

Our Right to Health

The health of young people aged 11 to 18 in Manchester.

Public Health Annual Report 2026



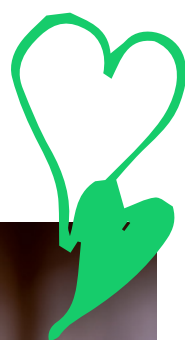
Scan the QR code to access
a playlist of the videos
mentioned in the report



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Foreword



*Councillor Thomas F Robinson,
Executive Member for Healthy
Manchester and Adult Social Care*

Manchester has a growing young population, and young people are the future of our city. The decisions we all make today will have the greatest impact on their lives, yet too often, young people are left out of the decision-making processes that shape their futures.

Your age should not be a cultural or societal barrier to helping inform the world we want to see.

This year's Public Health Annual Report challenges that reality.

It highlights how vital it is to embed young people in decision-making from the very start, ensuring their voices help shape the services and decisions that affect them.

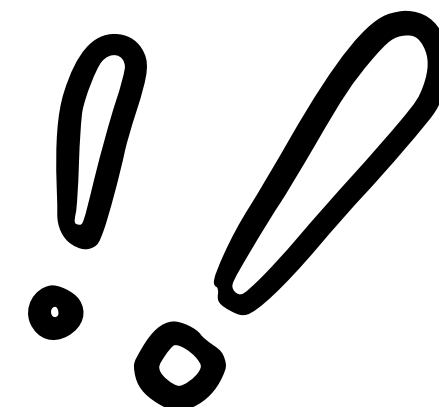
Earnest and meaningful partnerships with young people are essential if we are to create services and opportunities that truly reflect their needs, support them effectively, and make a lasting difference in tackling health inequities across the city.



*A welcome from the
Manchester City Council
Executive Member for
Healthy Manchester and
Adult Social Care*

What follows demonstrates how we hope to break that cycle – together.

To that end I would like to say thank you to all the young people and services that contributed to this year's report. Manchester is nothing without you, and I know this work is only the beginning of so many special things still to come.



Introduction

My name is
Dr Cordelle Ofori,
and I'm the Director
of Public Health for
Manchester



I lead Manchester's Department of Public Health, and we work together with lots of different agencies, organisations and people in Manchester to improve and protect the health of Manchester's residents.

One of my responsibilities is to write an annual report about the health of people living in Manchester. Each year, I choose a different subject for the report, and this year I want to focus on young people's health and wellbeing.

The last time we wrote a public health annual report about children and young people was in 2019, when we focused on younger children. So this time, my report is about older children. Most of the time, that will mean we use the phrase 'young people', as we are describing people aged 11–18.

Manchester is an amazing city and can be a great place to grow up, but not all young people have good access to the things that keep them healthy and support them to become the best they can be.

Watch Tabitha
and Zainab
interview me :)



I've chosen 'young people's right to health' as the theme for this report, because Manchester is currently working to become a UNICEF UK Child Friendly City – a place where local leaders make sure every young person feels safe and included, and has a voice in decisions that affect their life.

I believe that Manchester's children and young people are the best people to tell me what is important to them. We also need their views to help us plan and take action on the things that will make a difference to their lives, both now and in the future.

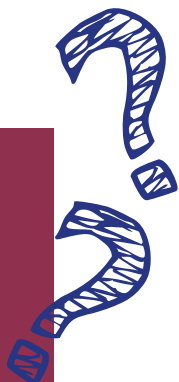
So this year I'm very proud to say that my report is created with, and for, young people in our city.

A pair of young people interviewed me to find out more about what is included.

My thanks go out to all the young people who have contributed to this report, and to the staff and services that support them.

Living in Manchester

What is Manchester really like as a place to be born, grow up, live, and work?



630k
live here!

18%
up on the
last decade

→ The good

Manchester is one of the UK's fastest-growing cities, attracting students, workers and families from all over the world.

Over 630,000 people currently live here, and the population has grown by 18% in the last decade.

It's the economic heart of England's North, with big industries in science, tech and creativity.

Our city is famous for music legends, football giants, global arts, sports, and entertainment venues. There are also museums, festivals, parks and green spaces.

→ The challenges

Manchester has some of the most deprived areas in England.

Manchester ranked 4th for deprivation out of 296 English councils in 2025.

Over 40% of our neighbourhoods are still among the most deprived in the country.

In 2025, our Annual Report looked at the health inequalities in Manchester and what we're doing to build the foundations of good health in our communities.

Health inequalities are the preventable and unacceptable differences in health between groups of people in different places and communities in society.

Health inequalities affect everyone in the city – including children and young people.

In 2023/24, the End Child Poverty coalition stated that 43.6% of under-16s in Manchester live in poverty after housing costs.

4th of 296 for deprivation



43.6%
of under-16s in Manchester live in poverty after housing costs



Making Manchester Fairer

→ What we're doing

Launched in 2022, Making Manchester Fairer is the city's plan to improve health equity and tackle the preventable causes of ill health and differences in life expectancy for all our residents.

We want everyone in the city to have the same opportunities to be healthy and happy, and this starts with our children and young people.

We do this by addressing the 'social determinants of health' (see the Glossary for more information about what this means), education, money, food, housing, our surroundings and transport.

One of the priorities in our Making Manchester Fairer plan is 'giving children and young people the best start in life', because we want all children and young people in Manchester to have the same opportunities and the best chance possible to grow up into healthy adults.

To do this, organisations in the city need to work together, and with children and young people, to improve the conditions that children and young people grow up in.

MAKING MANCHESTER FAIRER

8 THEMES



Giving children and young people the best start in life.



Lifting low-income households out of poverty and debt.



Cutting unemployment and creating good jobs.



Preventing illness and early death from big killers – heart disease, lung disease, diabetes and cancer.



Improving housing and creating safe, warm and affordable homes.



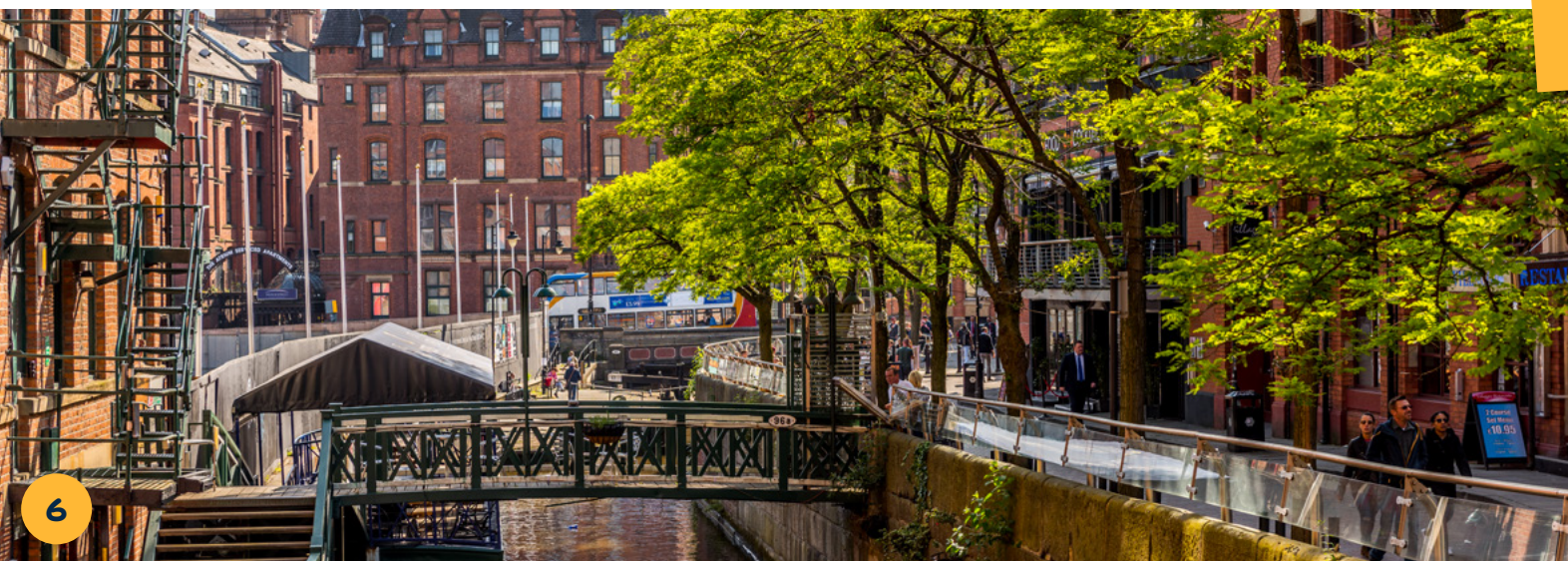
Improving our environment and surroundings in the areas where we live, transport, and tackling climate change.



Fighting systemic and structural discrimination and racism.



Strengthening community power and social connections.



Young People in Manchester

How many young people live in Manchester?

48,580

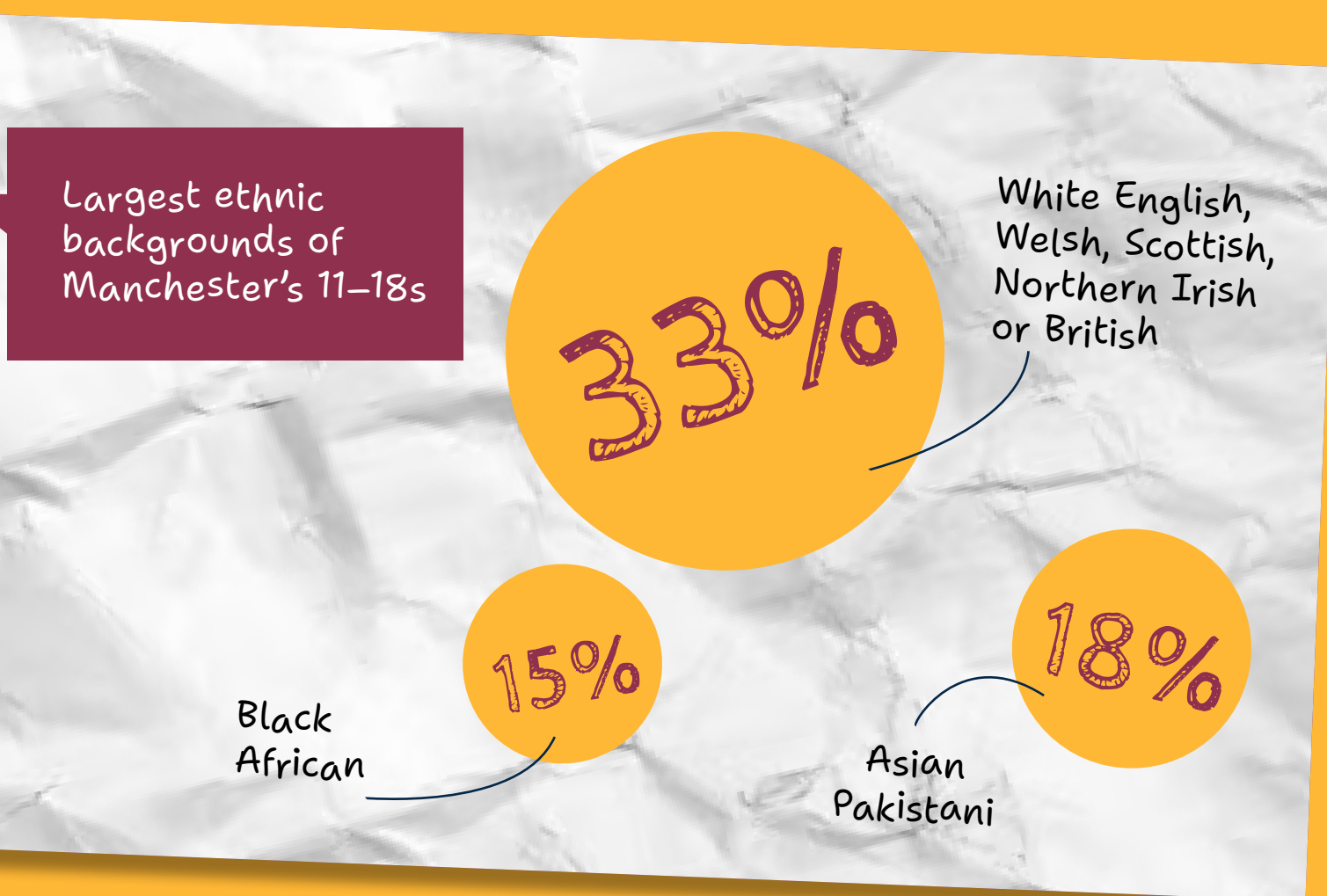
That makes *young people* one of Manchester's **fastest-growing groups**

36%
up since
2001!!!

