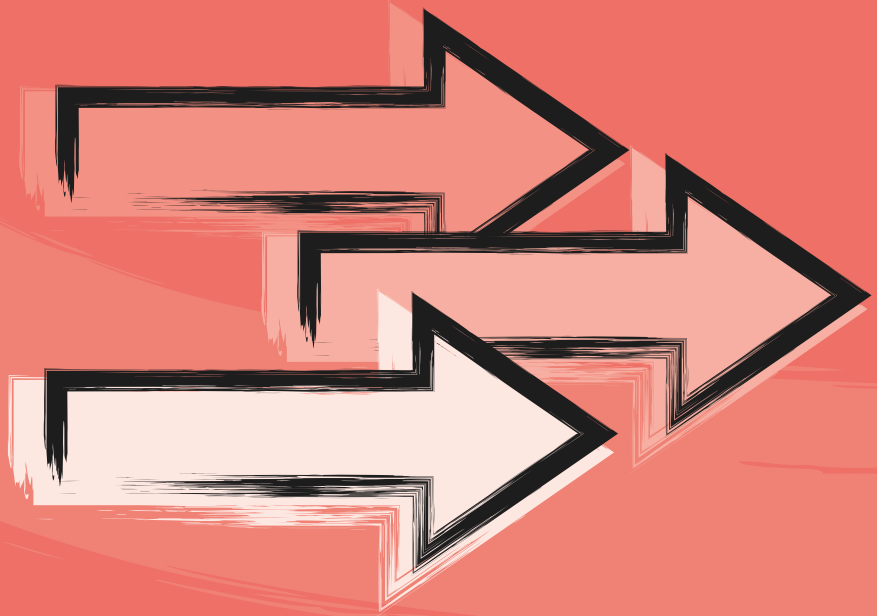
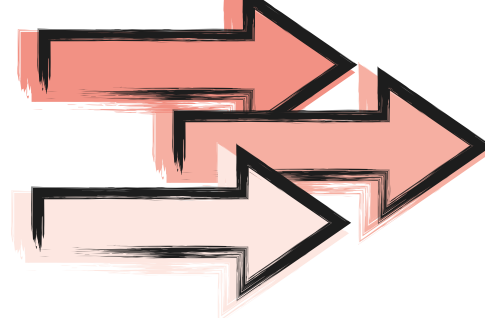


# My future: building hope and opportunity



From evidence to impact:  
The Good Childhood Report 2025 policy  
recommendations for **local government**

**The  
Children's  
Society**



# My future

**Wellbeing is shaped by more than how we feel day to day. It also depends on whether we can look ahead and see a future that feels possible. Increasingly, young people tell us they cannot. Money worries, housing that feels out of reach, and the news of global crises can make 'what next?' feel uncertain or bleak.**

The **Good Childhood Report 2025** found that the most important issue for young people's future is simply having somewhere to live. That is not a luxury – it is the foundation for everything else.

When that stability is missing, the effects show up fast. We see it in wellbeing, in how hard it is to stay switched on at school or college, in the struggle to take steps into work, and in the feeling that getting involved locally won't change much anyway.

As councillors, you can help turn that around by making support and opportunities easier to find and easier to use, and by bringing young people in early, while decisions are still being shaped.

## What the Good Childhood Report shows:

- When we ask young people what matters most for their future, they talk about the basics: a stable home, not luxuries.
- We are hearing more uncertainty about what comes next. For many, that links back to poverty, inequality, and the wider crises young people are growing up alongside.
- More young people are telling us they do not feel listened to. They don't believe their voice carries weight, and some think speaking up will not change anything.
- **Hope and agency are not 'nice to haves'. They protect wellbeing. When young people feel they have some control over their lives – and that adults will take them seriously – they cope better with stress and setbacks.**

## What young people say

Young people told us they are carrying a lot. They worry about what's coming next, and for many that uncertainty sits in the background most days.

This doesn't mean they've given up. Many want to help shape a better world, but the frustration is that they often feel they're not taken seriously, and that consultation can end up feeling like a tick box exercise.

