

# Youth Led Research

Young Researchers are young people, aged 14 - 18, trained in professional, accredited research and analytical techniques. Their role is to investigate community problems and co-produce solutions with experts... they then sit back and watch the magic happen!

## BACKGROUND

In 2012, Dorset County Council commissioned a group of young people to lead on participatory research.

Since then, they have investigated topics such as: social isolation, aspirations, volunteering, life skills, employability, careers, bullying and health and happiness.

Last year, they received 2,758 responses from young people aged 11-18 across the county. This is 7% of Dorset's youth population and statistically relevant.

Having young people lead a participatory research process leads to: better results; clearer recommendations and greater insight into young people's lived experience. Something adults aren't quite able to grasp but still make decisions on.



## THE PROBLEMS

Getting lots of responses from young people on difficult topics is tough. But the more responses they get, the more clout the findings and recommendations have.

Across the UK, Participation People see young people continually asked for their views and opinions. So much so that return rates are dropping and "silly answers" to surveys and polls, more prevalent. What's worse is that decision makers asking for young people's opinions are terrible at feeding back what has changed as a result of the consultation.

Follow this logic through to voting and political engagement... we have young people asking themselves why they should bother if no one is



## THE SOLUTIONS

1. Get young people **involved in the entire process!** Even better, ask them to lead it!
2. Get your **feedback mechanisms** working before you start the consultation. Ask young people what would work.
3. **Manage young people's expectations.** For example, set recommendations out as actions to take. Where things are not possible, explain the reasons why.
4. Plan a way to **report** to them on progress for as long as your action plan lasts.
5. **Ask** young people what they want researched or **what they think the problems and issues are for young people.**
6. Use Participation People's **CLOSЯ tool** to keep young people updated and involved in your decision making

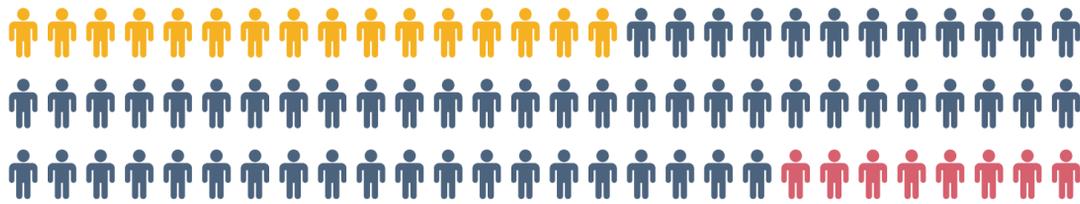


# 2,758 survey responses

Last year, 7% of Dorset's youth population responded to the Dorset Young Researchers call to action. This is the largest number of survey respondents and focus group participants to date.

Dorset is a HUGE county. It has over 42,000 young people aged 11-18 spread across 2,653 square kilometres. The success of this project is down to the following 5 things:

1. **Partnership working** with schools and Dorset County Council's teams.
2. **Interviewing, selecting, training and supporting** 24 Young Researchers from 12 schools.
3. Working with **Dorset Youth Council** and **Children in Care Council** to promote the survey, using social media and school assemblies.
4. **Targeting respondents from seldom heard groups** - 275 respondents who access Pupil Premium; 1,020 with a learning difficulty or disability; 30% of the children in care cohort took part.



● Pupil Premium ● Learning difficulty or disability ● Children in Care

# Social Value & Impact

Following surveys and focus groups, Young Researchers: clean the data; add weighting if needed and analyse it. They then work with experts to create recommendations for different audiences e.g. commissioners, politicians, schools, statutory services and voluntary sector.

They present this to as many decision makers as possible. They ask them for promises on what they will do: short, medium and long-term. The project then gets passed to Dorset Youth Council who scrutinise these commitments on behalf of young people.

1 month later, Dorset Youth Council send an Impact Survey asking for promise updates. They repeat this 6 months later. Data is collated and decision makers written to. Successfully implemented promises are showcased to young people through social media. Promises still to get off the starting block, are given a little push by senior decision makers...



● Consultation ● Analysis ● Presentation ● Follow up



The Participation People

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