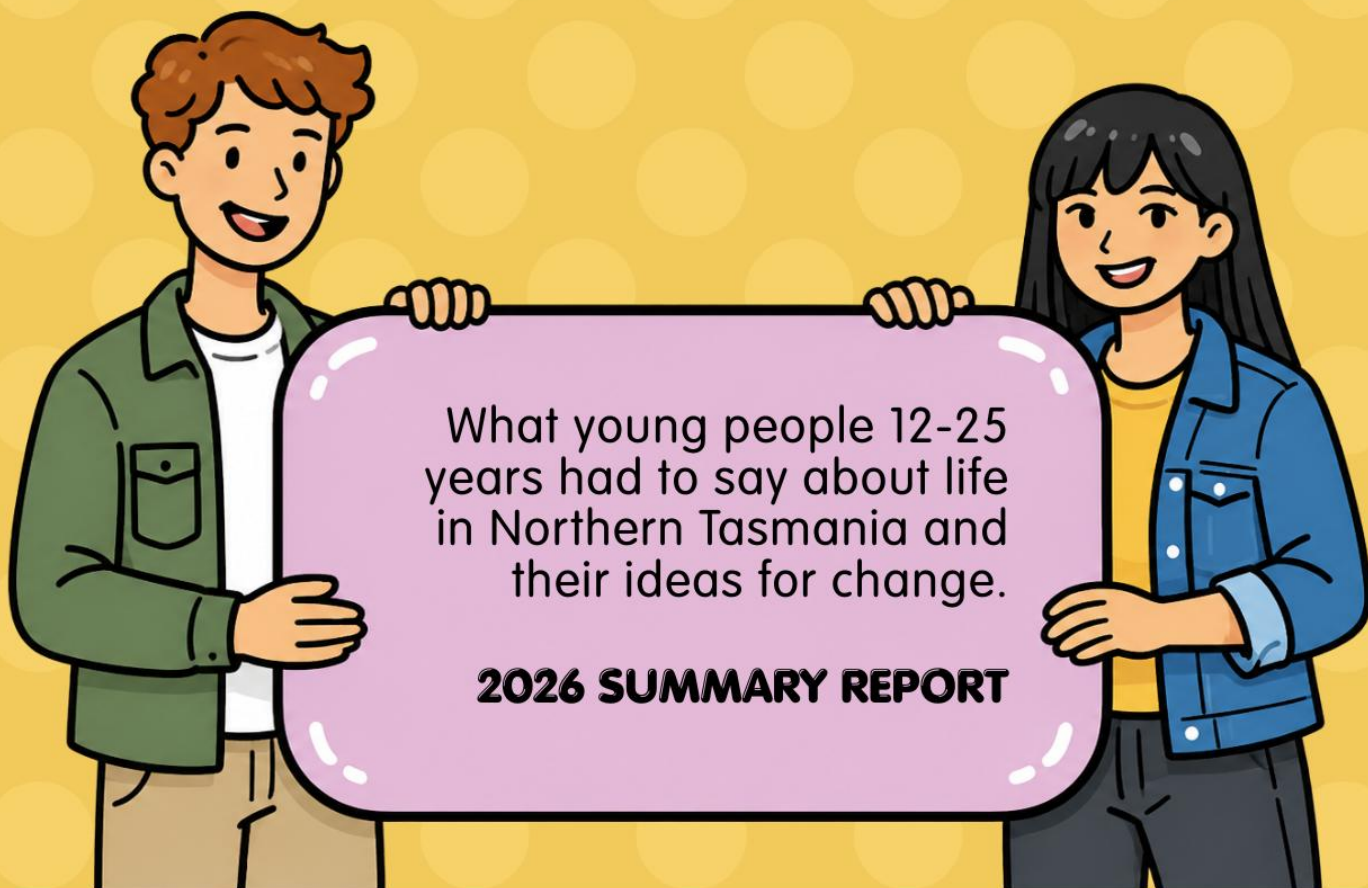


TASMANIAN YOUTH FORUM

NORTH REGIONAL ROADSHOW



What young people 12-25
years had to say about life
in Northern Tasmania and
their ideas for change.

