

THE
FUTURE
OF
SHEFFIELD
FOR
YOUNG
PEOPLE

A CITY POWERED BY YOUTH

INTRODUCTION

Sheffield is a city built on collective effort: from steel that changed the world to the creativity, resilience and solidarity that continues to shape our communities today.

The future of this city will be defined by how we treat and support its young people - and collective effort is critical.

Right now, we face a choice — to continue with business as usual, or to come together around a shared ambition that every child and young person in Sheffield can thrive.

This is our starting point. It is not another report to gather dust.

It is a call to action: to the youth sector, to schools and universities, to health and social care, to employers and businesses, to funders and civic leaders and above all, to young people themselves.

We want Sheffield to be known as the city that chooses to invest in its next generation, with courage and imagination.

Through the Sheffield Youth Alliance we are building a new way of working: pooling resources, amplifying youth voice, opening doors to opportunity, and demanding better from ourselves and each other.

Together we can create a city where no young person goes hungry, where every young person has someone to turn to, and where young people's creativity, skills and leadership are celebrated and supported.

However, we know words are easy and will not be enough. We also know we've been here before.

Change must be lived and felt. We want to see this change in the opportunities created; in the spaces opened up; in the fairness of our systems.

This is the start of a long-term commitment, and it will only succeed if we act together.

So this is our invitation: join us.

Whether you are a young person, a parent, a youth worker, a business leader, a teacher, a funder or a councillor - there is a role for you in building the future of Sheffield for young people.

Let's make ours a city that is powered by young people.

THE FUTURE IS COLLABORATION

We can't do this alone - the only way to meet our collective ambitions for Sheffield is to do it together.

Why Sheffield Youth Alliance?

Following three open meetings in late 2024, over 50 youth sector representatives agreed to form the SYA to help local organisations connect, collaborate, and prepare for the National Youth Strategy.

Who's Involved?

A volunteer Steering Group was formed to guide the early stages. Members include representatives from Saalik Youth, Mettle, Sheffield Futures, StreetGames, SAYiT, Sheffield City Council Youth Services, Voluntary Action Sheffield, and Spectrum Gaming

What's Been Done?

A review of youth work in Sheffield was conducted, involving 57 participants. Five reports were produced in May 2025 including a framework, reflections, and an action plan.

A draft vision, mission, and values were created to guide the SYA's work - which have informed this document.

We now meet together, in person and online, to explore work together and delivery on our shared ambitions - our focus will now be on making our 5 Big Asks a reality.

Our Vision:

Driving collective change and innovation in Sheffield's youth sector.

Our Mission:

To support high-quality youth work, develop young people's life skills, and build a more inclusive community.

FIVE BIG ASKS

We want your help to make Sheffield the city where...

1. Young people shape the future

Sheffield is known nationally as a place where young people genuinely share power because:

- They are at the forefront of shaping policy locally, regionally and nationally
- Authentic intergenerational decision-making is embedded, with young people alongside civic, business and community leaders
- Sheffield is investing in youth-led innovation, voice and influence across the city

2. Wellbeing is everyone's right

Health, happiness and safety are non-negotiable foundations for all children and young people because:

- Safe, inclusive, accessible spaces are available across the city, co-designed with young people
- Early, preventative mental health and wellbeing support is expanded and rooted in trusted relationships
- Sheffield nurtures joy, fun and belonging – recognising that being young should be exciting, not exhausting

3. Opportunities are open to everyone

Every young person can find and follow the opportunities that matter to them – no barriers, no closed doors because:

- Clear, accessible pathways into education, training, employment and entrepreneurship are available to all.
- Sheffield grows its youth sector workforce – offering jobs, apprenticeships and professional pathways in youth work
- Opportunities in culture, sport, digital, climate action and civic leadership are visible, accessible and inclusive

FIVE BIG ASKS

4. Collaboration drives creativity & change

Sheffield is recognised across the UK as a hub of collaboration, innovation and shared learning in youth work because:

- The Sheffield Youth Alliance is strengthened as the space where partners solve shared problems and unlock collective resources
- Innovation in youth work practice is supported nurtured and invested in, drawing on Sheffield's creativity and spirit of experimentation
- Sheffield's bold, energetic and connected approach is celebrated and shared as a model of good practice

5. Justice & equality are lived realities

Every young person is valued, included and celebrated – no matter who they are or where they come from because:

- Youth-led social action is supported, with young people driving our city's work on social and climate justice
- Inequalities are tackled head-on – addressing poverty, racism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia and all forms of discrimination
- Sheffield builds a culture that is inclusive and celebratory – from a visible LGBTQ+ scene to spaces where every identity and community feels at home

In the coming months we'll be working to create action plans against each of the big asks - defining exactly what we want to see happen and who can help make it a reality.

OUR CITY

Across Sheffield leaders, groups, organisations and institutions are mobilising behind an ambitious vision for the future = Sheffield City Goals sets out six stories we want to tell about the city in 2035, and the goals that will help us get there.