44%
use English in addition to
their main language

55%
live in the top
10%
of England's most deprived areas

15%
of pupils have special educational needs –
more than England's average



5% of 16-to-17s not in education, training or work.
England average is **3%**

100 in 10,000
are in looked-after care
England average is **70**

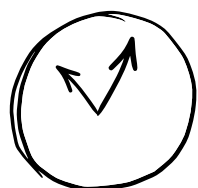
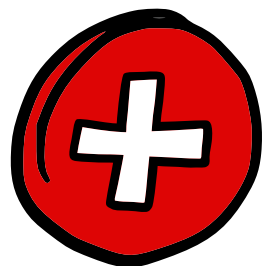
What Young People Tell Us

We asked a group of young people from an organisation called Young Manchester to tell us a bit more about what it's like to grow up in Manchester today. These are some of the things they told us..



→ Positives

- 'Our Pass': free bus travel is helpful for going to school
- There are lots of cultural activities and places to go
- There's lots of diversity
- Free healthcare and help with prescriptions
- Opportunities – for jobs and careers
- Accommodation and discounts for students.



See why it is important to talk to young people when designing support services



→ Challenges

- Finding the right school to support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Cost and availability of healthy food
- Long waiting times at A&E and for GP appointments
- Living expenses – rents and travel costs are too high
- Some areas of the city don't feel safe.

→ Things young people would like more support with

- Practical life education (eg. finances, careers guidance, healthy living) from the PHSE curriculum and other places
- Knowing what health services are available and how to access them – without having to rely on parents for the information
- More support from schools when problems arise
- Better ways of communicating health information so it's accessible to children and young people.



UNICEF UK Child Friendly Cities & Communities



The UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) Child Friendly Cities & Communities programme was founded because cities' transport, housing and public spaces were often planned with adults in mind, without considering what children and young people need to grow, play and thrive.

All children and young people have their own dreams, and their voices deserve to shape the places they live. This is what we believe in Manchester, so we are working with UNICEF UK towards recognition as a Child Friendly City.

Imagine a city that won't treat children and young people as second-best, where your rights set the rules, and health is not a privilege – it's a promise.

Safe streets, clean air, and food that fuels futures: this is what happens when children and young people lead the way.

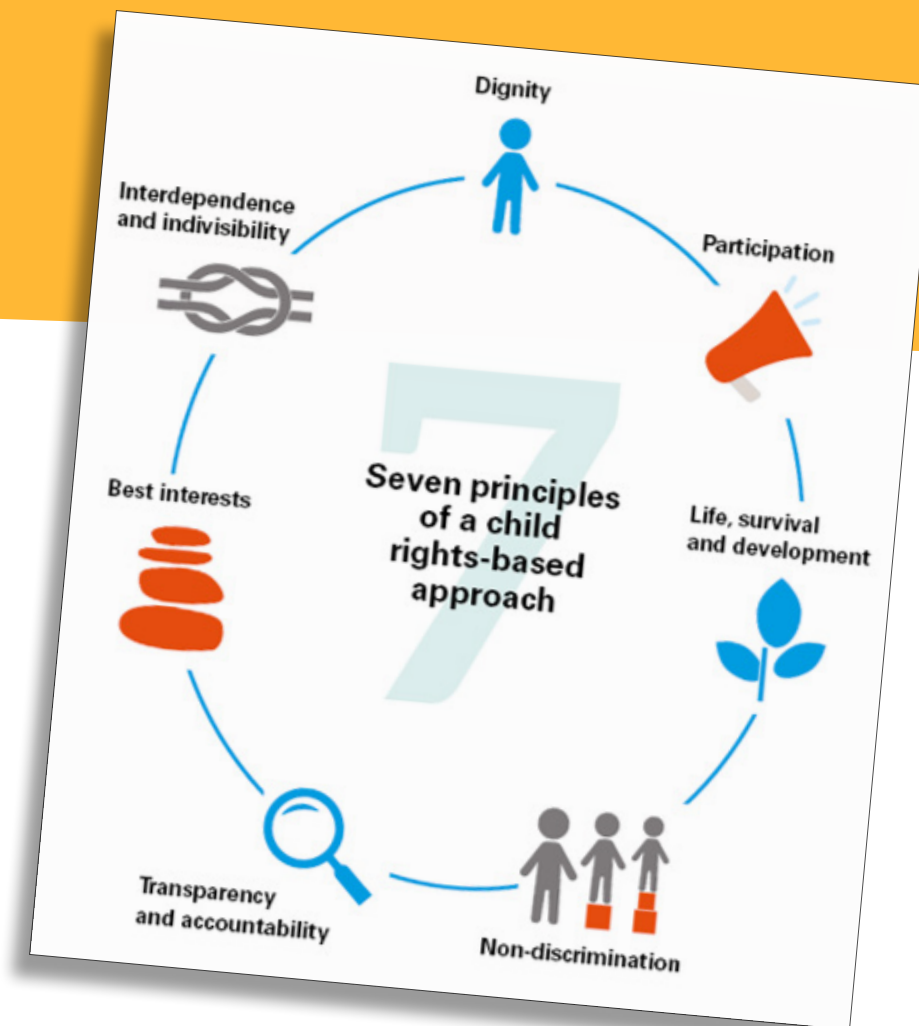
Watch to learn more about Child Friendly Manchester



A city that works for *young people* works for *everyone*.

A Child Rights-Based approach

To create a city that works for children and young people, we're taking a 'Child Rights-Based approach'. Here's how that looks...



unicef
for every child

**The United Nations
Convention on the
Rights of the Child
(UNCRC)**

A global agreement
setting out under-18s'
fundamental rights

The most-signed
human rights
agreement in history

The basis of all
UNICEF's work

It tells adults and governments to work together to make sure all children and young people can enjoy all their rights all of the time. It has 54 'articles' about all aspects of a child's life. It also spells out what all children, everywhere, have a right to.

The Child Friendly Manchester Ambition



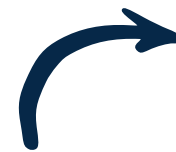
→ We want a Manchester where children's rights are:

- Built into everything we do
- At the heart of making decisions and policies
- Respected, and every child has a voice and the power to influence decisions.

So we've been working with UNICEF UK and organisations that care for children and young people in the city to make it happen and turn it into actions and changes.

We want these changes to make children and young people feel:

- Safe
- Heard
- Cared for
- Free to thrive.



11,000+ children and young people joined a consultation on making change happen.

They picked 'badges of change' for things they most want to see action on.

'Healthy' was chosen as one of the top three badges.

→ **What the Healthy badge means**

It works for children's right to be healthy by:

- Reducing inequalities in the opportunities that different groups of children and young people have to be healthy
- Supporting health and wellbeing for children and young people of all ages and backgrounds.

It prioritises Manchester's young people's call for:

- Improvements in mental health and wellbeing
- Getting the best possible start in life
- Being involved in decisions about their health and wellbeing.

A Message from UNICEF UK



“By choosing the Healthy badge in the early stages of their Child Friendly City journey, Manchester’s children and young people have made it clear that health is a top priority for them. Upholding the right to health, as set out in Article 24 of the UNCRC, means that every child, regardless of background, culture, ability or anything else, is able to access good-quality health and wellbeing services and information.

“Through the CFC programme, Manchester has committed to meaningfully consider children and young people’s voices, experiences and ideas to shape public health actions and policies.

A large, stylized black handwritten signature is written across the top of the right page.

“We believe that the rights and voice of children and young people are key to public health decision-making because their perspectives and ideas ensure that policies and services are relevant, effective, and truly meet the needs of all children and young people.”

Naomi Danquah
Programme Director for Child
Friendly Cities & Communities
UNICEF UK



The Right to Health

Governments must provide good-quality healthcare, clean water, nutritious food, a clean environment, and education on health and wellbeing so that children and young people can stay healthy.

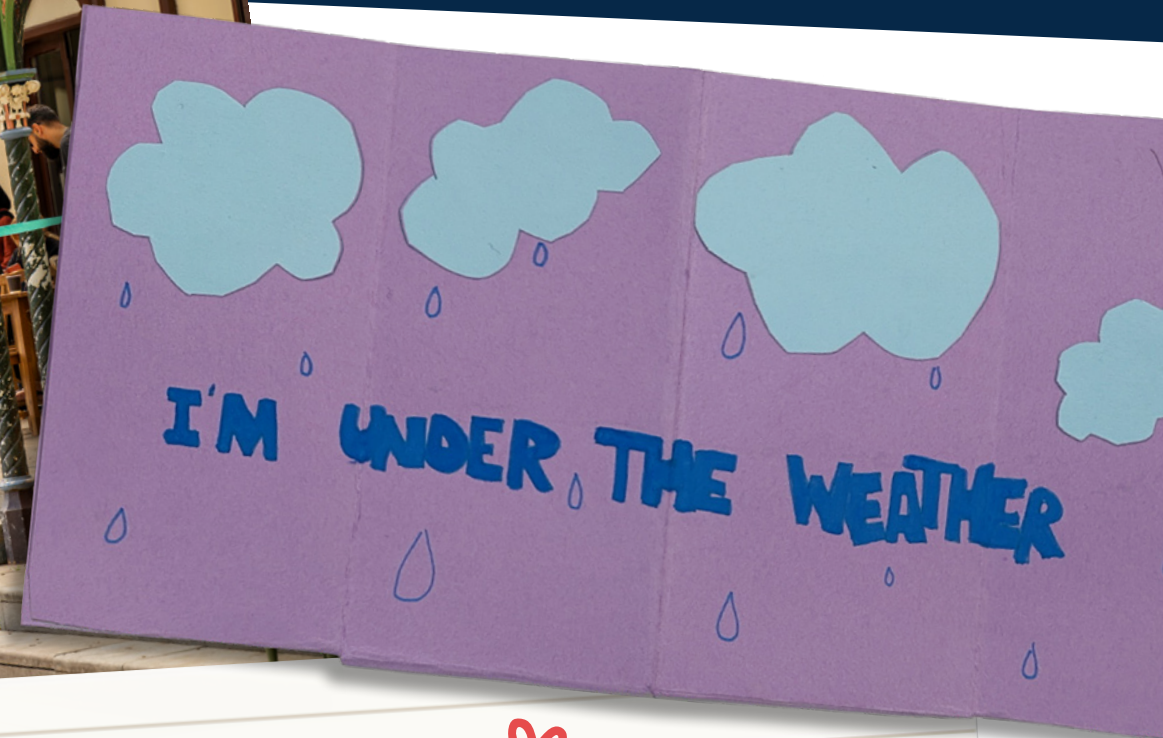
Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that children and young people have the right to the best health possible.