2026 SUMMARY REPORT

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Report prepared July 2026

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Palawa/Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the original owners of Lutruwita/Tasmania and recognise their continuing connection to the land, sea, sky and waterways. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community of today.



Executive Summary

The Tasmanian Youth Forum (TYF) North Regional Roadshow was held at George Town Memorial Hall on 27 March 2026, bringing together 60 young people from across Northern Tasmania. The forum gave young people an opportunity to share what it is like to live in the North, identify the issues affecting them, and develop solutions to improve outcomes for young people and their communities.

Young people described strong relationships with family and friends as central to their sense of belonging. Community events, outdoor spaces and the natural environment, free shared public spaces, sporting facilities and local activities also helped young people feel connected to their local community. However, access to these places and activities was often inconsistent. Limited transport, geographic isolation, restricted opening hours and a lack of youth-specific spaces prevented some young people, particularly those living outside metropolitan centres, from taking part.

Young people wanted greater influence over decisions affecting their lives and clearer evidence that their involvement leads to action. They called for safe, affordable and inclusive youth spaces, designed with young people and supported by trusted adults, services and community

organisations. They also identified the need for more reliable and accessible public transport, clearer pathways from school into work and study, and easier access to confidential and non-judgemental support.

Safety was also a significant concern. Young people spoke about antisocial behaviour, bullying, cyberbullying, poor lighting, unsafe public transport and public violence. They wanted responses that address both immediate safety concerns and the underlying causes of harmful behaviour, including mental health difficulties, family violence, alcohol and drug use, poverty, anger, boredom and social pressure.

Young people also developed six 'Big Ideas' focused on strengthening their influence in government decisions, creating youth-designed community spaces, improving transport, making support services easier to access, preparing students for life after school, and preventing public violence through safe activities and early support.

Five key themes emerged from young people's feedback at TYF:

1. **Youth participation and influence:** Create direct and accessible ways for young people to contribute to government and community decisions, and report back on what happened as a result.
2. **Youth spaces and activities:** Establish safe, inclusive and affordable youth-dedicated spaces, designed with young people and supported by trusted adults, services and community organisations.
3. **Transport and access:** Improve the frequency, reliability, affordability and safety of public transport, particularly for young people living outside metropolitan centres.
4. **Safety, wellbeing and support:** Improve access to confidential and non-judgemental support, address the underlying causes of public violence and antisocial behaviour, and provide safe activities and places for young people to connect.
5. **Education and post-school pathways:** Provide practical life-skills education, clearer information about work and study options, and access to mentors who can support young people through the transition from school.

Young people emphasised that these issues cannot be addressed in isolation. Transport, youth spaces, education, safety, social connection and access to support all affect one another. They want to be actively involved in developing and delivering solutions, with adults providing the support, resources and authority needed to make those ideas possible. They also see lasting change as a shared responsibility, requiring coordinated action across government, councils, schools, services, businesses, community organisations and young people themselves.

Introduction: The TYF Regional Roadshow

The Tasmanian Youth Forum (TYF) is the annual youth participation event of the Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT), Tasmania's peak body for young people aged 12–25 and the youth sector.

TYF provides a platform for young Tasmanians to share what is important to them and identify the ideas and solutions they believe would improve outcomes for their peers and communities. YNOT draws on this feedback to advocate to government on behalf of young people, ensuring our policy and advocacy work reflects the experiences, priorities and ideas of young Tasmanians.

In 2025-26, YNOT delivered the TYF Regional Roadshow, bringing the forum to Tasmania's main regions. This approach was developed in direct response to feedback from TYF participants and the YNOT Youth Advisory Council, who wanted an opportunity to explore regional issues important to them, to connect with local decision-makers, and to improve access for young people living in rural areas. The North forum was the second event of the series.

