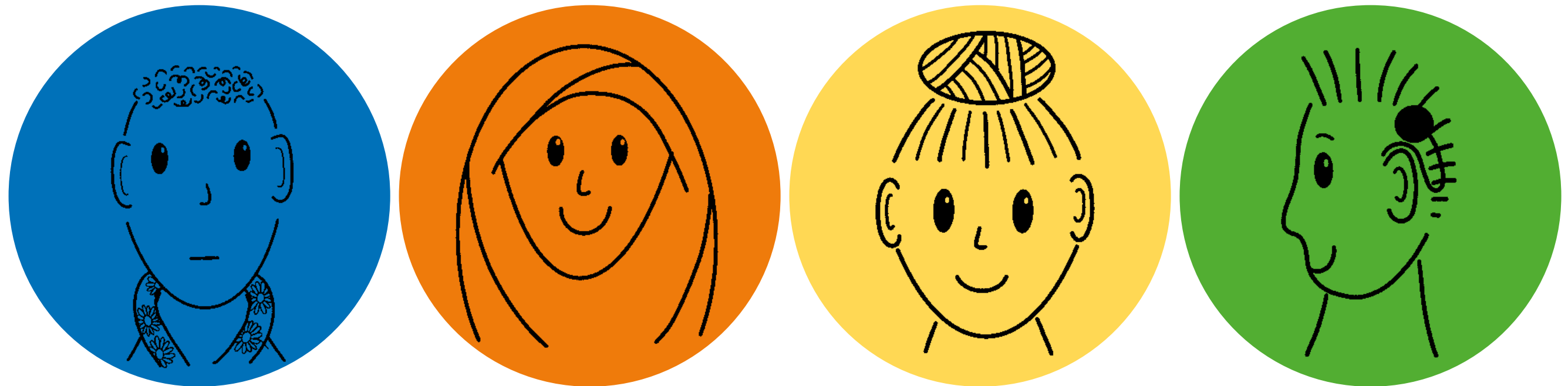


Organisational Strategy **2025–2028**



Association for Young People's Health

Introduction from our Chair and Chief Executive

Our 2025–2028 organisational strategy retains AYPH’s focus on the most pressing issues for young people’s health. Adolescence is a unique stage of development and a critical time for action. At this time young people change physically and emotionally. Apart from infancy the biggest development in the brain takes place in adolescence continuing into early adulthood. Inequality, a lack of availability of help, challenges accessing services that are there and a lack of understanding of young people’s needs are all threats to the health and wellbeing of 10-25 year olds. A focus on adolescent and young adult health is vital for young people’s wellbeing today and as a foundation for good health in later life.

The UK has 12 million young people aged 10-24 making up just under 20% of the UK population. As a generation they face changing and complex pressures online and offline. We celebrate many positive trends in young people’s health behaviours including reductions in smoking and drinking but not all the trends are positive and obesity, mental health, vaping and online harms are deeply concerning.

Working with young people at the centre of all we do, we will continue to work to improve young people’s involvement in health and increase understanding of their needs amongst

policy makers, health professionals and researchers. Our methods include sharing the most recent research and good practice and co-delivering highly regarded training and other events with young people.

We have developed our plan with our staff, trustees, advisory council young ambassadors and young trainers who together bring lived experience and diverse professional experience to their roles at AYPH. We will continue to work with them and our members and stakeholders to implement our priorities.

All of our priorities for change and activities to meet these will be supported by an aim to develop AYPH to best meet our goals. This includes continuing to focus on diversifying our funding to support our sustainability and ensuring that our work has impact for young people and their health. It is critical that we invest in this life stage and the expertise and experience AYPH brings are key to improving young people’s health.

Claire Bethel and Emma Rigby



Understanding everything that affects young people's health by keeping lived experience central

Young people are at the heart of all that we do. Our youth participation has continued to develop over the last three years and we have an embedded group of young ambassadors who form a youth advisory panel as part of our governance structure. Our young trainers have delivered courses and conference sessions across the country as set out in our success report. Our young trainers have also developed and created illustrations for the stories of young people that form the core of our strategy – highlighting why the changes we want are so important to young people's lives.

AYPH focuses on all the factors of a young person's life that impact on their health. This has included a multi year focus on young people's food security with a highly regarded place based piece of work with Newham Council. Bringing together young people's views, schools, the youth sector, the local authority and many other stakeholders demonstrated the importance of thinking about the whole system and the need to focus in on opportunities for transforming the ways things work for young people that have not been explored.

Finally networking and partnership are vital to all that we do and we were delighted to refresh our membership scheme in early 2025 making it free and easy to access – with over

600 members within the first month we know that this is a community that will continue to grow. Our amazing team with expertise in policy, participation, training, evidence and strategic influence will continue to work to deliver our ambitious priorities for change working with young people and the community of professionals and organisations who support them towards our vision.