The UK is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, but in Manchester there are still big differences in the conditions that young people grow up in.

This means that young people in Manchester don't all have the same opportunities to be healthy and happy. Reducing these differences, which we refer to as 'health inequalities', is one of the main priorities for the Public Health Department and the organisations we work with.

The following section of the report looks at some of this work in more detail. It focuses on how:

- We support young people with their physical and mental health and wellbeing
- Organisations in the city work together to make sure that we are supporting everyone's right to health
- We make sure that young people can take part in decisions about their health and are not discriminated against when accessing health care and other support.



My Manchester

My Manchester promotes diversity, inclusivity, difference and acceptance

My Manchester funds the youth, funds social services, funds the elderly, and every little positive

My Manchester is for the people.

Alija, 15

Healthy Living

27



FOOD, CLOTHING,
A SAFE HOME

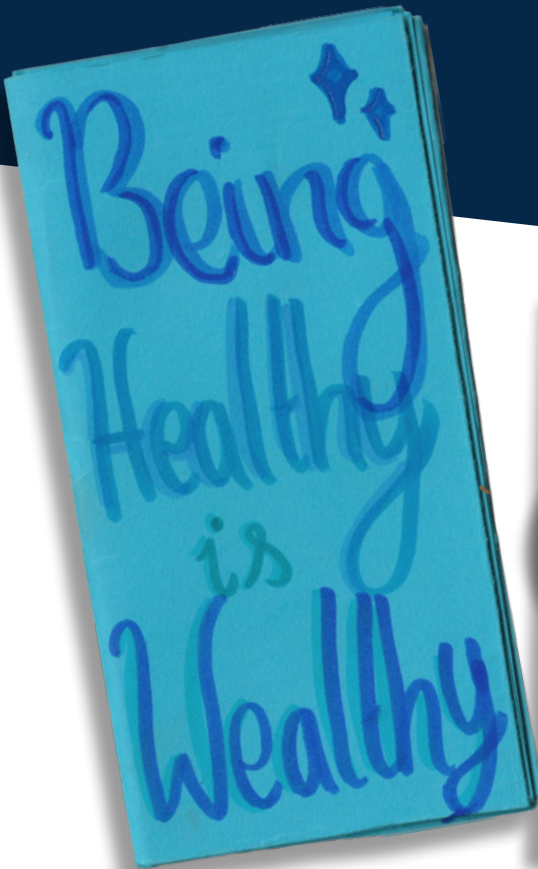
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REST, PLAY,
CULTURE, ARTS

Why is this important?

Eating well and being active are the building blocks for good health and wellbeing. Our opportunities to do this are shaped by the environments that we live in. Young people have told us that they don't always feel safe spending time outdoors in their local area, so it can be difficult for them to get enough exercise. Girls are less likely than boys to be active. Young people are aware that healthy food can be more expensive for their families to buy.

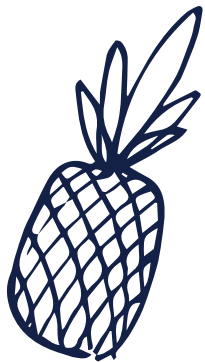


According to the 2024 #BeeWell survey, only



young people who completed the survey said they ate five portions of fruit and vegetables every day

→ What services support this?



Junior PARS (Physical Activity on Referral Service), run by an organisation called Morelife, is a service for young people in Manchester who need support to be more physically active. Children and young people may be referred to the service by a school nurse or a doctor. Alternatively, their parent or carer can ask the service for help so they can self-refer. Practitioners from the service spend time with children and young people to understand what activities they like, what they would like to try, and whether anything makes it difficult for them to be more active.



They then help young people decide what they want to do more of, and help them to get going. Some families don't have spare money for things like joining a gym or swimming, so the service helps to find free activities, or supports them with the costs. Finding activities that feel enjoyable is important, because they are more likely to become routine. The service also discusses habits, nutrition and sleep, as well as activity support.



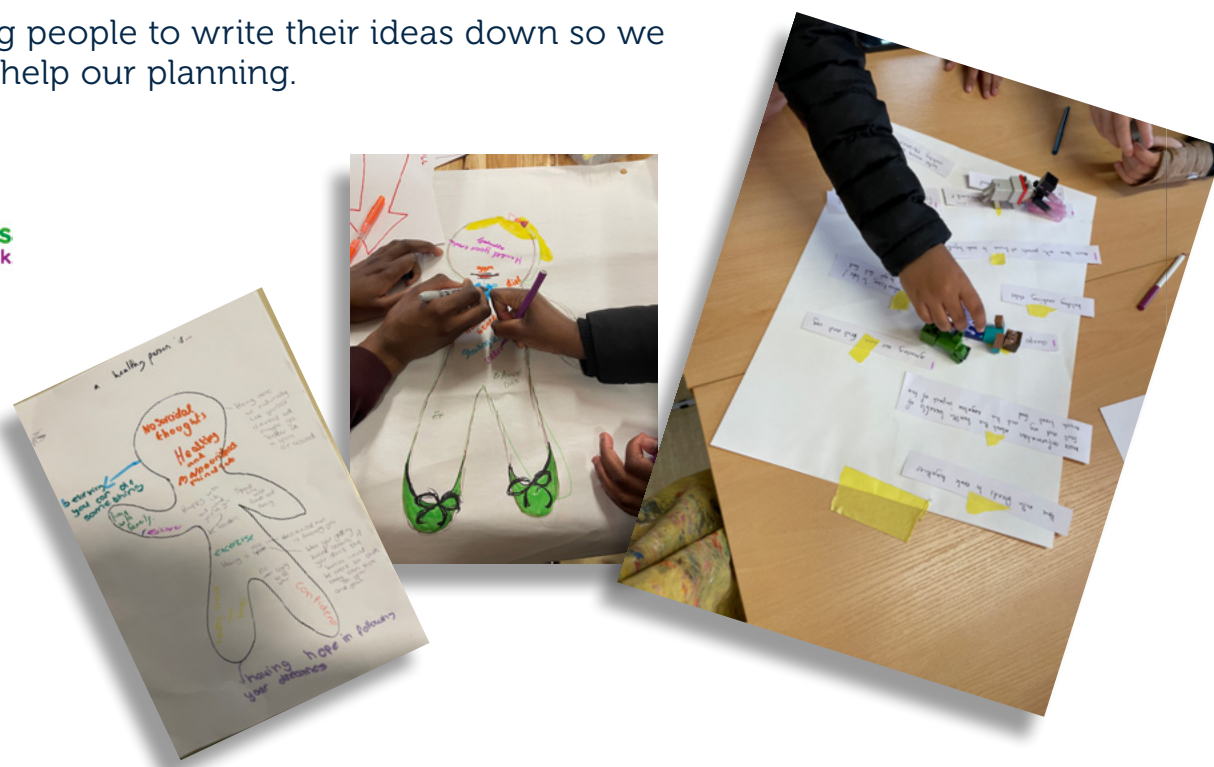
→ What else is happening?

Manchester City Council's Leisure Centres also offer young people aged 16 and under free swimming during school holidays and weekends. In 2026, Manchester will be launching a free Universal Junior Gym Access for all 11 to 16-year-old Manchester residents at every Council-operated Leisure Centre.



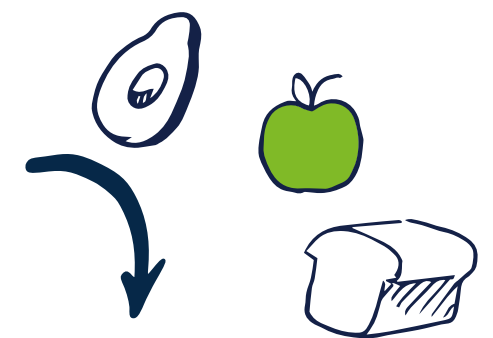
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We asked for young people to write their ideas down so we could use them to help our planning.



Feeling safe is important

Concerns about safety restrict access to physical activity, such as playing in parks and cycling to venues. They would like more accessible and inclusive opportunities for activity in their local area.



The cost of living is important

Food prices have increased and this means that healthy choices aren't always affordable.

Mental health is important

Health is important
Bullying, discrimination and unwelcome peer influences can cause young people to struggle. Support to build confidence, motivation and self-esteem is helpful.

Vaping is an issue

Young people feel that products are too attractive and easy to access, and they don't have enough information about the harmful effects.

Healthy Places

Why is this important?

Healthy living isn't just about the actions we take as individuals to eat well and be active. The places we live can make this easier or more difficult.

For example, it's easier to eat healthy food if you can buy it cheaply near where you live, and it's harder to exercise outside for free if there aren't welcoming places in your neighbourhood or you don't feel safe.

There are also things that businesses do that influence the availability and affordability of different products, including the advertising and marketing of unhealthy ones (like alcohol or fast food).



What are we doing about this?

To protect young people's health, we work to reduce their exposure to harmful products and environments and improve fair access to healthier options.

The Public Health Department works across the Council, and with partners, on the 'commercial determinants of health' (see the Glossary for more on what this means).

This includes shaping local licensing and advertising policies, raising awareness of corporate influences on health, providing feedback and making the case to the Government about other changes.

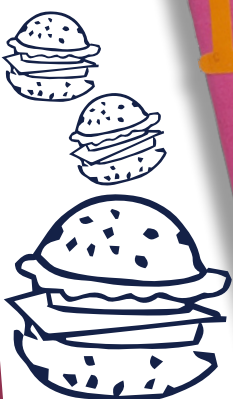
We also work with Council teams to increase opportunities for play, physical activity and access to healthy food in local neighbourhoods.



What have young people told us?