YNOT hosted the North forum in George Town on Friday 27 March 2026, in partnership with the George Town Youth Impact Council and George Town Council. The forum was facilitated by emcees Taz and Em from Futures Isle. Young members of the George Town Youth Impact Council welcomed participants on arrival and led an opening icebreaker activity before the official program commenced. The forum opened with an Acknowledgement of Country by Ash (17), followed by addresses from Satayah (18), who helped set the scene, and the Hon. Jo Palmer MLC, Minister for Children and Youth, who formally opened the forum.

Sixty young people attended from across the region. We thank the young people and adults who participated, including representatives from Dorset Neighbourhood House, headspace Cornerstone Youth Services, Launceston Church Grammar School, Port Dalrymple School, Ravenswood Community Health Care, RANT Arts Devonport, South George Town Primary School, and the West Tamar Youth Advisory Council.

We also thank invited guests, Rob Fairs MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth Engagement and Sports, and Mayor Matthew Garwood, City of Launceston for attending the full event, and George Razay MP, George Town Deputy Mayor, Greg Dawson, and Councillors Winston Mason and Heather Ashley for attending the Big Ideas presentation session.

We also thank Kara (16), Caroline and James, for photography and videography, and the George Town Lions Club for catering.

Methodology: How we listened

In small groups of 6–8, young people shared their views through structured activities that included:

- Identifying the positive and challenging aspects of living in the North, and brainstorming ideas to improve outcomes.
- Selecting a 'Big Idea', focused on a specific issue and solution, to work together and design the ideas in more detail.
- Presenting their 'Big Idea' concept to attendees and invited guests.

Discussions were captured through audio and video recordings, staff notes and handwritten participant notes. Feedback was collated and analysed for key themes using thematic analysis, compiled into this summary report for participants and decision-makers.



What's it like living in the North?

Community and participation: Wanting to be involved

For young people in the North, a “welcoming culture” came down to two things: positive relationships and having things to do. Positive relationships with family, friends and community members were central to young people's sense of belonging. School and community events and activities, including markets, festivals and concerts, provided opportunities to connect with others and participate in community life.

At the same time, participants wanted to be more involved in shaping these activities, rather than only attending them. They were interested in planning, creating and leading hands-on activities, as well as contributing through public speaking, volunteering, paid roles at events, community initiatives and competitions. However, young people were clear that meaningful youth leadership still requires adult support. Adults, schools and organisations need to create the opportunity, provide guidance and resources, help navigate practical requirements, and remain involved throughout planning and delivery rather than handing responsibility to young people without support.

Partnerships with organisations outside of school were highly valued, and participants wanted schools to strengthen their commitment to involving students in community-based activities. They also wanted adults to support and show up for youth-led events, helping young people turn their ideas into activities that could have a visible impact in their communities.

Youth groups, such as those run by local councils and neighbourhood houses, were seen as a valuable way for young people to influence local issues. However, these opportunities were not

available everywhere, and participants said consultations were not always followed by visible action or communication about what happened next. Young people wanted to understand how their input had shaped decisions and to receive honest updates where change was not possible, rather than experiencing engagement as “tokenistic”.

Places to connect and spend time: Much to offer but uneven access

Young people said Northern Tasmania has a lot to offer, including social clubs, parks, cafes, national parks, wilderness areas, walking and bike trails, skateparks and sporting facilities. Libraries were frequently mentioned because they provide a safe, clean and free place to spend time and meet with others. Participants wanted longer opening hours and greater access to digital technology in libraries and other community spaces.

Young people also wanted a broader range of affordable activities that reflected different interests. While many enjoyed sport and exercise opportunities, equipment, membership and travel costs placed some options out of reach. Participants wanted more opportunities to engage in music, art and theatre, as well as digital entertainment such as gaming rooms, arcades and virtual reality.

Participants also highlighted the need for more safe, affordable and accessible places to spend time outside home and school, particularly in regional communities where there were fewer options and existing activities did not suit everyone. They emphasised that spaces should be welcoming to CALD, First Nations and LGBTIQA+ young people, and designed with young people rather than based on adult assumptions about what they wanted.