Our vision, mission and values

Our vision

All young people have the best possible health and equal access to high quality youth friendly services.

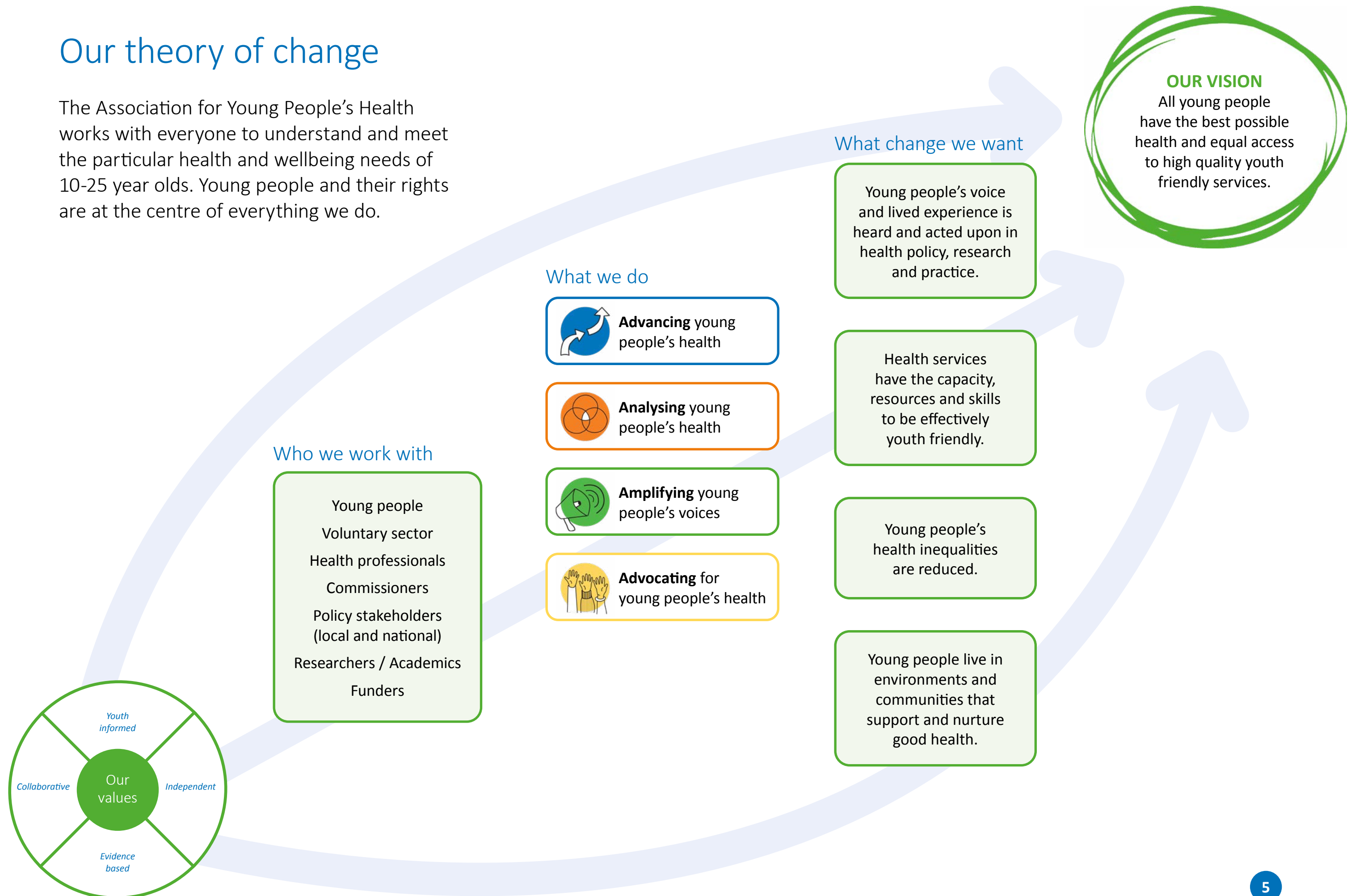
Our mission

We work with everyone to understand and meet the particular health and wellbeing needs of 10-25 year olds. Young people and their rights are at the centre of everything we do.



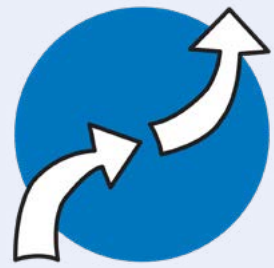
Our theory of change

The Association for Young People's Health works with everyone to understand and meet the particular health and wellbeing needs of 10-25 year olds. Young people and their rights are at the centre of everything we do.