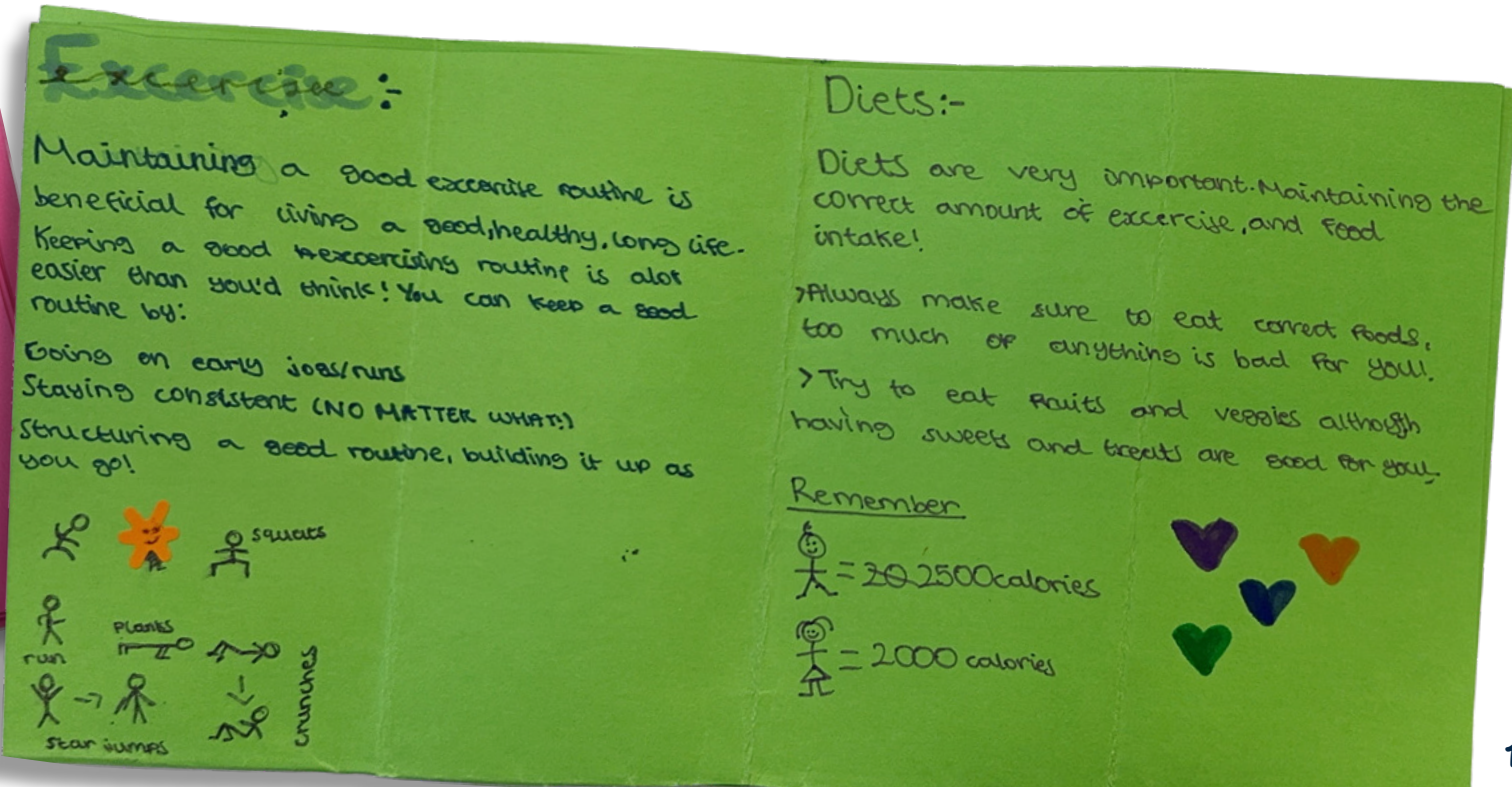
They know which foods are healthy and unhealthy – but healthier foods can be more expensive, or not so easy to buy where they live and spend time.

They are concerned about the availability and advertising of other products, such as vapes.



Manchester has one of the highest levels of fast-food shops per person in England, approximately:

183 per 100,000



Being Healthy in School

Why is this important?

Most children and young people spend a lot of their time in school. It's a place to get information about health, and support for those struggling. Young people learn better if they feel healthy and happy. There are a number of ways we make sure they stay healthy in school.

Watch Stephanie find out how School Nurses support young people to stay healthy in schools



MEDIA CUBS

HPV vaccinations can reduce rates of cervical cancer by up to **90%** especially when given at a younger age

This service is provided by NHS Manchester Foundation Trust School Health Service. They work with others to keep children and young people safe and to help them deal with difficult circumstances. School Nurses offer:

- Support with health assessments to spot any needs early
- Individual support and advice on things like mental health and healthy living.

Vaccinations

In school, students will get important vaccinations to help protect their health. This usually includes the HPV (human papillomavirus) vaccine, which helps prevent certain cancers, among others that protect against tetanus, diphtheria, polio, meningitis and septicaemia. Schools also provide the annual flu vaccine for extra protection during flu season.

HPV vaccine:

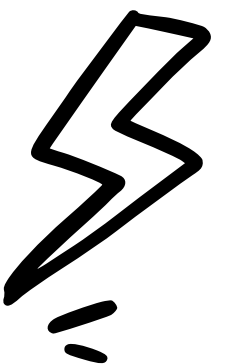
HPV is a common virus that spreads through sexual contact, but most people won't have symptoms. Schools have been offering the HPV vaccine to girls since 2008 and to boys since 2019. It can help to reduce the chances of some types of cancer and lead us towards the cervical cancer elimination goal. It is delivered in schools by IntraHealth. The IntraHealth team works together with local neighbourhood teams, Healthy Schools, and Public Health to make sure services are joined up and delivered in a way that meets the needs of young people across the city. Catch-up clinics are also available during school holidays for young people who have missed the school offer.

The Healthy Schools Team

The Healthy Schools Team help teachers and other school staff to understand the best ways of teaching children and young people about health and wellbeing. They give useful resources and ideas to use in lessons and provide information for parents and carers. This service is provided by NHS Manchester Foundation Trust School Health Service.

Topics covered include mental and emotional health and wellbeing, relationships and sex education, smoking and vaping, alcohol and drugs, healthy living (eating well and being active) and staying safe (eg. road safety).

Healthy Schools hold termly events for students to learn more about local and national health campaigns, give their feedback, and recommend topics to Healthy Schools that they need more information about.




IntraHealth

Youth Voice in Action: Being Healthy in School



➔ **What have young people told us?**

In a VoiceBox session on sleep, young people said they wanted more information about how phones and other electrical devices could affect sleep.

➔ **What are we doing about this?**

The Healthy Schools team created a resource giving more information about what happens when you use phones or other devices before going to sleep. They included ideas from young people on other activities that could be relaxing, as well as advice on how to use phones and other devices more safely. There is also information about where to get help if you're having problems sleeping.

Substance Use: Smoking, Alcohol, and Drugs



Why is this important?

Most young people don't ever try smoking, vaping, drinking alcohol or taking drugs, but some do experiment, and it's important that they understand the risks involved and can get support if they need it. These services are provided by Change, Grow, Live.

225,080

illegal e-cigarettes/vaping devices/e-liquids
have been seized in Manchester since 2022

→ What services support this?

Eclipse is a service for people in Manchester up to the age of 25 who are affected by drugs, alcohol or vaping.

It offers friendly, non-judgemental support that focuses on what young people need. The aim is to listen, understand and help in a way that works.

Eclipse also trains adults who work with young people so they can spot problems early and give the right support to those affected by their parents' alcohol or drug use.

As well as support to stop vaping or using alcohol or drugs, Eclipse can help with other issues, such as mental and emotional health and wellbeing and healthy living.

Be Smoke Free is a service for anyone aged 12 or over in Manchester who wants to stop smoking. People who go to the service can get advice and support on cutting down or quitting, without the need to go to their GP first. For people who want to stop smoking tobacco, Be Smoke Free can provide free nicotine replacement therapies (eg. patches and gum).

Be Smoke Free works with schools, colleges, Eclipse, Healthy Schools and other services to make sure young people can get support quickly and easily, and to deliver workshops that raise awareness about the risks of smoking.



Change
Grow
Live

BE
SMOKE
FREE

Eclipse

My Perfect Manchester

- No non-kitchen knives allowed
- No vaping or smoking
- Limited alcohol consumption
- Cleaner and greener environment
- Affordable healthy food for ALL
- A 4-day week for school and work
- Limited access to social media for those under 16
- No drugs
- No harm
- No bullying
- Always LOVE.

Orla, 13

Youth Voice in Action:

Substance Use



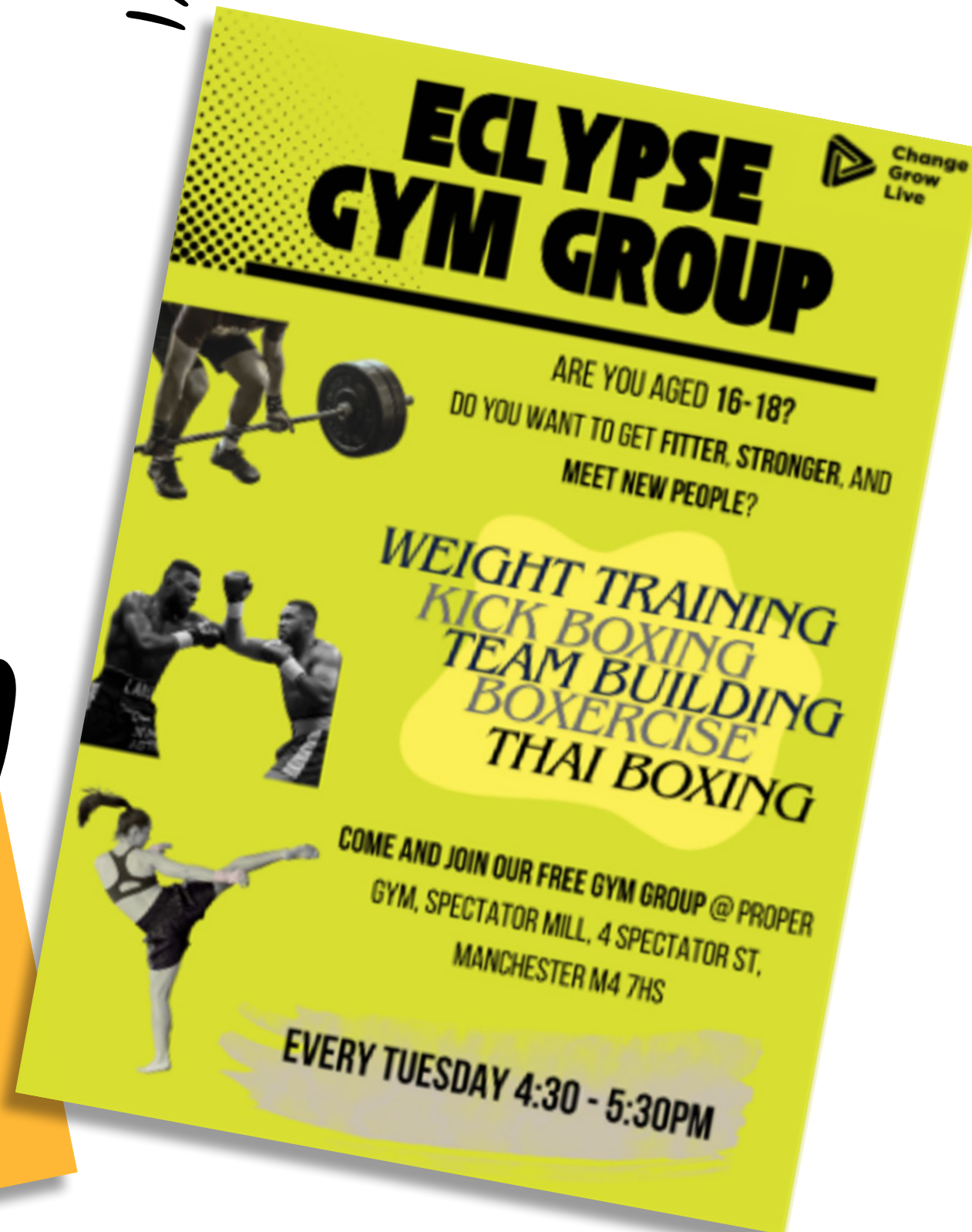
What have young people told us?