Access varied considerably across the region. Fuel, vehicle ownership and running costs made private transport expensive, while public transport did not address limited routes, infrequent services or communities with no practical bus access. Events and activities were often concentrated in Launceston or Hobart, creating additional barriers for young people living in regional towns. Participants said transport limitations affected their ability to maintain social connections, attend appointments, and get to school, work and community activities.

Although public transport was free at the time of the TYF, several participant statements highlighted the importance of maintaining free public transport, or making it more affordable in the future. Young people also wanted more transport options beyond buses, as well as environmentally sustainable ways to travel.

Education and post-school pathways: Good variety but need for mentoring

Young people wanted education to be “fun, relevant and engaging”. Some participants highlighted the range of educational options available in the North, including different schools, homeschooling and alternative learning environments such as Indie School. They appreciated having pathways that could better meet different learning styles, needs and circumstances. They also wanted schools to better support different sensory needs, including through teacher training, appropriate sensory tools and quiet rooms where students could take time out when needed.

Some participants wanted a better balance between school and home life, including less schoolwork outside school hours. Others called for greater recognition of students' achievements and more opportunities to take on leadership roles.

Young people also wanted clearer and more practical support to prepare for life after school. Ideas included a dedicated "adult life education" or life-skills subject covering areas such as tax, budgeting and money management. Participants wanted more information about work and study pathways, along with a broader range of businesses, industries, trades and work experience opportunities.

Mentoring was raised as an important part of this support. Young people suggested individual guidance from teachers or tutors, career mentoring from people with relevant experience, and peer support from TAFE or university students. They saw this as a way to make the transition from school into work, training or further study feel less confusing and more achievable.

Safety and wellbeing: Feeling unsafe and in need of support

Young people raised concerns about safety in public places, on public transport and online. They spoke about antisocial behaviour, vandalism, bullying and cyberbullying, and said these experiences could stop young people from going out, using public spaces or taking part in activities. Poor street lighting and a lack of visible police or security presence were identified as particular concerns.

In discussing public violence and offending, participants wanted governments and services to look beyond the behaviour itself and address the underlying causes. They pointed to mental health issues, drug and alcohol use, family violence, bullying, poverty, pressure at home or school, anger and boredom as factors that may contribute. Participants felt that addressing these issues was an important part of preventing violence and improving community safety.

Housing and cost-of-living pressures were also affecting young people's sense of security. Participants described rents as unaffordable, some rental properties as poorly maintained, and homelessness as an issue in the North. Access to basic necessities was also raised, with support for expanding community food pantries and programs that provide free menstrual products.

Anxiety was a strong theme, particularly in relation to pressure from family or school and fear of being judged by peers. Young people wanted mental health and trauma support to be easier to access, with shorter waiting times, free or low-cost therapy, outreach services and more opportunities to speak informally and confidentially with a worker. One suggestion was a dedicated youth "open-chat" time through services such as headspace or Lifeline.

Participants also called for more addiction support, youth-specific legal assistance and clearer information about where to get help. They suggested promoting services through schools, social media, posters, radio, QR codes and community events, and bringing services into places young people already attend. Training young people in peer mental health support was also proposed, so they could recognise when someone may need help and connect them with appropriate support.

The Big Ideas

The Big Ideas turn the issues raised across the forum into practical proposals for change. Young people focused on six areas where they wanted a clearer response: stronger links between young people and government, safe youth spaces, affordable and reliable transport, easier access to support, better preparation for life after school, and action to prevent public violence.

Each proposal sets out the problem young people identified, why it matters in their everyday lives, and what they thought should happen next.



‘Government Games’: Direct pathways between young people and government

“We feel like the Government is in control of everything, but we don’t actually get a say in what happens to youth because they just think we’re children and we don’t have an opinion on anything.”

The Problem: Government does not listen often enough or provide clear ways for young people to influence decisions. Many young people feel their ideas are dismissed because of their age, contributing to a rift between government and communities.

Why it matters: Young people bring useful ideas and direct knowledge of the issues affecting them. However, there is a power imbalance between government and communities: “We want to level out the power.” Without meaningful opportunities to contribute, young people’s experiences can be overlooked and, as participants put it, “If voices aren’t heard, change won’t happen.”

