

PARTICIPATION PEOPLE

IMPACT REPORT



2024-2025

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



Fourteen years ago, Participation People was born out of frustration — and, if I'm brutally honest, a lot of anger - borderline righteous rage.

Anger that young people were always consulted last.
Anger that decisions about their lives were already made, usually, without them.
Anger that “youth voices” too often meant adults listening politely, clapping occasionally, and changing nothing.

In 2024–2025, that frustration sharpened again.

Not because youth participation has become less important — but because the stakes are higher than they have ever been.

Young people today have more choice, more visibility, and more power to disengage than any generation before them. And increasingly, they are doing exactly that. They are leaving jobs, walking away from services, blocking brands, and opting out of systems that no longer feel relevant, safe, or worth their energy.

This year forced us to be honest.

Honest about what works.
Honest about what doesn't.
Honest about where participation slips into posturing and performance, instead of persuasion, influence and power.

So we made deliberate, sometimes uncomfortable and difficult choices.

We worked with fewer young people — but more deeply and more meaningfully.

We delivered fewer projects — but with greater influence and accessibility.

We said “no” more often — to protect young people, our team, and the integrity of the work.

And we doubled down on what matters most:

- Paid, ethical participation
- Real decision-making power
- And young people involved early enough to change outcomes

What you'll read in this report is not a highlight reel. It is a reflection of a year where we chose clarity over comfort.

Participation People exists to build youth-powered systems — together with young people, not on their behalf. Year 14 reaffirmed why this matters, and why we will keep pushing for more.

Because investing in young people is not about future-proofing alone.

It's about doing better, about innovating, right here, right now - always together.


CEO, FOUNDER, KEYNOTE SPEAKER

LESS VOLUME. MORE INFLUENCE.

Young people are opting out.
Out of services that don't feel safe.
Out of jobs that don't feel worth it.
Out of brands, systems and institutions that ask for their views — but don't change.



National evidence now confirms what young people have been telling us directly:



Almost half of young people feel their voice does not matter



Only 40% say they are likely to vote



One in three don't know how to influence decisions locally



Loneliness is rising, despite constant digital connection



Youth infrastructure has collapsed — with a 73% cut in youth facility spending since 2010



THIS IS NOT A YOUTH PROBLEM

It is a leadership, trust and relevance problem. And we, us adults, are responsible.

Year 14 was the year Participation People chose clarity over comfort.

“IF NOTHING CHANGES, WHY WOULD I STAY?”

— Sirad, 16, she/her, South West London, Young Consultant

WHAT WE CHANGED (ON PURPOSE)

IN 2024-2025, WE DELIBERATELY DID LESS - AND DID IT BETTER

We moved away from:

- High-volume, extractive engagement
- Long-term advisory panels that privilege time, academic attainment, confidence and access
- Youth voice activity that sits at the edges of power

And doubled down on:



**Youth-powered diagnostics
that shape decisions early**



**Paid, time-bound
participation with real
influence**



**System-level work where
young people sit closer to
power**

**THIS WAS NOT A
CONTRACTION.
IT WAS MATURITY.**



**“I REALISED MY VOICE ACTUALLY
CHANGED THINGS. NOT JUST IN
THE ROOM – BUT IN THE
DECISIONS THAT FOLLOWED.”**

— Chloe, 19, she/her, South East
London, Young Consultant

HEADLINE STATS

100% OF YOUNG CONSULTANTS

paid and incentivised ethically

contributed to

3 GLOBAL RESOURCES & 4 RESEARCH PAPERS

25 KEYNOTES

co-hosted with young people

32 ORGANISATION-WIDE DIAGNOSTICS

delivered nationally

celebrated

15 YEARS OF PARTICIPATION PEOPLE!

21 YOUTH HACKS

delivered with 84 young people & 27 professionals

launched our new

PAY AS YOU GO OFFER

THE OUTCOMES

Fewer projects

Greater depth

Higher stakes

Trauma-informed

Co-designed with young people

Longer-term system change





THE IMPACT

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



Fewer young people engaged overall, by design, to facilitate quality engagement



Youth involvement focused on decision points, not decoration



Clear feedback loops showing what changed because of them (and what couldn't)

FOR ORGANISATIONS & SYSTEMS



Worked across corporate, statutory and voluntary sectors



Influenced national safeguarding systems, not just local delivery



Supported organisations to change priorities, strategy and governance



Shifted youth voice from consultation to influence



FOR US AS A COMPANY



Significant global reach, spreading youth voice to Africa and across Europe



High-impact, qualitative work, renewing our sense of purpose and mission



Greater alignment of how we support and platform our young people



OUR STRATEGIC FOCUS

Year 14 prioritised where youth voice carries the greatest risk — and reward:

- Safeguarding & statutory systems
- Digital safety and corporate decision-making
- Health, identity and lived experience of governance
- Early-career talent, trust and workforce sustainability



**WE CHOSE INFLUENCE OVER VISIBILITY.
POWER OVER PERFORMANCE.**

WHY THIS MATTERS

When youth engagement is weak:

Trust erodes
Services lose relevance
Talent walks away
Risk increases

When youth participation is real:

Decisions improve
Safeguarding strengthens
Brands become credible
Systems last longer

“WHEN ADULTS ACTUALLY LISTENED – AND THEN DID SOMETHING – IT CHANGED HOW I SAW MYSELF.”

