

IT'S OUR BOROUGH TOO

St Helens Borough Children and Young People's Declaration (2024 – 2027)

FOREWORD FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL CLLR DAVID BAINES

St Helens Borough Council's number one priority is doing all we can to ensure children and young people have a positive start in life. We are committed to making our borough a place where young people are safe and healthy, can live well, can learn and develop, and can achieve their aspirations and goals.

This is outlined in our St Helens Borough Strategy agreed and published in 2021 and can be seen in the significant investment and improvements we have made in Children's Services, rebuilding schools, opening new Family Hubs, investing in accessible play equipment in our parks, working with employers to provide careers advice and training opportunities, and much more.

As a council, we have committed significant investment in regenerating our town centres so that they are safe, attractive and fun places for children and their families as well as a source of pride and success for the whole community. We are striving to deliver better transport from projects such as the new train station at Lea Green, better public transport, investments in projects such as the CYCLOPS junction and other sites across the borough which are intended to make it safer and easier for pedestrians and cyclists to get around.

We are working towards tackling the climate emergency and our net zero target, so that we can hand the next generation an environment they can enjoy. In addition, in 2022 we agreed a Local Plan which protects the vast majority of our green and open space for current and future generations to enjoy while at the same time being ambitious for the jobs, homes and services children and their families need now and in years to come.

But we know there is more that we can do.

That's why we have produced this Children and Young People's Declaration. In putting together this important document, we have engaged with thousands of young people across the borough via schools as well as organisations such as our Youth Cabinet, Big Chat St Helens, and the Youth Climate Commission.

The Declaration has been codesigned with children and young people to make sure it spells out their priorities, their hopes, and their dreams, alongside our commitment to do everything in our power to deliver them.

We hope this Declaration will not only be 'owned' by those children and young people who have helped to produce it, but also by as many of their peers as possible. We also want people and organisations right across our borough to support

the ambitions contained within the Declaration, as if we're going to help every child fulfil their potential, we will all need to play our part - not just the Council but young people themselves, their parents, guardians and relatives, our nurseries, Family Hubs, schools, colleges and training providers, our local businesses, charities, and other essential public service providers.

We believe that every child raised in our borough deserves the best possible start in life, and this Declaration sets out how we can all work together to make that happen from birth and into education, training, work, and beyond.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Baines". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot at the end.

Cllr David Baines

St Helens Borough Council Leader

INTRODUCTION

Working together for a better borough, with people at the heart of everything we do, by improving people's lives together and creating distinct, attractive, healthy, safe, inclusive and accessible places in which to live, work, visit and invest is at the heart of everything we do as a Council. This is embodied through our St Helens Borough Strategy which outlines our commitments to achieve this vision.

One commitment we have outlined in our Borough Strategy is to work towards St Helens being recognised as a [UNICEF Child Friendly Borough](#). As part of this commitment, we want to ensure that young people have a voice in developing our plans, feel part of the journey and play an active role in achieving the vision set out in our Borough Strategy, because after all, they are the future of St Helens.

With this in mind, we have been engaging with children and young people across the borough to hear their vision for a good life in St Helens and to understand their priorities for the next three years.

This Declaration sets out their vision for St Helens, the themes that are most important to them, the changes they want to see for residents in the borough, and the outcomes that young people, the Council and local partners will strive to achieve in the coming years to make life better for young people in the borough.

- 1) MAKE SURE NO ONE GOES HUNGRY IN ST HELENS**
- 2) MAKE ST HELENS SAFER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**
- 3) MORE HELP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING.**
- 4) MORE PLACES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO GO THAT ARE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE.**
- 5) PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR THE FUTURE AND HELPING THEM TO ACHIEVE THEIR AMBITIONS**
- 6) LOOK AFTER OUR ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE AND ENSURE OUR BOROUGH IS CLEAN AND TIDY.**

COPRODUCING THE DECLARATION

We have placed real importance on ensuring the Declaration was coproduced with young people at its heart, to ensure they have decided upon the priorities which we will focus on in the coming years. We believe it is important for young people to have led the creation of this Declaration, to have ownership of it, and play a key role in the delivery of it.