Eclipse set up a peer support group to hear from young people and understand their needs during and after leaving the service.

Young people said they wanted a space to take part in activities that help them socialise, build healthy lifestyles, and support their mental health and wellbeing.

4/10!

The number of young people in Manchester who get 60 minutes of activity every day



What are we doing about this?

Eclipse partnered with RehabFitness (a local organisation that supports people recovering from alcohol or drug addiction) to create the Eclipse Gym.

Young people aged 16–18 can attend weekly sessions offering activities such as weight training, kickboxing, Boxercise, Thai boxing, yoga, and team building.

Sessions last around an hour and are exclusively for young people who use the Eclipse service. These sessions are small and inclusive, giving young people the chance to connect with peers, Eclipse staff and fitness coaches in a safe space.

This has helped them make healthy choices and improve their overall wellbeing.

Youth Voice in Action:

Youth Vaping



→ What have young people told us?

Lots of young people have told us at different events that vaping is the most important thing to look at to support their health. They have said that vapes shouldn't be made to be appealing to children and young people, that there should be better controls over shops that sell them, and that young people need more information about the risks.

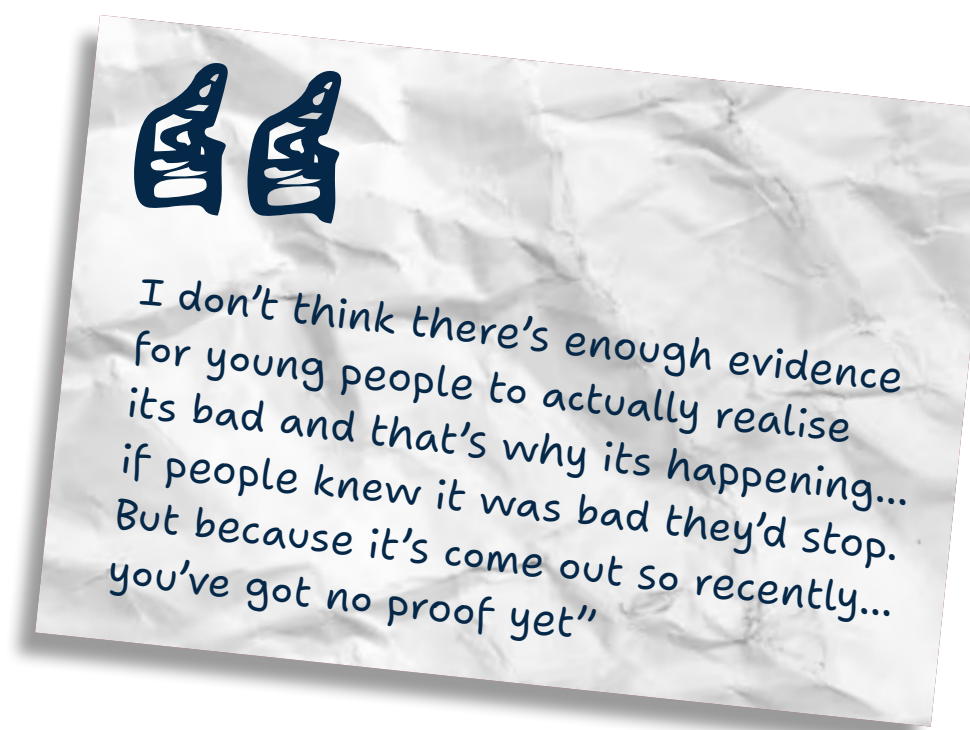
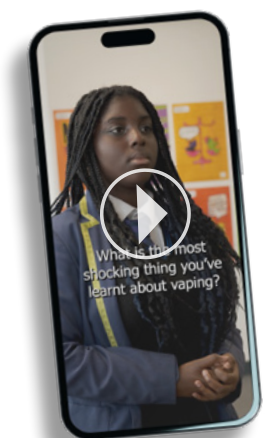


→ What else is happening?

One of the jobs of a Public Health team is to bring together different organisations that contribute to protecting young people's health. A group of organisations in Manchester meet regularly to look at youth vaping. They commission research to find out more about young people's views, give support, and ensure information is available for young people. There are also updates about how they are tackling illegal sales of vapes to young people. In addition, the group deliver workshops for children and professionals to raise awareness of the risks of young people vaping.

→ What are we doing about this?

The Public Health Department and Media Cubs worked together to put on a workshop about vaping at a secondary school in Manchester. They invited people who work for all the different organisations involved in preventing harm from vaping. Young people planned the whole event and had opportunities to create media content about what they had learned. They also took part in a question-and-answer discussion with workers who attended the event, and filmed one-to-one interviews.



Mental Health



Why is this important?

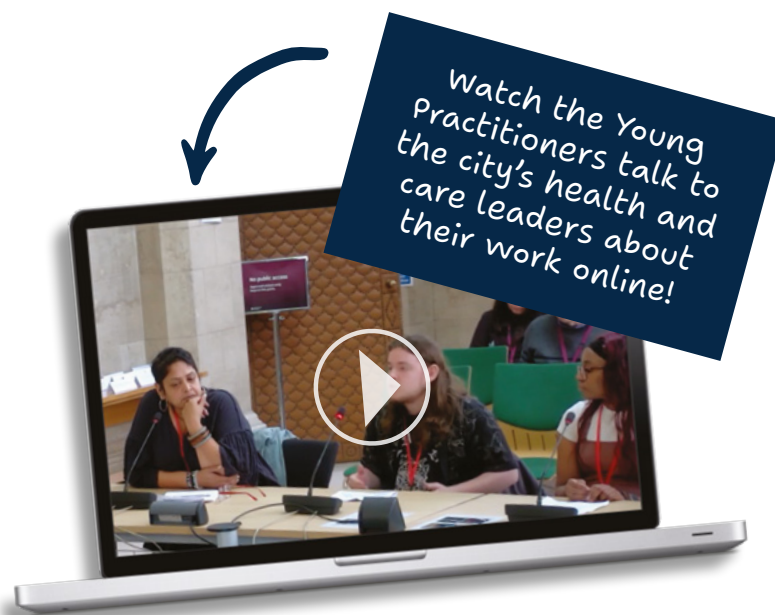
Growing up can be a challenging time, and some young people struggle with their mental and emotional health. This is especially the case for young people growing up in difficult circumstances, such as those experiencing poverty, discrimination, or family problems. Young people tell us that being supported by people who understand their circumstances makes a big difference.

Making Manchester Fairer is the city's plan for giving everyone a fair and just opportunity to be healthy. We know that young people from some groups (such as young people living in low-income areas and LGBTQ+ young people) find it more difficult to access mental health support. Youth workers who support those young people also told us they needed more information about how to help them with their mental health.

We worked with 42nd Street, a local mental health charity, to test new ways of supporting young people in difficult circumstances and providing training for the workers who support them.

The Making Manchester Fairer Young People's Kickstart provides one-to-one support for young people in challenging circumstances, and training for youth workers. 42nd Street employ workers who represent Manchester's communities.

Young people were involved in developing the training, and 42nd Street have employed three Young Practitioners with lived experience who deliver the training alongside other 42nd Street staff.



42ND STREET



I felt incredibly supported and not at all judged; this has helped me more than I could ever put into words. These sessions have changed my life"



~1 in 5

under-25s in England needs support for a mental health problem

(Source: Mental Health of CYP in England survey, NHS England, 2023)



Working with someone with lived experience was so helpful and helped me feel listened to and seen, that my experiences weren't discounted. It meant that I had the space to explore my identity."



Relationships and Sexual Health



Why is this important?

Adolescence is a time when many young people begin to explore their identity and form sexual relationships. Increasingly, young people tell us they use social media to find out about contraception and sexual health, because they feel embarrassed or worried about what adults will think.

It's important young people have access to good-quality information, feel safe to ask questions, and get support making decisions.

→ What services support this?

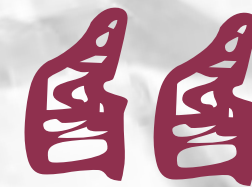
Brook provide free confidential contraception and information and advice on sexual health for all young people up to the age of 19.

They provide free condoms and other forms of contraception, pregnancy testing, and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections. Drop-in clinics are held at various times of the day (including evenings and weekends) and advice can be given over the phone.

It is a priority for Brook that young people feel safe and respected when using the service, feel that the service is accessible, and trust that they can have confidential conversations with workers.



At no point did I feel rushed or intimidated. I felt cared for and safe when using the service."
Brook service user



[I was] offered support in a way that other services wouldn't, and made me feel more heard and reassured."

The Proud Trust service user

The Proud Trust supports lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other young people exploring their sexual or gender identity (LGBTQ+) in Manchester. They run youth groups and mentoring for young people and provide training and resources.

One of their main services is Proud Connections, which is a free and confidential online safe space for young people who are questioning their gender or sexuality. It gives young people the opportunity to ask questions, share concerns, and get support from trained youth workers. This helps young people feel more confident and less isolated.

Parents, carers, and support workers can also access information and resources to help them better support young people.



Youth Voice in Action: Relationships and Sexual Health



YOUR FEELINGS
ARE VALID! ♥

helpful environment
time things
service
Good place
information
helpful staff
signhead
informed advice
times
years
good reassurance
Fast service
helpful service
decision
entire time
Good services
Confidential service
easy process
Good customer service
bff x
helpful environment
worries
effective lovely people
young people
unprotected sex
query
great staff
respect
Helpful kind
overall service
medication
questions
results
advice
good reassurance
amazing staff
Fast service
helpful service
decision
entire time
Good services
Confidential service
easy process
Good customer service
bff x
great service x
experience
Easy experience
Ben
good advice
Thankyou
sensitive staff
Lovely woman
member of staff
helpplace
amazing service
heather
comforting staff
girl reception staff
nurse
examination
problems
kind
door
Jill
empathic people
good service
compassionate staff
fact
contraception advisor
Regular corner
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Friendly staff
Great service
care
nice service thanks
Great clinic
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Heather
speedy process
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ease
amazing staff
cleanly clinic
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Fast appointment
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clear answers
great experience
Nice polite service
Amazing experience
Awkward nature
Excellent service
Friendly people
funny great service
hormonal contraception
comfortable speaking
needs
comfortable environment
answers
clinic
Debbie
lovely environment
nice staff
couple years
Clean facility
Brooks
Heather
Grate staff
calm
amazing staff
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Fast appointment
answers
altercation
problem
receptionist
clear answers
great experience
Nice polite service
Amazing experience
Awkward nature
Excellent service
Friendly people
funny great service
hormonal contraception

Why don't young people use free condoms?