The idea: Create clearer and more regular ways for young people to understand, access and influence government. Suggestions included:

- teaching young people how different levels of government work, who makes decisions and how to raise an issue
- establishing youth positions within the Tasmanian Parliament or creating a direct link between youth groups and government through a youth subcommittee
- making existing committees and consultation processes easier for young people to access
- enabling students of any age to submit anonymous letters about issues affecting their schools or communities
- conducting regular surveys, at least annually, to identify shared issues for government action
- training and mentoring young people to present issues and proposals to decision-makers
- reporting back to young people about what happened following their involvement and what action was or was not possible.



‘No-Name Community Hub’ / ‘Youth Sanctuary’: Safe spaces designed with young people

“Spaces are made on what they think kids want. Not on what they actually want.”

“We deserve to have safe, inclusive spaces.”

The Problem: There are not enough safe, affordable and accessible places for young people to spend time outside home and school. Existing after-school and weekend activities, including organised sport, do not suit everyone. Some spaces are difficult to reach, poorly advertised or designed around adult assumptions rather than what young people actually want.

Without a dedicated place to go, young people can feel isolated or unwelcome in public spaces. This is especially difficult for those who do not feel safe or comfortable at home.

Why it matters: A youth space can provide connection, belonging and somewhere to socialise, learn and be oneself. As one group explained: “Not everyone wants to be at home all the time, and not everyone can.”

A safe place to go after school and on weekends can also reduce boredom and isolation. When young people have access to positive activities, trusted adults and practical support, they are better able to participate in community life. As presenters put it, such a space would not only “keep us out of trouble”, but “make everyone safer”.

The idea: Create a “place for happiness and strong community” that is designed together with young people and provides opportunities for them to shape its activities and operation. Young people should have leadership and decision-making roles, supported by consistent staff, volunteers and community organisations.

Youth spaces should consider these features in their design:

- **Access and comfort:** free or low-cost entry; reliable after-school, weekend and school holiday opening hours; easy access by public transport; heating and cooling; and a welcoming environment that does not feel overly controlled or school-like
- **Different spaces:** areas for socialising, gaming, creative activities, quiet time and study
- **Technology and learning:** computers, Wi-Fi, charging points, tutoring, practical skills workshops, career guidance and links with businesses, training providers and tertiary education
- **Activities:** youth-led games, events and workshops focused on creativity, wellbeing, recreation and practical skills
- **Basic needs:** a community pantry or garden, clothes swaps and free menstrual products
- **Access to support:** information, visiting services and confidential spaces where young people can connect with mental health, addiction, legal and other support
- **Relationships and safety:** trusted and consistent staff who build relationships with young people and provide supportive supervision
- **Youth opportunities:** paid work, volunteering and leadership roles within the hub.

Councils, youth organisations, community groups, businesses and services would need to work together to establish and sustain the space. Partnerships with organisations such as headspace and other community services could provide specialist support, while sponsorship and donations could assist with equipment and supplies.

The Lounge in Launceston was frequently mentioned as a positive example of inclusive third spaces for community inclusion. Young people wanted to see similar spaces established elsewhere in the North, drawing on the features that made The Lounge welcoming and accessible.



Travelling: Free, accessible and safe transport for young people

“We want our Government and politicians to take action on this growing problem. Not just for youth but for our community. In conclusion, we aren’t asking for that much. We just wanna get where we need to be safely and affordably.”

“We don’t feel safe on buses! There’s anti-social behaviour and scary people.”

The Problem: Public transport across the North is infrequent, unreliable and difficult to access, particularly for young people living outside metropolitan centres. Many also feel unsafe on buses and around bus stops because of antisocial behaviour, poor lighting and limited security.

Free public transport until July 2027 has reduced costs for young people and families. However, there is concern about fares returning when the initiative ends, particularly for those who already face limited service options.

Private transport is also expensive. Fuel, vehicle purchase, maintenance and other running costs place additional financial pressure on young people and their families.