All 6 stories, and all 18 goals, directly relate to young people's experiences of Sheffield and support their role in making Sheffield a better place for us all:

- **A creative & entrepreneurial Sheffield** - where we all have opportunities to invent, make, create and build in ways that grow shared prosperity, create high-quality jobs and enrich our communities and ourselves.
- **A green and resilient Sheffield** - where we all act urgently on the climate and environmental crisis, prepare for a changing future, and prioritise the health and wellbeing of our city's people and nature.
- **A Sheffield of Thriving Communities** - where we all belong to welcoming communities that care for one another, help us live safe and fulfilling lives and share equitably in the city's success.
- **A connected Sheffield** - where we all have opportunities to form lasting, positive relationships in our neighbourhoods and across the city, through technology, great transport and common causes.
- **A caring and safe Sheffield** - where all our voices are heard and acted on equally, and we feel the respect and celebration of each other's histories, heritage and cultures across the city.
- **A Sheffield for all generations** - where all generations can flourish today while remaining hopeful about the future, free from poverty and oppression and regardless of background.

We fully support and embrace these goals, and their commitment to centering the lived experiences and voices of communities across Sheffield, including children and young people.

OUR CITY

Alongside the City Goals, Sheffield is thinking ambitiously about young people and communities are shaping the city - through arts and culture, sport and leisure, education and research.

Sheffield Council's new Communities Strategy will be key:

“At the heart of the strategy is collaboration – a commitment to working with communities, not just for them. This means involving local people and organisations in shaping decisions, designing services, and delivering change. It recognises that communities are experts in their own lives and should be equal partners in the process.”

An opportunity for a renewed relationship across the public and VCSE sectors, and a commitment to sharing power, is one we must all embrace and support.

We know the challenges we have to face - the economic, social and political barriers which block our path - but we will not be defined by them.

As a sector, we are committed to working together to support delivery of the city goals, and ensure that young people are driving change.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE WANT

We know and understand the experiences of young people in Sheffield - we see it in our work every day, in our engagement with young people and through our ongoing commitment to ensure that our own work, and work across the city, is shaped by their experiences and voices.

We've also consulted with young people. A lot.

The themes across formal engagement (e.g. surveys) and our ongoing informal engagement with young people are consistent, and reflect national trends.

Young people tell us they are concerned about:

- Isolation and inclusion
- Mental health and loneliness
- Safety and security
- Access to support
- Access to activities, safe, warm spaces, parks and youth service provision

Young people also tell us that they want to play a bigger part in shaping Sheffield - from their own communities to the arts and culture offer.

As a sector, across public and VCSE, we haven't always turned this information into action - and critically collective action.

We also know we need to do more to reach everyone in Sheffield, and ensure that our services, and wider services across Sheffield, reflect the needs and ambitions of all young people.

Our commitment is to:

1. Be clear - on what we know and understand, and share it
2. Be aware - of our gaps (in data and practice), and work to address them
3. Be action-focused - use what we know and what we don't to make things happen
4. Be proactive - on inclusion, and seek to ensure our services, and our work together, is for everyone
5. Share our power - work towards a commitment to ensuring all young people can shape our work, and the city as a whole

A SHARED STRATEGY

In 2026 we will launch a new Youth Work Strategy, in partnership with Sheffield City Council.

This will set a clear, long-term direction for youth work in the city, backed by collective accountability and shared learning.

The strategy will be built on strong foundations, building trust, understanding and sharing power and a commitment to acting differently together.

The strategy will:

- **Set citywide ambitions for high-quality, inclusive youth work**
- **Put young people at the heart of decision-making as partners and leaders**
- **Support us to grow and champion the sector that supports young people**
- **Encourage us to collaborate effectively with shared data, insight and evaluation**

With a new National Youth Strategy and opportunities for support and investment in our young people across government, this will be a critical step towards realising our shared ambitions.

A SHARED STRATEGY

Commitment from Sheffield City Council

Sheffield Council has committed to supporting this strategy and working towards delivering our shared ambitions for the city, recognising that youth work thrives when it is rooted in communities, led by expertise, and shaped by lived experience. This is not a top-down model, it is a shared civic project.

The role of Sheffield Youth Alliance

SYA will continue to create space with not over others, with a focus on:

- Convening partners and drive collaboration
- Supporting sector-led innovation and workforce development
- Holding ourselves – and the city – to account for progress
- Championing young people’s voice, leadership and lived experience

Together, we are building the strategy Sheffield’s young people deserve – and a future they can feel and trust.

The plan and timeline:

- November 2025: Needs analysis, asset mapping complete
- December 2025: Further engagement with local, regional and national partners
- January 2026: Strategy published
- From 2026 onwards: Collective implementation across the city

GET INVOLVED

We want to hear from you, and we'd love you to join us.

If you work in the sector, have a passion for children and young people, or feel you can help us to make Sheffield a great place for young people, then Sheffield Youth Alliance is for you.

You can find out more at our website - sheffieldyouthalliance.co.uk

Sheffield

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