67%

"Too embarrassed to
speak to someone about
getting them."

53%

"Don't know where
to get them."

→ What have young people told us?

Brook are really interested to understand what young people think about their service and what they think the service could do differently or better. They often ask for feedback and suggestions.

Young people said they can feel embarrassed to use sexual health services, so it is important for them to know that the service is free and confidential and the staff working there won't judge them. They also said it can help to make appointments online and have consultations over the phone.

Brook also wanted to find out more about how accessible the service is to young people with additional needs.

→ What are we doing about this?

A group of young people with special educational needs and disabilities worked with Brook to look at how the service could be more accessible to young people. They looked at lots of different things they thought could be improved, including how easy it is to use the website, how to find the service when visiting, and if people felt comfortable in the waiting areas.

Brook are now looking at how they can make changes based on the suggestions made by young people.

Young People Who Need Additional Support

Why is this important?

Some young people in Manchester are growing up in challenging circumstances and may need extra help. They include those with caring responsibilities (eg. for parents, siblings or other loved ones), young people who are 'looked after' in care, and young parents. Some of this support is provided by the Council (eg. Children's Services), and Public Health also supports community-based projects for some groups of young people.



→ Young Carers

Supporting young carers is crucial, because their care-giving responsibilities can significantly impact their education, health and overall wellbeing.

The Council works with young carers in Manchester to tackle health inequalities. Through consultations, many told us they feel left out in health settings like GP surgeries and hospitals.



Hear more about the Manchester Young Carers Strategy, from Young carers themselves!

To change this, the Council and Healthwatch Manchester co-designed, with young carers, a Health Practitioner Toolkit with two parts: one for professionals, and one for young people. The toolkit reflects what young carers asked for and has led to a greater awareness among practitioners of young carers' needs and the barriers in respect of health services. Manchester City Council and Healthwatch Manchester will keep promoting the [toolkit](#) through GP surgeries and online.

1,708
care leavers aged 16 or above in
Manchester as of August 2025

→ Care Leavers

Most young people are brought up by their parents or other family members, but in some circumstances it is not safe for them to stay with their family.

Manchester has a higher-than-average number of children and young people who are 'looked after' by the Council. Young people who've been in care may need extra support as they leave care and become independent.



Healthy Me Healthy Communities leads a partnership project supporting 'care-experienced' young people aged 16 to 25 in Manchester, focusing on those who are not in education, employment or training. The project aims to improve the lives of young people leaving care by providing support to build skills, while improving wellbeing, and making sure they can get good-quality, affordable healthy food.

It also helps young people to have more control over decisions that affect them, and to influence the way local services and systems support those who've been in care.

Young People Who Need Additional Support continued



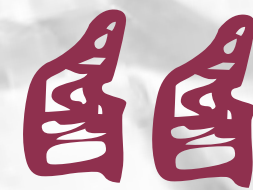
→ Young Parents

Although fewer young people now become parents early on in life, those who do may need additional support.

Home-Start Manchester's local community network of trained volunteers and experts helps families with young children through their challenging times. In Manchester, they run a Teenage Parents project for mothers who were 18 or younger when they became pregnant. The project supports young mums to navigate challenges such as finding housing and setting up a home, managing money, and education and work. They also support with other issues, such as relationships, making connections with other support services, eg. Family Hubs and children's centres, and dealing with problems like domestic violence.

The Young Dads Project, delivered by M13 Youth Project, supports Manchester fathers under the age of 21 to help them feel confident and present in their children's lives. They want young dads to be seen, included, supported and valued, and accessibility is central to the project's approach. Workers often attend meetings alongside young dads, helping remove financial, confidence and system-related barriers. Support is also offered in familiar community settings such as schools, colleges, youth venues and workplaces, as well as through early engagement at teenage antenatal clinics.

The project also helps with finding housing and work, and connects the young people with other young dads for peer support. This helps to reduce barriers to engagement and reinforces the message that young fathers are an integral part of their child's life. Overall, the project supports young dads by talking through their feelings and helping them to feel confident to give their child the best possible start in life.



Before I met M13 Young Dads workers, I didn't feel like anyone listened to me. They helped me get to my meetings, explained things in a way I could understand, and made me feel like I had a voice. Now I feel more confident as a dad and like I can actually be more present for my son.
M13 Youth Project attendee

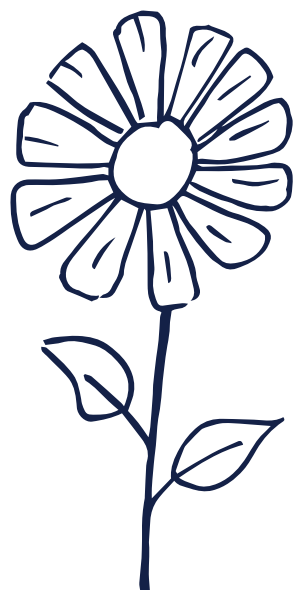
**Births by mothers in the UK
aged under 20 declined from**

4.2% to **2.2%**
in 2013 in 2024

Our Right to Health in Action: Next Steps

Earlier in this report, we talked about the different things we need to do to make sure Manchester is a city that works for young people, and how the seven principles of a Child Rights-Based approach can help us with this ambition. Throughout the report, we have shown how different organisations and services help young people to stay well and improve their health.

To end this report, we will look at the things that young people have told us still need to change and improve, and what we think is important to help them live, thrive and develop. Finally, we will make some recommendations on what needs to happen next.



My Perfect Manchester

My perfect Manchester would be
Without racism, sexism, ableism and homophobia
It would be accepting and inclusive
Welcoming all different types of people
Full of trees and plants all green and clear
Without litter
Without any violence or crimes
Sunny and bright
Very supportive
Full of different religions and races
Full of different ethnic minorities
A fair and just society.

Lucie, 14

Youth Voice in Action: Young People's Recommendations

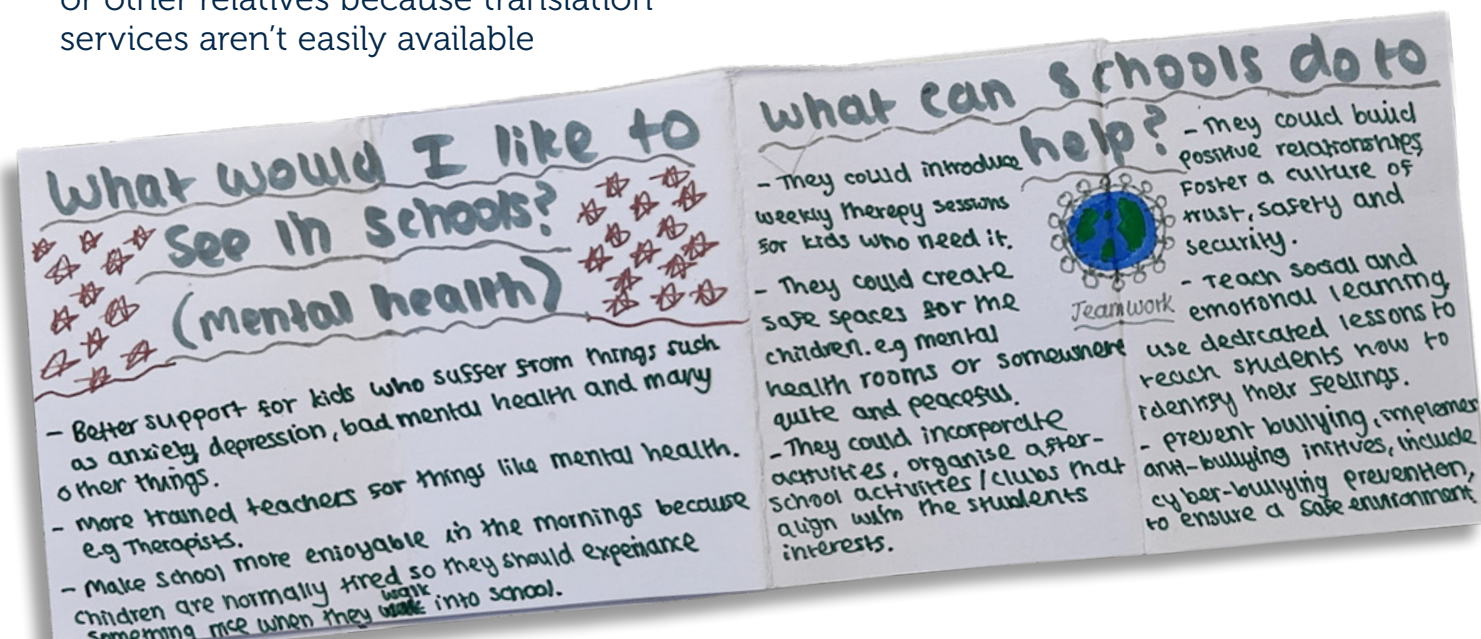


→ Challenges



Young people have told us about the health challenges they feel need addressing:

- Neurodiverse conditions that haven't been identified and unmet needs of those with special educational needs and disabilities in schools
- How social media shapes health and wellbeing differently for different genders
- Healthcare professionals might hold cultural biases that affect how they treat people
- Having to act as translators for parents or other relatives because translation services aren't easily available
- Impact on mental health of being exposed to distressing content online, such as war, injustice and climate change, or being aware of youth violence and feeling overwhelmed and powerless
- Feeling lonely and isolated, not having access to community spaces or being able to afford activities, and feeling like places such as parks aren't safe.