WHO DID WE ENGAGE WITH?

In our initial phase of consultation, which was delivered in partnership with Vibe and Public Health England, was the Reach Programme. Within this we asked young people and children across the borough about their aspirations, and the barriers they experience in seeking to achieving them. In this phase of engagement, we worked across St Helens and engaged with Cowley College, St Cuthberts, Sutton Academy, Mill Green, St Augustine's of Canterbury and De le Salle, involving pupils from years 7, 8 and 9. This engagement included children and young people from all sorts of backgrounds and included the views of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). As part of this engagement, we hosted eight solution themed workshops, and 32 consultation sessions, within which we engaged with 1058 young people.

In our second phase of consultation with young people was the 'Hope Hack' event, which was delivered in partnership with Vibe, Altru Drama, Hope Collective, Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership, and the Daniel Fox Foundation. Within this we hosted eight themed workshops, with 85 young people attending from seven schools and colleges.

The workshops looked at the issues in education and how they could be resolved; at mental health services, how current services could be improved, and what good support should look like and; at community safety and the ways in which St Helens could be made safer; and also looked at poverty and inequality and how poverty affects individuals and families in St Helens, and what we can do to combat this

We took the findings from our two initial phases of engagement and shaped the priorities of young people by working alongside the Youth Climate Commission, Big Chat St Helens, and St Helens Youth Cabinet. Through these sessions we developed the priorities further and agreed the areas upon which we will focus over the next three years. This document outlines those key areas and will be refreshed in 2027.

FUTURE GOVERNANCE

The Declaration has been developed with, and is owned by, the Council's Youth Cabinet who will monitor and work with the Council and partners to ensure that the priorities young people have set out are delivered upon.

The monitoring of the progress against the delivery of the priorities contained within this Declaration will be reported to the St Helens Youth Cabinet once per quarter.

Each of the groups that co-produced the Declaration will continue to have an active role in the delivery of the agreed priorities.

Below is a summary of what each group do:

St Helens Youth Cabinet

St Helens Youth Council and UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) members are young people aged 11-18 years, elected to represent the views of young people across St Helens, locally, regionally and nationally such as, British Council Youth Convention. UKYP members also represent views nationally, attending an annual debate in the House of Commons in London. Members attend events informing them about important social and political issues. They gather the views of other young people using online surveys, and campaign for changes by producing films, blogs and other media.

Big Chat (St Helens)

Big Chat is a youth voice group for young people aged 11-25 with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND). Big Chat discuss issues that are important to young people and campaign for positive change in our area. Members take part in consultations and discuss issues that are important to them, creating ways to tackle these and ensure voices are heard. The latest focus for their work is around Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) ensuring young people are involved in these and they are the best they can possibly be. St Helens Borough Council engaged with Big Chat on priorities for the future which have been embedded into this document.

Youth Climate Commission

Young people from St Helens have seized the climate change conversation following the close of COP26 with the first ever Youth Climate Commission. Hosted by St Helens Borough Council, 15 students from De La Salle School gathered to hear from local figures in the local fight against climate change. Students also used the opportunity to discuss key issues in the climate change agenda, including waste, energy and transport, before presenting their own ideas to make each more sustainable, considering the challenges that might be presented and must be overcome. They also made their own pledges to demonstrate their climate action commitments. This has been incorporated into St Helens Climate Response Plan and their thoughts have also been included in this Declaration. The youth climate commission will continue to bring in young people from across the borough's high schools to discuss climate change and how change might be affected locally.

HOW WE WILL DELIVER AND MEASURE PROGRESS

This Declaration will be supported by a delivery plan to support its implementation and to ensure that progress is monitored. Council representatives will report progress to the Youth Cabinet on a quarterly basis via an Outcomes Framework.