Why it matters: Young people rely on transport to get to school, work, appointments, services, activities and social events. Infrequent or inaccessible public transport can leave them unable to maintain social connections, access support or take up education and employment opportunities. As one group put it, “travelling should be the least of our worries”.

Better public transport would also reduce reliance on private vehicles and provide a more environmentally sustainable way to travel.

The idea: Make public transport more affordable, reliable, accessible and safe for young people. Suggested changes included:

- continuing free or low-cost fares for young people beyond July 2027
- increasing the number and frequency of services
- improving connections between regional communities and metropolitan centres

- ensuring services run at times that allow young people to reach school, work, appointments and activities
- adding more stops where services are currently difficult to access
- improving safety through cameras and a visible staff or security presence on buses and around transport points
- improving lighting around bus stops and waiting areas
- displaying clear expectations about passenger behaviour
- building more sheltered bus stops to provide protection from the weather.



Access to support services: Make asking for help easy

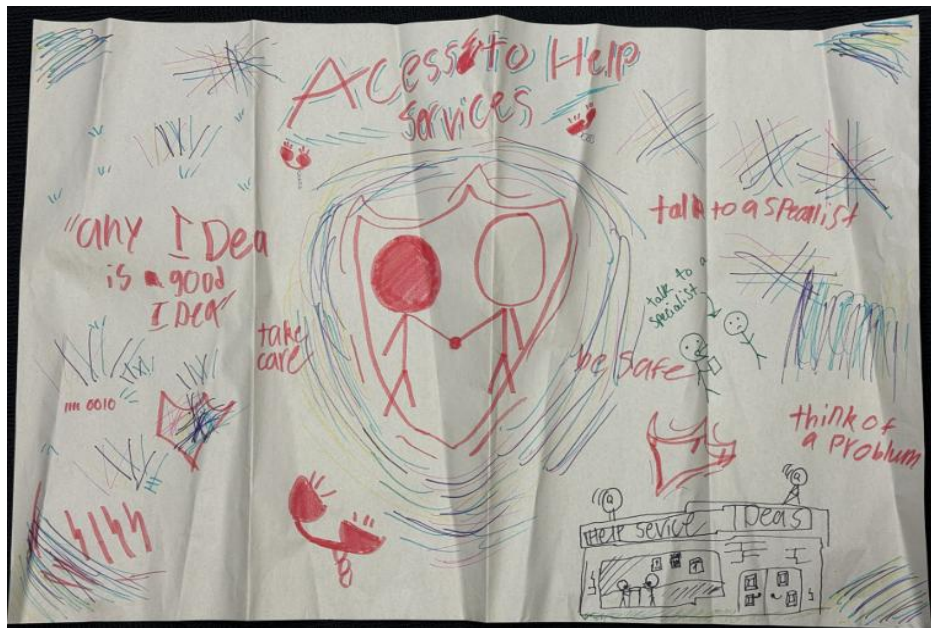
“They will all get their own room and talk about what the problem is they are struggling with. It will help them understand that asking for help is ok and no one will judge for it.”

The Problem: Support services can be difficult for young people to find, understand and approach. Some do not know what help is available, where to access it or what will happen if they ask for support. Fear of being judged or getting into trouble can also stop young people from reaching out.

Why it matters: Problems can become harder to manage when young people do not feel able to ask for help. Services need to feel private, approachable and supportive, and make it clear that their role is to help rather than punish or judge. As one group explained, “asking for help is so important because if you don’t ask for help, life could get harder and your problems won’t go away.”

The idea: Make support easier to find and bring services into places young people already attend. Suggested changes included:

- holding monthly pop-up sessions at schools and workplaces, with different services attending
- providing private spaces where young people can speak confidentially with a worker
- clearly explaining what each service does, who can use it and what happens when someone asks for help
- providing business cards, simple service information and QR codes linking directly to support
- inviting service providers to speak at schools and community activities
- promoting services through posters, social media, television, news, radio, community stalls and word of mouth
- using welcoming, youth-friendly communication that reduces fear of judgement.



