94% OF YOUNG PEOPLE FELT HEARD THROUGH LIBRARY CO-CREATION PROGRAMME, REPORT FINDS

Wednesday 15 July, 2026

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A national report has revealed that involving young people in decision-making and co-creation creates stronger outcomes for communities, libraries and the young people themselves with significant potential to shape future library practice and inform national policy development.

At a time when only one in five young people believe adults running the country are listening to them, a new national evaluation, released by national charity, Libraries Rising, has found that 94% of the young people involved in a library co-creation programme felt their voice was genuinely listened to - and are now hoping decision makers sit up and take notice.

The findings come from the **Libraries Rising Youth Engagement Network**, which brought together **236** young people and **20** library services across England to design and shape library services alongside staff, collaborating as equal partners.

The report provides some of the strongest evidence yet that co-creation (giving young people meaningful influence over decisions that affect them) delivers true, measurable benefits for both young people and public services, strengthens relationships and improves how services are designed and delivered, making them more inclusive and relevant to young people's needs.

Among young people involved:

- 94% felt their voice was truly listened to
- 92% felt more welcome in their library
- 85% felt proud of what they achieved
- 77% gained new skills and knowledge
- 61% said they would visit the library more often than before

The impact was equally of great benefit for library staff:

- 88% reported greater empathy towards children and young people
- 81% said they could confidently identify what successful co-creation looks like
- 75% felt more able to demonstrate the value of co-created work
- 56% felt more confident delivering co-created projects

Young people described feeling empowered, valued and more connected to their local library through the process.

One young participant said:

"Something new that I didn't know before is... you can use the library for free."

A library staff member said:

"It's enabled a group that feels that there are barriers in their lives anyway, to find somewhere that they feel valued and that they feel slightly more understood, that there aren't specific expectations on them as such."

Tabitha Witherick Macaulay, Chief Executive, Libraries Rising, said:

“One of the most impactful takeaways was just how strongly young people engaged throughout the whole process. In many cases this helped challenge wider perceptions of young people’s interest in libraries, including their enthusiasm to continue working with services beyond the initial activity.

By building trust and taking a flexible approach to what can be achieved, the programme has demonstrated the value of co-creation as a model for meaningful engagement with young people. The key is to start the conversation, and to truly listen.

The evidence is clear: co-creation in libraries helps young people feel heard, builds confidence and belonging, and supports the development of inclusive services. At a time when many young people feel their voices aren't being listened to, libraries are showing what meaningful participation can look like in practice.”

Another member of library staff involved in the programme made their hopes for the future clear. They said:

"I think co-creation is the way forward and I would like to see it in at least 75% of any future projects."

Libraries Rising, who have also created a toolkit for library staff to help them incorporate co-creation into their work, is now calling for co-creation to become a core approach across the library sector, ensuring young people have a meaningful role in shaping the services designed for them.

https://librariesrising.org.uk/what-we-do/youth-engagement-network/

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