

My place: creating safe and supportive spaces



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

**The
Children's
Society**

My place

A sense of belonging and connection is central to good wellbeing, but too many young people report feeling isolated in the places they live.

The **Good Childhood Report 2025** found families report the cost of living is the most significant barrier to opportunity, with crime the second biggest societal concern. As youth provision declines and public spaces feel less welcoming, children lose access to both physical safety and emotional connection.

When supported by national government, local government can drive this change: restoring youth spaces, supporting trusted adults, and building communities where every child feels they belong.

What the Good Childhood Report shows

- 37% of parents and carers struggled to afford out-of-school activities in the past year.
- Nearly half of children said that a lack of money had stopped them doing something they wanted to in the last six months.
- Crime is the second biggest societal worry for children, with 38% concerned about it.
- The reduction in youth provision and informal spaces has left many young people feeling disconnected from their communities.
- Cost, accessibility, and a lack of local information remain major barriers to participation.

What young people say

Young people spoke about feeling isolated from their communities and how that sense of disconnection affects their wellbeing. Many want to be active and involved locally, but said opportunities are scarce.

They also told us that strong, supportive relationships with trusted adults are essential to good wellbeing. They felt that role models, especially those from their own communities, can help build trust and connection.

“A lot more [were] available a few years ago but they are not visible as much anymore. People don't seem to be talking about them as much.”

Young person

They were worried about the lack of safe spaces to socialise. **A safe space, they said, means “knowing you are welcome, and you don't have to leave”**. For some, safety is not just about physical protection, but about acceptance and belonging. Parks, for example, can feel unsafe for teenagers who report being treated as a nuisance or constantly told to move on, yet have nowhere to move on to.

Cost was another barrier.

“If they can't afford things, it also means they'll miss out on opportunities, and will feel left out ... The more a person socialises the better they feel, and they can share their feelings, but if they haven't got that opportunity because they can't afford it ... ”

Young person

Finally, young people also said it is hard to find out where services and activities exist. While they are told to spend less time on their phones, many said there are few positive alternatives.

What professionals say

Professionals we spoke to highlighted that **the loss of universal and early support services has left many families spiralling to crisis point** without help. Schools are increasingly expected to fill the gap but are often under-resourced. This creates additional risk and barriers for children who are not regularly attending a school setting. The lack of dedicated spaces for young people contributes to low wellbeing, particularly in young people who also feel excluded from public areas in their communities.

They also described the loss of everyday interactions between young people and a wide range of adults who could offer informal support. Trusted adults, such as youth workers, sports coaches and librarians are rapidly disappearing due to the loss of non-statutory services.



Recommendations

Map and restore local youth provision

Many communities have lost accessible youth services, leaving young people without safe spaces to go.

- **How:** map what provision exists in the local area, including provision the council doesn't directly commission or deliver. Use available council levers to address gaps, including youth service funding. Where appropriate, you may also want to consider developer contributions such as the **Community Infrastructure Levy Section 106 funding**, to support facilities.
- **What can councillors do?** Request an up-to-date youth provision map and ensure the council is discharging its duties under Section 507B of the Education Act.

Did you know? **Section 507B of the Education Act** already requires local authorities to do this. You may want to ask your council to explain how it's discharged its duties under the Act.

Designate and protect youth-friendly public spaces

Young people need welcoming places where they can meet without being treated as a problem.

- **How:** use planning, estates, and community safety arrangements to promote youth-friendly spaces with a focus on safety and inclusion, rather than displacement.
- **What can councillors do?** Ensure young people are involved early in design and local safety planning. Ask to see how their input has changed the final plan. Challenge approaches that simply move young people on without addressing underlying issues.

Support community-based trusted adults

Trusted adults provide support and guidance that formal services often struggle to offer when trust is low.

- **How:** build access to trusted adults into the everyday places young people already use through mentoring, outreach and peer support. Ensure consistent supervision and safeguarding routes are embedded.

■ What can councillors do?

Advocate for sustained support for mentoring or outreach offers and ask whether provision reflects the communities it serves (including diverse and relatable role models). Seek regular updates on reach and accessibility: who is being engaged, who is not, and what is being done about it?

What works?

Time for young people, Newham, offers emotional wellbeing support for young people in Newham, East London, as well as support for parents and carers.

Young people choose what support they access and when – no waiting list, appointment, or referral needed.

Trained professionals help young people navigate challenges such as managing difficult feelings, finding a sense of belonging in the community, planning for or questions about their future, or other issues they face today.

Embedded in the local community, Time for young people provides young people with a space that is theirs, where they can press pause, take a moment, and get support.

Why this matters

Where young people live is not just a backdrop to their lives. It shapes whether they feel safe, welcome and connected, or isolated and 'in the way'. When there are few affordable activities and public spaces feel hostile, young people do not simply have less to do. They lose everyday places where friendships form.

Trusted adults notice when something is going wrong, and small problems can be picked up before they become crises. That loss of connection shows up in young people's wellbeing, but it also shows up in how communities function, whether that's more tension in public spaces, weaker trust between generations or fewer positive routes for young people to spend time.

Investing in safe spaces, accessible activities, and trusted adults should not be seen as an optional extra, but as a preventative approach that strengthens community relations and reduces demand later on.

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.



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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**.

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