Preparing for life after school: A dedicated transition subject

The Problem: Schools do not provide enough practical support for the transition into work, training or further study. Many young people lack clear information about available pathways, how to apply for opportunities and where to find support. Access to work and study mentors is also limited.

Why it matters: Young people are expected to make important decisions about their future before they fully understand their options or the steps involved. Earlier, practical guidance would help them prepare for life after school, make informed choices and feel more confident about moving into work or further education.

Solutions: Introduce a weekly school subject focused on practical life skills and the transition from school into work, training or further study. The subject should:

- explain pathways into employment, apprenticeships, TAFE and university
- advertise apprenticeships, work opportunities and external support
- cover practical skills such as budgeting, tax and money management
- connect students with work, study and career mentors

- connect students with local businesses, employers, training providers and tertiary education providers
- be developed with the Department for Education, Children and Young People, schools and teachers trained to deliver the subject.



Combat public violence: Outlets for excess energy and frustration

“Everyone has to engage with this problem to fix it, as not a single person can fix it.”

The Problem: Public violence can be driven by interconnected issues, including mental ill-health, bullying and cyberbullying, problems at home, alcohol and drug use, anger, boredom, poverty, and pressure from family or society. Without safe ways to manage these experiences, frustration can build and be expressed through harmful behaviour.

Why it matters: Fear of violence can stop young people from going outside, using public spaces and participating in community life. This can increase isolation, worsen mental health and contribute to further conflict and violence.

The idea: Provide young people with more safe and healthy ways to use their energy, manage frustration and express themselves. As the group explained, young people need different outlets where it is possible to “drain your energy and express yourself” and “do something healthy”.

Suggested actions included:

- supporting existing football, boxing and community clubs to involve more young people
- providing a wider range of structured physical activities for young people with different interests (e.g. expanding access to boxing, Taekwondo and other martial arts)
- ensuring activities are affordable, accessible and appropriately supervised
- involving young people, families, schools, clubs, services and government in preventing violence.

Conclusion

Young people in the North want greater influence over the decisions that affect them and clearer evidence that their involvement leads to action. They want safe, inclusive and affordable places to spend time, with activities, practical support and opportunities to take on meaningful roles. They also need transport that is reliable, accessible and safe, particularly outside metropolitan centres, so they can maintain social connections and reach school, work, appointments, services and community activities.

Young people also want it to be easier to ask for help. This includes clearer information about available services, confidential and non-judgemental support, and better access to mental health, trauma, addiction, family violence and legal services. Schools also have an important role in preparing young people for life after school through practical life skills, clearer information about work and study pathways, and access to mentors.

These issues are closely connected. A youth space cannot be genuinely accessible without practical transport options. Limited transport can restrict participation in education, employment, services and community life. Support services cannot respond early if young people do not know they exist or fear being judged for seeking help. Safe activities, trusted relationships and accessible support can also help address some of the pressures associated with public violence and antisocial behaviour.

No single person or organisation can address these issues alone. Young people called for coordinated action involving government, councils, schools, community organisations, services, businesses and young people themselves. This requires adults to create opportunities, provide practical support and share decision-making, rather than expecting young people to act without the resources or authority needed to succeed.

The ideas and recommendations raised through TYF have been grouped into five priority areas for action:

1. **Youth participation and influence:** Create direct and accessible ways for young people to contribute to government and community decisions, and report back on what happened as a result.
2. **Youth spaces and activities:** Establish safe, inclusive and affordable youth-dedicated spaces, designed with young people and supported by trusted adults, services and community organisations.
3. **Transport and access:** Improve the frequency, reliability, affordability and safety of public transport, particularly for young people living outside metropolitan centres.
4. **Safety, wellbeing and support:** Improve access to confidential and non-judgemental support, address the underlying causes of public violence and antisocial behaviour, and provide safe activities and places for young people to connect.
5. **Education and post-school pathways:** Provide practical life-skills education, clearer information about work and study options, and access to mentors who can support young people through the transition from school.