a creative method rooted in the Theatre of the Oppressed. This approach involves performing a play on an issue for a panel of policymakers, with audience members intervening, debating, and voting on solutions. This innovative engagement tool has helped young people push for policy change in dynamic and interactive ways.

## The Warren

The Warren is a youth-led organisation providing a range of services for young people in Hull. It is governed by an internal youth parliament

called 'The Thing.' This group meets fortnightly, with young people setting the agenda, chairing discussions, and voting on the direction of policy and campaigning activities.

Policy work focuses on three areas: working with National Highways to improve suicide prevention measures on bridges, collaborating with Humberside Police on a youth charter for Hull's diverse community, and the "Black Holes" project, which advocates for schools to recruit a governor who identifies as having a very poor experience of education.

The National Highways campaign has had notable success, resulting in a requirement for suicide prevention training for organisations working on bridges and inspiring a trauma-informed programme for care leavers by contractor Balfour Beatty. As a result of this work The Warren also has been working on influencing the suicide strategy led by the Mental Health Strategy Development Group, a regional public body. Representatives from The Warren have joined both the suicide prevention working group and a broader mental health strategy group as well as contributed to the suicide prevention strategy in the city. In partnership with another local organisation it secured £130,000 pounds from the government's Suicide Prevention Strategy Fund for a project representing the needs of the most vulnerable groups, particularly LGBTQ young people and neurodiverse young people. The Warren credits these developments to the original suicide prevention project and the support of Blaggrave Trust which gave the work credibility.

## We Belong

We Belong's #OutOfTheLoop campaign aims to raise awareness about the impact of rising Home Office fees on the lives and mental health of young migrants. Initially focused on ensuring the implementation of a shorter route to settlement (from ten years to five), the campaign evolved in 2023 when the government announced a 20% rise in visa fees. The campaign now focuses on advocating for a fee waiver, as many young migrants eligible for settlement cannot afford the £2,400+ application cost.

The campaign engages young people directly, offering information sessions on fee waivers and access to legal advice clinics. A parliamentary event in May 2024 brought together young people and cross-party MPs, co-hosted by Tim Loughton and Tim Farron, to raise awareness and share personal stories, aiming to ensure that young people feel heard while reframing their experiences as a systemic rather than individual issue.

Ahead of the General Election, We Belong launched a parliamentary and policy working group of young people to enhance their advocacy skills and influence campaign strategy. This included writing to MPs and helping to shape the campaign's direction.

We Belong has also built coalitions through training for sector organisations, aiming to raise awareness of settlement rule changes, encourage collaboration on the campaign, and increase referrals to its support services. By combining grassroots mobilisation, parliamentary advocacy, and sector-wide alliance building, We Belong continues to amplify the voices of young migrants while addressing community needs and driving systemic change.

## About Blgrave Trust

The Blgrave Trust works to bring lasting change to the lives of young people; investing in them as powerful forces for change and acting upon their right to be heard in pursuit of a fair and just society.

Blgrave has been practising a relational and trusting approach to partnership for many years – this continues to sit at the heart of how we fund. We treat our partners – young and old, grassroots and growing, or well-established charities – as equals. We approach those relationships in a spirit of humility, collaboration and mutual learning.

## About Common Futures

Common Futures is a think-and-do tank specialising in participatory research and engagement which supports and strengthens young people's role in local and national public life.

We work directly with young people to share their experiences, build dialogue and public leadership skills, and codesign policies and services which improve their lives. We also support organisations and institutions to work more effectively with young people, respond to their perspectives and priorities, and share learning with others.