→ Future

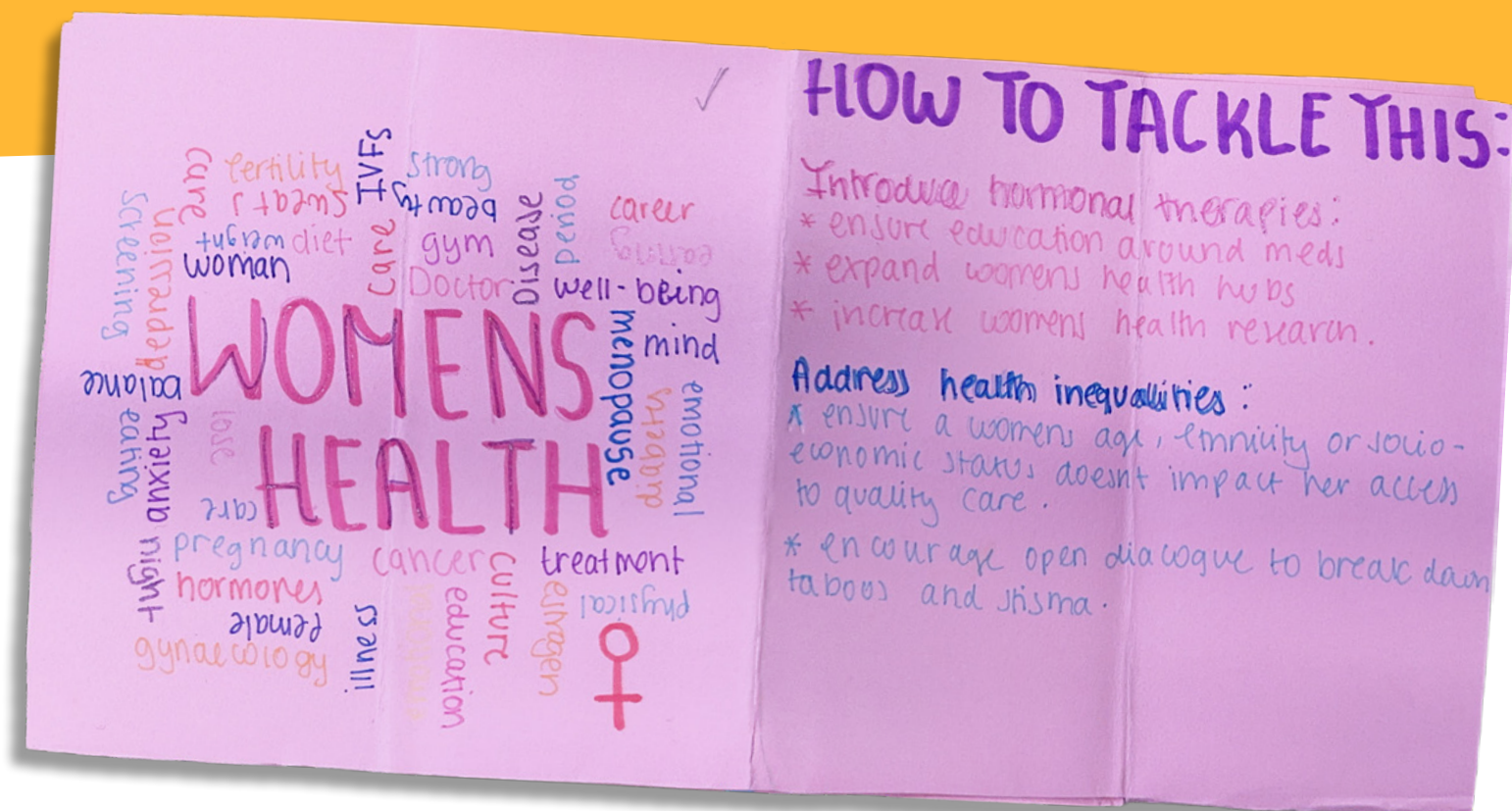
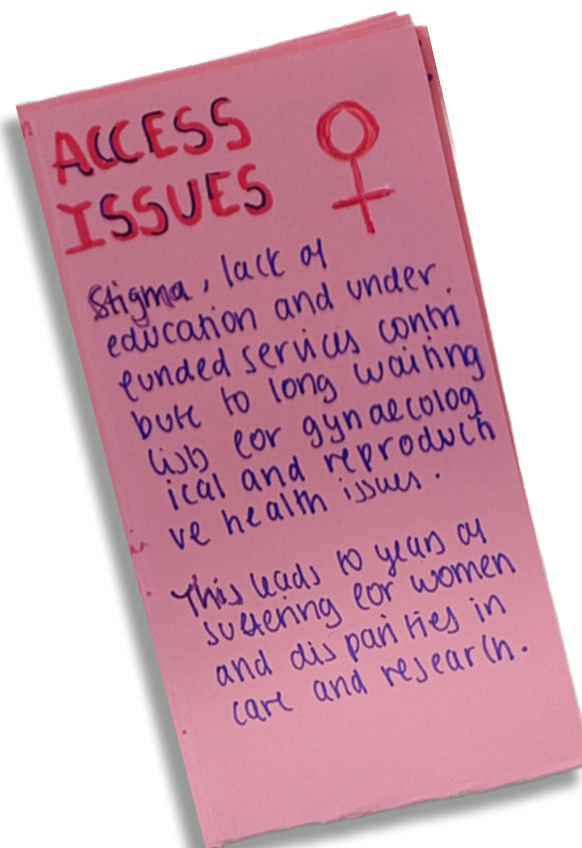
The Young Manchester Engagement Group told us about what they want to see in the future:

- More education in schools on being healthy, and access to school nurses
- Better support for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and training for school staff
- Support for young women to be more active and to get involved in sport
- Support for young men's mental health
- More understanding of women's health issues
- Safe and well-maintained local places to take part in sports and improve our wellbeing
- Promotion of the places, facilities and activities we already have in our communities
- Better healthcare support for people from different cultures, including training for staff and support for people who speak different languages.

Watch to learn more about how young people's voices can shape decision-making



Recommendations and Actions

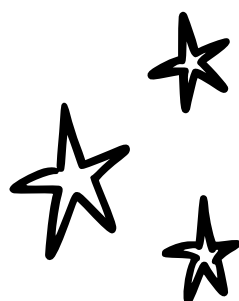


→ Collaboration and partnership

We will bring leaders together from the NHS, Children and Families Services, Education, Youth Services and voluntary sector organisations to meet regularly and work together to make sure we all have a shared plan to improve young people's health and wellbeing.

What it means for young people:

Young people will experience more joined-up support and services that meet their needs and experiences – from the practical information on careers, finance and healthy living, to the support they get through schools and youth services, as well as more specialist support if they are struggling.



→ Equity

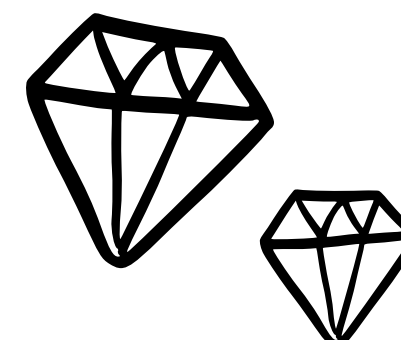
We will make health and wellbeing services for young people more inclusive, culturally relevant, responsive to real-life experiences, and shaped by young people. This means investing in better research to understand the challenges faced by young women, disabled young people, those with special educational needs, young people in care, and young carers.

We will also stand up for young people who have lost trust in health services because of racism, discrimination or other forms of oppression.

To make sure meaningful change happens, we will support leaders and staff across the NHS and the Council to build their understanding of the health needs of young people so that services genuinely see, hear, and support them.

What it means for young people:

Young people, and particularly those from underserved or underrepresented groups, and those with additional needs, will get support from services that understand them and can respond equitably and fairly. They will feel listened to, respected, and confident that the care they receive reflects their combined and unique needs.



Recommendations and Actions continued

→ Support in neighbourhoods

We will work with the NHS, voluntary and community organisations, leisure operators and other Council departments to provide support services that help young people navigate the challenges of growing up to be healthy and happy adults. We will ensure that all young people have access to sport and physical activity, and that there are safe spaces and activities that promote positive mental health and wellbeing in neighbourhoods where young people live. We'll do this through Family Hubs and Young Futures Hubs, as well as through specific wellbeing services for young people. We will make sure that information about services is provided in lots of different ways to make sure they know about the support available to them.

What it means for young people:

Young people will get help and advice online and in their neighbourhoods more easily, without a lengthy waiting list or the need to travel to unfamiliar places.



→ Healthy places

We will make the case for businesses to have stronger rules and guidelines to reduce young people's exposure to unhealthy products and environments. We will work with other Council departments to ensure that the neighbourhoods are safer, cleaner and greener so that young people can spend more time outdoors, socialise and be more physically active.

→ Rights and voice

We will uphold a clear human rights approach, recognising that every young person has the fundamental right to the highest attainable standard of health. We will actively work with diverse groups of young people to make sure their voices shape the way services are designed, delivered and improved.

This means creating real opportunities for young people to say what works, what doesn't, and what needs to change. As a result, this will ensure their lived experience directly influences decisions that affect their health and wellbeing.

What it means for young people:

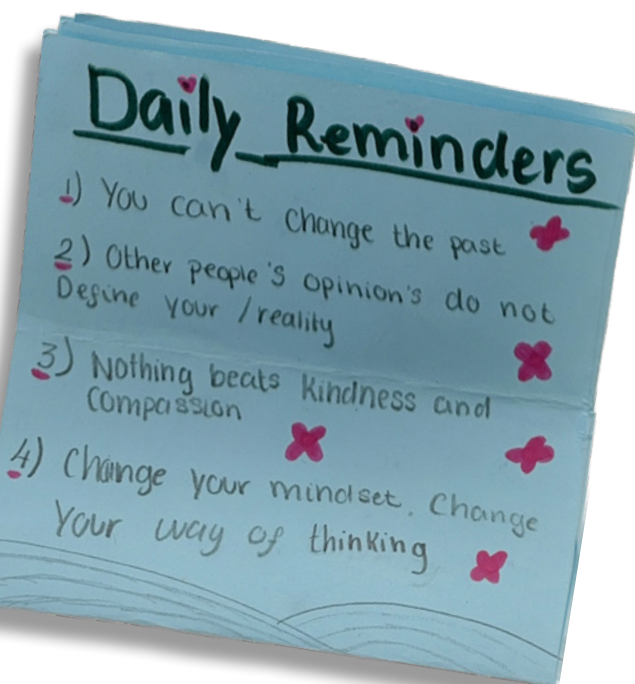
Young people will live in places that support them to be healthy and give greater access to affordable, healthy food. There will also be more safe green spaces for socialising and being active, resulting in fewer harmful influences.

What it means for young people:

Young people will have regular chances to share what's working and what isn't in the health system — and they'll see real changes happen because of what they say.



Epilogue



Hear a big thank you from Cordelle to all the young people who made this report possible!

None of us can create real change alone, but when young people, adults, services and communities all work together, we can build something that reflects the experiences of everyone.

Young people's Right to Health is about feeling safe, supported and able to grow in every part of life: at home, in school, online and in the community. For things to improve, everyone who influences young people's lives needs the confidence, knowledge and commitment to make health equity a reality. That includes understanding the range of challenges young people face today: pressure around exams, money worries, mental health, identity, friendships, the online world, and the impact of where they live. These are all things that shape their opportunity to be healthy now and in the future.

The best way to understand this is by listening to young people directly. Young people have a right to be heard, a right to be taken seriously and, most importantly, the right to good health.

My hope is that this report shows what is possible when young people's voices are at the centre of change. Because when young people speak up and adults listen, we can all create a future where every young person has the chance to thrive.

*Dr Cordelle Ofori,
Director of Public Health for Manchester*

Dr Cordelle Ofori with Tabitha Reid and Zainab Aamer from Young Manchester



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Lead Authors

Dr Cordelle Ofori
Aleksandra Bardon
Lydia Fleuty
Jaya Vyas

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Healthy Me Healthy Communities
NHS Manchester Foundation Trust School Health Service
NHS Manchester Foundation Trust (MFT)
Manchester Local Care Organisation
Home-Start
IntraHealth
Morelife – Junior PARS service
Media Cubs
Proud Trust
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Young Dads Project – M13 Youth Project
Young Identity
Young Manchester

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Below are the young people from Young Manchester:

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Aishat Ayansina, 14
Aleeza Shafique, 14
Ruqaya Hameed, 14
Sarah Khan, 17
Tabitha Reid, 17
Zainab Aamer, 17
Zoha Waheed, 14

Young person who attended sessions at Groundworks, 15

We would also like to thank Groundworks for their invaluable support as the main engagement partner in reaching and engaging young people.