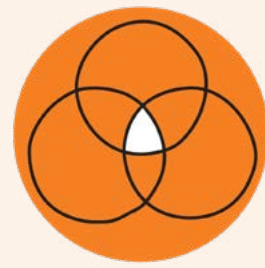
Our ways of working

We have four ways of working to achieve our vision and mission:



Advancing young people's health

We share information, innovation and best practice. This includes training as well as supporting a community of people and organisations committed to improving young people's health as part of AYPH membership.



Analysing young people's health

We provide access to high quality, reliable evidence, data and research about young people's lives, views and experiences.



Amplifying young people's voices

We value young people's expertise and deliver a range of participation and engagement projects as well as supporting our youth ambassadors and young trainers.



Advocating for young people's health

We bring the specific health needs and experiences of young people to a range of audiences. We advocate for young people's health and rights via our policy work at local, regional, national and international levels.

Our priorities for change

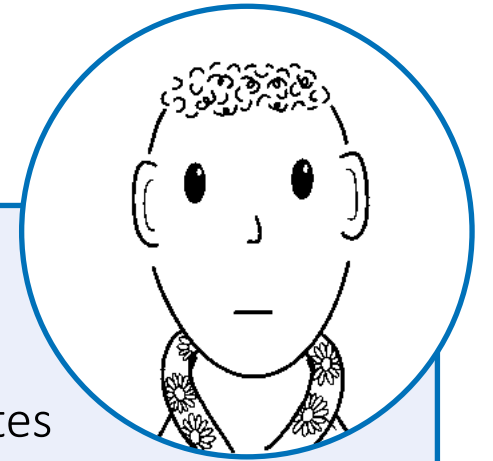
1 Young people's voice and lived experience is heard and acted upon in health policy, research and practice.

All too often young people are excluded from conversations or involved in a tokenistic way. Young people from groups more likely to face marginalisation and stigma are often the least likely to have their voices heard. Young people tell us they want to be involved in conversations about their own health and improving health for all young people. Youth engagement delivered well improves research, service planning and delivery. We will expand our expert youth engagement work with a range of objectives including:

- Providing expert support to enable young people's voices to be heard at the highest level of health decision making in the UK.
- Embedding ethical youth engagement models in research and health service settings.
- Ensuring a diversity of young people inform and shape AYPH's governance and work at all levels.
- Increasing the impact and reach of our work with young people.

12 million

young people in the UK
between 10-24



Milo is 19 and has really struggled with his mental health – his story demonstrates the power of effective participatory work with young people.

In the past it was dark for me - I only went out once a month and I didn't have any hope or aspirations. Things got progressively worse - I had three hospital admissions for my mental health, I went missing and I was picked up by the police. I was about 16 and I was debating if I wanted to live.

With help I feel like I am now at a point where I can take ownership of the past and distance myself from those feelings. I can use it for better rather than erase it from my head, I can use my experience to help others. As a young trainer I like sharing my experiences and helping people. I really enjoy the collaboration with other young people too.

Openly speaking about my experiences makes me realise that I am out of those times, I am capable of doing certain things. It has given me enthusiasm and motivation to do things I thought I couldn't do.

These stories are based on the experiences of the young people we work with and have been created by them. Names and identifying information have been changed or removed.

Our priorities for change

2 Health services have the capacity, resources and skills to be effectively youth friendly.

Models of youth friendly healthcare exist but there is a lack of understanding of the importance of their work. A lack of focus on the adolescent life stage, constrained budgets and overstretched health professionals can lead to a sense that youth friendly care is unachievable. We want to highlight why youth health services are so important and provide access to practical tools, evidence and good practice to support all services and settings with a range of objectives including:

- Making the case for youth friendly health services.
- Increasing understanding of the elements of youth friendly care and how to deliver it.
- Sharing innovation, good practice and the latest evidence in adolescent health across the UK.
- Co-producing practical tools to support youth friendly healthcare.

“These sessions illustrate that we must have the patience to listen equitably to all children and young people. This enriches our understanding of what solutions are possible despite working in financially challenging environments”

Delegate at LGA conference where AYPH Young Trainers presented



Mina is 20 and has diabetes – her story highlights the need for confidential, youth-friendly healthcare for young people and young adults.

My diabetes was managed pretty well when I was living with my dad but now I’m away studying its really hard to stick to my routine in particular eating well, and regularly when I’m studying, working and cooking for myself.

I didn’t feel like I had any support and every time I spoke to a doctor about it I felt like I was the problem. In the end I changed my GP – it was a relief they treated me like I was normal. The space was non-judgmental, confidential and they asked me about all the things that were going on in my life – hobbies, friends, accommodation – it helped me realise that more sleep would help me with stress and I got some links to info about local health services for me and my friends.