THE ST HELENS

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S PRIORITIES

1) MAKE SURE NO ONE GOES HUNGRY IN ST HELENS

Summary

Young people in the borough identified the rise in the cost of living as a huge problem that they felt is impacting themselves, their families, and their friends. They also acknowledged that the problems surrounding the rise in inflation and the cost of living are not going away anytime soon and felt more will need to be done to ensure the most vulnerable in our borough are supported. They wanted to ensure this was reflected in one of their key priorities. As part of this they felt the most important area around cost of living was ensuring that no one goes hungry in the borough. They believed this was particularly important as hunger can have huge health implications on individuals and can have wider impacts on other societal issues such as an increase in inequalities, an increase in crime, an increase in poor mental health, and could also limit the aspirations of individuals and families in the borough. They felt that food banks were a good short-term fix but people accessing this needed longer-term support and a pathway to food independence. They wanted to see a longer-term solution.

What the Council has done so far.

St Helens Council have convened a steering group on the cost of living to focus their areas of support for residents. This runs alongside the Inequalities Commission which is made up of council representatives and local partners and looks to identify key changes, interventions and actions that the Council and partners can take to support people and reduce inequalities in the borough.

This has helped the Council target support through our allocation of the Household Support Fund. Through this we have distributed support in this area via supermarket vouchers to those in crisis and have provided schools with additional vouchers to support families in need. We have also been able to ensure no child goes hungry during the school holidays by extending free school meals during those periods. This has also been extended to children who were not eligible under the scheme's criteria but who were identified as struggling and 'falling through the gap'.

In recent years, working with Halton and St Helens VCA, Torus and the Food Alliance, we have been able to support our five main food banks and four food pantries with food and cash donations. We have worked with local churches and community groups to expand the number of static food pantries in the borough growing them from three to seven (one in each locality area) in just two years.

We have also supported Mission in the Economy and the VCA in setting up the St Helens Borough Mobile Pantry. The vehicle looks to bridge the gaps between

community food provisions across St Helens helping to ensure more areas have access to affordable food. The vehicle has now been adapted and is ready to visit sites across the borough to provide more food provision in wards across the borough.

Through our Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) Programme, which is aimed at providing healthy free school meals and activities for young people during the school holidays we have provided 50,513 meals to young people and distributed 754 food parcels and food hampers to children and young people who attended the programme and who were leaving care.

Key stats

- £30,000 committed to set up food pantries.
- Now up to seven food pantries
- Mobile pantry visiting four sites in the borough.
- Expansion of community growing schemes
- 50,513 meals provided to young people through HAF
- 754 food parcels and food hampers through HAF

Council Pledges (the Council will)

- Continue to expand and promote community food provision across the borough.
- Promote & support affordable food provision across the borough.
- Work to ensure people can progress to be 'food independent' and are supported with other pressures.
- Continue to ensure free school meals are delivered to those who need them.
- Continue to make reducing inequalities a priority for the borough through initiatives like Cradle to Career and the Inequalities Commission
- Continue to encourage reduction in food waste in schools.
- Continue to promote uptake on the Healthy Start Scheme
- Increase the levels of education to be delivered in schools around cooking and sustainable meals.
- Undertake food waste recycling trial in schools in St Helens
- Encourage volunteering opportunities for staff to support food bank and food pantry operations.

Young People Pledges (Young People will)

- Keep an eye out for each other – ask if others are struggling and be there to support and raise awareness about the support on offer
- Donate to food banks and pantries and the mobile pantry and ask parents/schools to support them too.
- Create opportunities through school etc to raise donations for food banks/pantries.
- Support their school's food bank or set up a school food bank.
- Support the reduction and recycling of food waste in schools and at home.
- Encourage volunteering opportunities to support food banks and food pantry operations.

Partners Pledge (partners and stakeholders will.....)