– Jeremy, 19, he/him,
Southampton, Young Consultant

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT



REWIRING SAFEGUARDING SYSTEMS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

North West Improvement Programme (NWIP)

Sector: Statutory / Multi-agency safeguarding

Role: System design, diagnostics, youth leadership

Why it matters: Safeguarding systems cannot protect young people without listening to them

Across the North West, safeguarding partnerships are under increasing pressure to evidence meaningful participation — not just consultation, but influence.

Rather than placing young people on the edges of decision-making, we worked with NWIP to:

- Co-design youth engagement diagnostics across 24 safeguarding partnerships
- Support multi-agency leaders to hear youth insight before decisions are made
- Establish the Safeguarding Voices Leadership Network, positioning young people as system influencers, not observers

This work required us to sit in discomfort — alongside senior leaders — and ask difficult questions about power, accountability and trust.

Where is this taking us next?

Year 2 of NWIP will deepen this work — embedding baby, child, youth and family leadership into safeguarding governance, not as an add-on or a youth voices moment, but as standard practice, re-designing the system, with young people and families. NWIP represents Participation People moving beyond delivery into system shaping.



“This work is about achieving real change—moving beyond tokenism—and progressing at a pace that enables sustainable and meaningful transformation for our families.”



– Emma Ford, North West Safeguarding Partnership Director

[Explore the full case study](#)

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

YOUTH POWER AT CORPORATE SPEED



Vodafone Group – Digital Safety & BIG Hack

Sector: Corporate / Digital / Global

Role: Youth Hackathons, co-creation, strategy insight

Why it matters: Digital decisions made without young people carry real risk

Our work with a major global telecommunications organisation, Vodafone Group, tested whether youth engagement could happen at pace, at scale, and without becoming extractive or performative.

Through the Digital Pact BIG Hack, Participation People designed and delivered a series of youth hackathons that:

- Replaced year-long advisory panels with time-bound, paid, outcome-focused youth engagement activities
- Brought young people into live problem-solving with senior professionals
- Generated insight that directly informed digital safety thinking and priorities

Young people were not asked to “react” to pre-made decisions. They were asked to design, challenge and stress-test them.

Where is this taking us next?

This work has shaped Participation People’s growing focus on:

- Youth-powered innovation
- Digital safety and regulation
- Corporate risk, trust and early-career talent strategy



“They didn’t just ask what we thought. They actually changed things because of it.”

– Kai, 17, they/them, Highlands, Scotland, Young Consultant



[Explore the full case study](#)

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

FROM LIVED EXPERIENCE TO STRATEGIC CHANGE

CoppaFeel! Youth Network

Sector: Voluntary / Health / Inclusion

Role: Youth network design, strategy input, ethical participation

Why it matters: Health organisations cannot afford to get youth voice wrong

CoppaFeel! has long been recognised for centring young people in its work. Participation People's role was not to start from scratch — but to strengthen, protect and evolve that approach with young people, at the centre.

Recruiting to and working with CoppaFeel!'s Youth Network, we focused on:

- Ensuring youth engagement is inclusive, intersectional and trauma-informed
- Moving young people from content contributors to opt-in strategic influencers
- Protecting young people from burnout, overexposure, consultation fatigue and unpaid labour

This work directly informed:

- Brand positioning and engagement strategy
- Organisational thinking around representation and inclusion
- How youth voice was supported internally

Where is this taking us next?

This work informs our growing advisory role with charities navigating:

- Lived experience governance
- Youth burnout and exploitative extraction
- Funder expectations vs ethical delivery



“Being paid and trusted made it feel real. It wasn't just volunteering for adults' ideas.”



— **Abigail**, 19, she/her, Yorkshire, Young Consultant

[Explore the full case study](#)



YOUTH-POWERED WORK DOES NOT NEED TO BE LOUDER.

It needs to be earlier, braver and closer to power.

Participation People exists to help organisations:

- Listen before decisions are made
- Act visibly on what they hear, regularly
- Share power, not just insight

Year 14 showed what happens when companies take that seriously.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

- More system-level diagnostics
- More youth leadership within governance
- More work where youth trust, safety and credibility are on the line
- Fewer projects that compromise young people, or this work

**This is not youth engagement as usual.
This is youth-powered system change.**



READY TO LEVEL UP?

Want to strengthen your youth engagement and level up your organisation with youth insights?

Contact us today and let us help you make a difference.

Email: hello@participationpeople.com





**LET'S BUILD A
BRIGHTER,
MORE
INCLUSIVE
FUTURE**

TOGETHER.