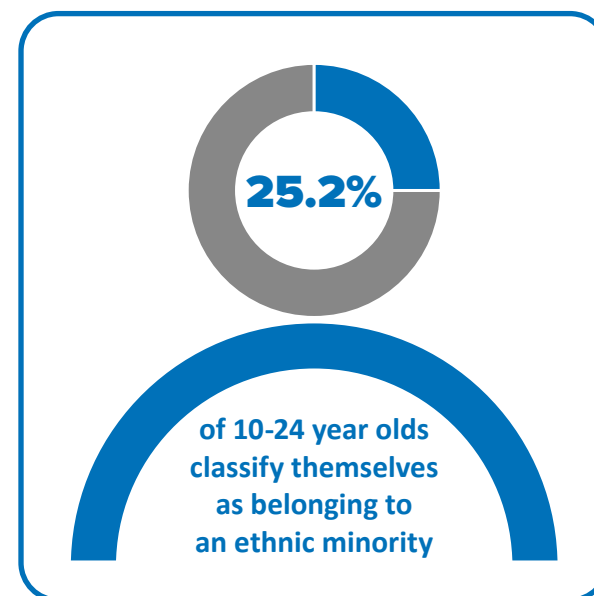
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Our priorities for change

3 Young people's health inequalities are reduced.

Health inequalities affect many groups of young people. Social factors that are unfair and preventable impact directly on young people's health. We will increase awareness of the health inequalities experienced by young people and focus on what professionals and organisations can do to improve things with a range of objectives including:

- Increasing understanding about how young people facing health inequalities can be more effectively supported in health and education settings.
- Increasing understanding about intersectionality and young people's health.
- Improving understanding of the needs of different groups of young people and how the barriers they face to good care could be reduced.
- Building the confidence and capacity of young people who experience health inequalities to lead systemic change through training and workforce development.



Ella is 15 and lives with foster carers – her story demonstrates the complexity of health inequalities and the need to support young people's aspirations

I don't talk about my life with my family before. When I was 13 I went into care. It meant moving school again and I hated it. My skin and my anxiety were getting worse.

I was more absent from school than in it and barely doing any work. I just couldn't focus and it got worse during Covid. My social worker got me in contact with the early help service and they helped me arrange some tuition at the library to help with school. Then I got involved in a local youth group – they really wanted to hear what I had to say and I was surprised. I never had good role models but being with the group has made me think about what I might want to do when I leave school – I have a bit of a path to follow.

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Our priorities for change

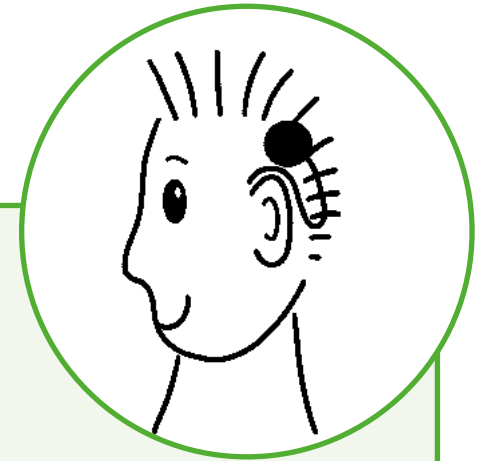
4 Young people live in environments and communities that support and nurture good health.

Young people spend a lot of time in their local communities and where they live is important to them. Good transport, safe parks, leisure facilities, clean air and youth centres and spaces all support their health and well-being. As they develop having communities and spaces that provide them with the things that are important for their physical and mental health is key. We want to develop the capacity of areas to support young people's health with a range of objectives including:

- Developing a UK adolescent health community to share good practice in places across the UK.
- Increasing understanding about young people's food security and its importance for health.
- Supporting places to work alongside young people to improve services and support.
- Increasing understanding about what supports young people's health in communities across the UK.

"Take in consideration that school may be the only place students are able to eat."

Young Person



Bob is 11 years old and has asthma – his story highlights the importance of local environments for young people, enough food and services working together.

My dad passed away from Covid and since then my family has really struggled. My mum has to leave early for work, there's often no breakfast and my new house has mould. I feel ashamed that I can't keep up with my friends cause I get out of breath a lot.

My doctor got in contact with school to tell them more about my asthma. School helped me get a mentor from a local project and now I go to their youth space when my mum has to work late – there's food there too.

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About AYPH

The Association for Young People's Health works to understand and meet the particular health and wellbeing needs of 10-25 year olds. For more information about our work email info@ayph.org.uk and visit our website ayph.org.uk



Illustrations by Ellie Page-Jones,
AYPH Young Ambassador