Special thanks to Laura Smith, Partnership Lead at Young Manchester, for working with the young people on the report.

Below are the young people from Loreto High School who helped to create the School Nurse video:

Isobel, 14
May, 11
Stephanie, 14
Sumaiyah, 14

A special thank you to Jennifer Yates, School Nurse at Loreto High School, who filmed the interview with the students.

Below are the young people from Manchester schools who worked on the 'From Both Sides' project with Young Identity (a Manchester-based literature and performance arts charity) and authored the poems in the report:

Alija, 15
Lucie, 14
Orla, 13

Several Manchester high schools have also been featured in the Public Health Annual Report:

Co-op Academy Manchester
Loreto High School
Manchester Enterprise Academy
St Paul's Catholic High School

Glossary

#BeeWell: A project in Greater Manchester that asks young people about their wellbeing, how happy, healthy, and supported they feel, so schools and communities can make things better.

Census: A survey that happens every ten years in the UK. It collects information about everyone living in the country, eg. age, jobs, and housing. This helps plan services such as schools and hospitals.

Child Rights-Based approach: An approach to policy and practice that ensures children's rights (as set out in the UNCRC) are respected, protected and fulfilled in all decisions affecting them.

Commercial Determinants of Health (CODH): The ways that big companies and brands influence our health through the things they make, sell and advertise. This includes fast food, sugary drinks, vapes, alcohol, and even the marketing we see on social media. Sometimes, these products are designed or promoted in ways that can make it harder for people to stay healthy, especially young people.

Council Executive Member: A Council Executive Member is a local councillor who has special responsibility for a certain area of the Council's work, such as housing, education, health, the environment or transport. They are a bit like the 'lead' or 'head' for that topic in the Council. They help make important decisions, plan services, and make sure things run properly for people living in the city.

Cultural bias: Cultural bias is when someone judges or makes decisions about other people based on the rules, beliefs, or traditions of their own culture, without realising that other cultures do things differently. It often means assuming your way is the 'normal' or 'right' way, which can lead to unfair opinions or misunderstandings about others.

Discrimination: Unfair or unequal treatment of individuals or groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, disability or religion.

Family Hubs: Family Hubs are local places where children, young people and their families can get support from one easy-to-access spot. They bring different services together, such as help with mental health, parenting, early years support, and advice for young people, so families don't have to visit lots of different places to get what they need. They support families from pregnancy through to age 19, or up to 25 for those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). Their aim is to make getting help simpler, earlier and more joined up, so problems don't build up or get worse.

Health inequalities: Differences in health between groups of people. For example, some communities might have higher rates of illness because of poverty, housing, or lack of access to healthcare.

Healthwatch Manchester: Healthwatch Manchester are an independent organisation that make sure the voices of local people are heard when it comes to health and social care. They listen to what residents think about things like GP services, hospitals, dentists, mental health support, and social care, and then use this feedback to help improve services across Manchester.

Housing costs: How much you spend on rent or mortgage, which affects how much money you have left.

Intersectionality: How different aspects of who you are (eg. race, gender and income) combine to affect your experience – sometimes making life harder or easier.

IntraHealth: IntraHealth is an organisation in the UK that provides NHS healthcare services, including GP surgeries, pharmacies, vaccinations, and support for people who need regular medicines. It runs GP practices and community health services across different areas and helps to ensure people can get good-quality care close to home.

JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment): A local plan that looks at what people in an area need to stay healthy and happy. It also helps decide what services to provide.

Looked After Children/Cared for Children: Children who are cared for by the local council, often in foster homes or care homes.

Making Manchester Fairer: Manchester's plan to reduce unfair differences in health and wellbeing across the city. It focuses on tackling poverty, improving housing, and creating equal opportunities.

Making Manchester Fairer Young People's Kickstarter: Making Manchester Fairer Young People's Kickstarter is a programme that supports young people in Manchester who may face extra challenges that affect their mental health and wellbeing, such as poverty, discrimination or difficult life experiences. It works by funding support for young people and by training organisations that work with them, so they can offer the right help in a safe, inclusive and understanding way. The aim is to reduce unfair differences in health and give more young people the chance to feel well and thrive.

Manchester Youth Council: Manchester Youth Council (MYC) is a group of young people from across the city who work together to make Manchester a better place for children and young people. They meet regularly to talk about the issues that matter to young people and share these views with important decision-makers in Manchester City Council and across Manchester. MYC is open to young people aged 11–17 (or up to 25 for those with additional support needs).

MFT (Manchester Foundation Trust): MFT stands for Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust. It's one of the biggest groups of hospitals in the UK and runs ten hospitals across Manchester and Trafford. It provides all kinds of healthcare, from everyday check-ups to specialist treatment, and looks after hundreds of thousands of people in the area.

Poverty: Absolute poverty means not having enough money for the basics, such as food, clothes and a home. Relative poverty means having less money than most people around you, so you can't take part in normal life.

Protected characteristics: Things about you that are legally protected from discrimination, such as your age, race, gender, disability, religion and sexuality.

Qualitative data: Non-numerical information that describes qualities or characteristics, often collected through interviews, observations, or open-ended surveys eg. opinions, experiences and themes.

Quantitative data: Numerical information that can be measured and analysed statistically eg. percentages, counts and averages.

Social determinants of health: Conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age that affect their health outcomes. They include education, income, housing, employment, and access to healthcare.

UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child): An international treaty that sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of children, such as the right to be safe, go to school, and have a say in decisions about them.

UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) Child Friendly Cities & Communities programme: The UNICEF Child Friendly Cities & Communities programme is a project that helps towns and cities become better places for all children and young people. It supports councils to make sure children's rights are part of everyday life, meaning children are listened to, kept safe, treated fairly, and given good places to learn, play and grow. The programme works with local councils over three to five years to train staff, improve services, and involve children in decision-making. It aims to make sure that every child can have a say in what happens in their community and benefit from services designed with their needs in mind.

VoiceBox: VoiceBox is a programme run by Healthy Schools Manchester that brings pupils together from different schools to talk about health and wellbeing. Through interactive sessions, young people learn about key health topics, share their views, and help shape resources, campaigns and activities in their schools and communities. VoiceBox makes sure young people's voices are listened to and used to make real changes.

Young carer: A young carer is someone aged 18 or under who helps look after a loved one who has a disability, illness, mental health condition, or a drug or alcohol problem. Most young carers look after one of their parents or care for a brother or sister, but some look after someone outside their family home. This might involve extra jobs in and around the home, such as cooking, cleaning, giving medication or helping someone to get dressed and move around. Some children give a lot of physical help to a brother, sister or parent who is disabled or ill. They may also be giving emotional support to siblings and parents.

Young Futures Hub: A Young Futures Hub is a safe, welcoming space in the community where young people aged 10–18 can get support, try new opportunities, and have a say in things that affect their lives. These hubs bring different services together, eg. mental health support, careers advice, fun activities, skills programmes, and help for young people who might be facing challenges, all in one easy-to-access place. The goal is to help young people feel confident, supported and able to thrive, by giving them chances to build skills, meet new people and get help early if they need it. The hubs are designed to be youth-led, meaning young people help shape what happens there.

Young Manchester: Young Manchester is a Manchester-based organisation that supports young people and the groups that work with them. It helps young people have a voice, build confidence and skills, and get involved in decisions that affect their lives, communities and the city. Young Manchester works closely with young people to make sure their views are heard and taken seriously, especially on issues that matter to them.

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Mental Health :-

Health isn't always physical
Having good mental health is
important as physical!

There are multiple ways
to mental health!

> Talking to someone about
important or not!

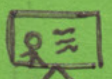
> Hobbies

> Peace

> Having time to yourself!



Reading



Watch TV

zzz

Sleep

When You feel



Create
Something



Talk about
it !!!



Go



JO

Being
Healthy
is
Wealthy

UNDER THE

What would I like See in Schools?

(Mental)

- Better support for kids
as anxiety depression, or
other things.
- more trained teachers
e.g Therapists.
- Make school more eni
children are normally
something nice when

HEALTHY

Adding a mental
health hour into
school timetable

weekly respect
ns (PSHE)

encourage young
to get
their

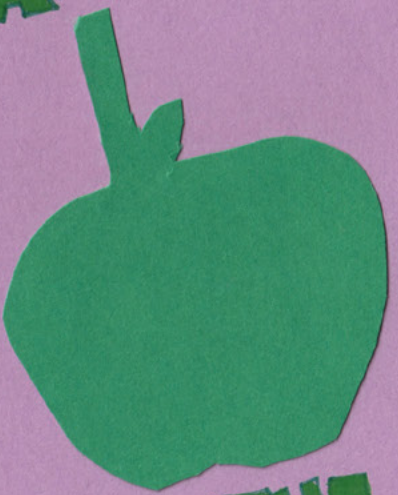
painting

journaling

activities to make sure
people can explore other
things + build on their
creative

allow
to look
thing

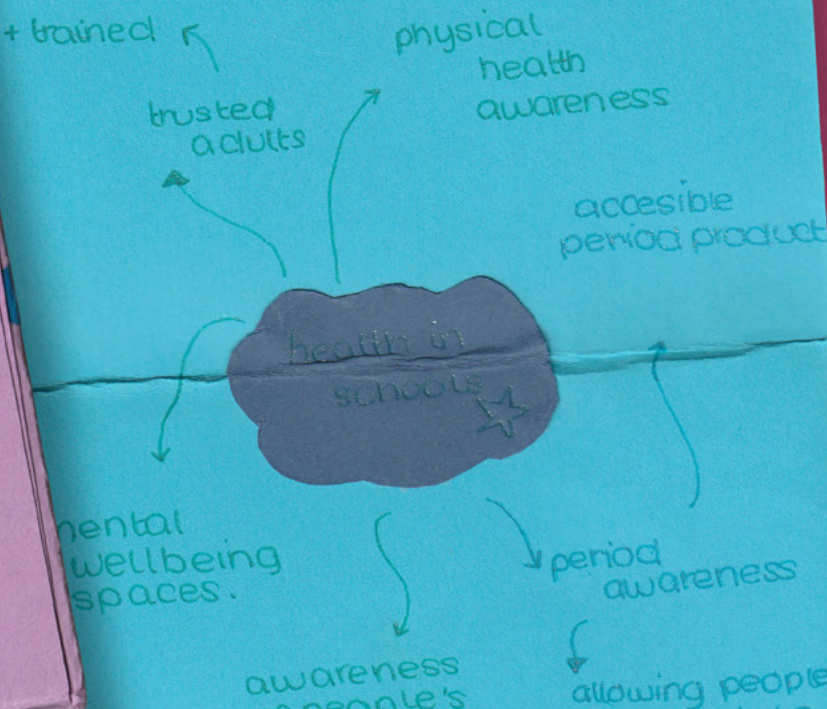
AN APPLE
A DAY



KEEP THE
DOCTORS
AWAY

HEALTH

representation



EAT YOUR
VEGETABLES



How can we
make school a
happier place?



WOMENS
HEALTH

Screening
balance
anxiety
night
pregnancy
hormones
female
gynaecology

illness
education
culture
treatment
estradiol
menopause
emotional
disorder
mind

♀

FEMALE
HEALTH