**"Despite the fact young people don't have much power, they still want to change things in society." Young person**

Young people are clear: they want to be involved while decisions are still taking shape, not after they've been made. And if you ask for their time and opinions, they want to see what happens next.

But they are not unrealistic. Not everything is possible, and sometimes difficult decisions sometimes have to be made. When that happens, they want adults and decision-makers to be honest about it.

**When they talk about 'opportunities', they mean practical ones too; chances to build skills and confidence and to see there are different ways to succeed.**

## What professionals say

Professionals told us they are supporting a growing number of children and young people who feel hopeless about the future. Many linked this to a growing gap between young people's expectations and their lived experience. They described **children seeing their families work hard yet still struggle, leading to questions about whether effort really leads to stability or success.**

They also pointed to the contrast between online aspiration and everyday reality. Young people compare themselves to influencers living idealised lives while witnessing real hardship in their own communities.

Others raised concern that adults sometimes dismiss or restrict the spaces where young people find hope, for example, in online spaces or in activism, rather than harnessing the positive aspects.

## Recommendations

### Fund life skills programmes

Life skills build resilience, confidence and readiness for adulthood, helping young people manage practical and emotional challenges.

- **How:** ensure there is a consistent life skills offer delivered through the settings young people already use, with content co-designed with young people.
- **What can councillors do?** Push for life skills to be a funded strand within local wellbeing and prevention priorities.

### Create routes for youth influence

When young people shape decisions, they feel ownership and belonging in their communities, strengthening confidence and hope.

- **How:** put in place clear, representative routes for youth influence within the council and build youth participation into major local plans and programmes when they begin
- **What can councillors do?** Set expectations that youth participation happens early and is not tokenistic. Ask for a clear 'you said, we did' response each time young people are consulted. Use your role to open doors for youth voice in your ward and within council structures.

### Promote a range of pathways to success

Narrow definitions of success can leave young people feeling they do not belong or cannot achieve. Recognising diverse skills and ambitions widens hope and opportunity.

- **How:** work with schools, careers services, local employers and where relevant, Strategic Mayoral Authorities, to raise the profile of vocational routes alongside academic pathways.
- **What can councillors do?** Ask what routes are being actively promoted to young people. Encourage the council

and partners to celebrate all types of achievements and ensure pathways are accessible.

### Embed opportunity and hope in local wellbeing strategies

Hope must be built through real change, not words without action. Embedding hope means making progress and opportunity visible.

- **How:** build measures of hope into local wellbeing frameworks and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).
- **What can councillors do?** Scrutinise whether wellbeing strategies include tangible actions and how progress is being tracked. Ask how young people can see and feel the changes locally, and what will be done if indicators worsen.

**Did you know?** We're campaigning for a national wellbeing measurement. You can find out more, including how you can support, on the **Our Wellbeing, Our Voice** Campaign website, or by searching "Our Wellbeing Our Voice".

### Why this matters

Councillors' decisions do not just shape services. They influence opportunity and communities. **This is reflected in the stories we share as adults about our childhood, and it will be for the next generation too.**

This document is clear about what young people say they need to feel hopeful about their future: stability, genuine opportunity and a real say in decisions that affect their lives. That means focusing on the foundations, housing and security, routes into skills and work, and support that is easy to find and joined up.

Councillors cannot solve poverty, the housing crisis or fix national pressures on their own. But you can make a real difference to how those pressures are felt locally: through joined up services and commissioning, genuine consultation and co-production, supporting education to nurture young people's talent and creativity.

If the levers are used effectively, hope becomes something tangible, and that shows up later in the confidence, safety and opportunities of the next generation.

## **Teenagers' needs are being ignored, with those who face abuse, exploitation or neglect only receiving help at crisis point.**

We reach teenagers where they are to tackle the struggles they face today, providing complete support that's specific to them, and challenging the government to deliver policies that will continue to protect them. Because a future of hope and happiness belongs to every young person.

## **Together, we can set a path to a good childhood.**



**Scan here to download and  
view The Good Childhood  
Report 2025 publications.**

For further information or advice on how to implement these actions in your council, please contact **Regional Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Georgia Power**, at Email: **[georgia.power@childrenssociety.org.uk](mailto:georgia.power@childrenssociety.org.uk)**.

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