Through this next period of consultation, we will seek to capture the pledges of parents, guardians and relatives, our nurseries, Family Hubs, schools, colleges and training providers, our local businesses, charities, and other essential public service providers.

Useful links

[Food - St Helens Borough Council](#)

[St Helens Mobile Community Food Pantry \(sthelensmobilepantry.org.uk\)](http://sthelensmobilepantry.org.uk)

[St Helens - Feeding Britain](#)

2) MAKE ST HELENS SAFER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Summary

A strong theme that came from our engagement with young people was the importance of feeling safe, particularly in and around the two town centres. Young people highlighted that they often felt vulnerable when walking through St Helens and Earlestown town centres and through our parks, particularly at night, and would try to avoid doing this when they could.

They suggested a number of solutions which would make them feel safer when out and about. This included the introduction of free phones on the streets for people to use in an emergency, the introduction of Wi-Fi spots and mobile charging ports so they could remain contactable and connected; more lighting particularly in our parks and dark places, and for a bigger police presence to operate in the evenings, particularly in hot spot areas. They also suggested more education in schools about gangs, weapons and self-defence.

Alongside this, they also felt there were a lack of safe places for young people to go in the borough to socialise safely with their friends. They wanted to see more youth clubs or youth centres offered as a safe space for young people to go. They felt this would help more young people get engaged in something productive, and of interest to them, and could help them stay off the streets, potentially also helping to prevent anti-social behaviour in the borough.

What the Council has done so far

St Helens Council has brought together a [Safer St Helens partnership](#) which consists of agencies and partners who have the powers to tackle anti-social behaviour, hate crime and violent crime in the borough. The partnership includes representation from Merseyside Police, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, local housing providers, and several departments from the Council.

The partnership recognises that anti-social behaviour and drug misuse and environmental crime are a top priority for residents. The partnership works to identify, challenge and where appropriate, educate or prosecute those who commit anti-social behaviour. As part of this initiative, the partnership runs a number of annual campaigns to tackle seasonal rises in anti-social behaviour through their Springwatch, Safe Space and Good Guy.

To help alleviate hate crime we have worked with schools on the introduction and embedding of a new syllabus in Religious Education lessons which promotes the British Value to respect different faiths and beliefs. Through SACRE the Council works on a Holocaust Memorial Day each year and provides support and training on other faiths and religions in recognition of Interfaith Week.

We are currently undertaking planning to regenerate and transform both our town centres and as part of this we have been working to ensure safety is a top design consideration. The Night-Time Economy (NTE) Forum have also been consulted on plans for regeneration and their feedback has been incorporated into the regeneration plans. As a result of this, CCTV will be aligned to new regeneration plans and will ensure coverage in new open spaces. Engagement will be ongoing with Police and the highways department to ensure that the Town Centres are a safe location for all. This includes plans to introduce a new Police Town Centre Team to support with this.

Key stats

In our Resident Survey 86% of respondents feel safe or fairly safe in their neighbourhoods during the daytime

- However, 30% of respondents feel unsafe at night
- The overall crime rate in St Helens in 2023 was 156 crimes per 1,000 people

Council pledges (the Council will)

- Upgrade and Invest in our CCTV to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour and serious crime.
- Design out crime and anti-social behaviour in our town centre regeneration plans.
- Work with schools on safety campaigns for young people and to educate young people on the dangers of gangs and engaging with violence and weapons.
- Work with schools to improve education on hate crimes.
- Make our Open Spaces safer places to be through our Open Spaces Strategy
- Coordinate educational programmes in schools that highlight the dangers of being in a gang and engaging with violence and weapons.
- Support in the delivery of the Merseyside Serious Violence Strategy
- Work with the Police to look at how the Council can support their strategies to ensure more 'hot spot' areas in the borough are effectively policed and monitored.
- Secure additional grants and funding opportunities to deliver programmes in our communities' and to deliver outreach services in our Town Centres, Parks and Open Spaces.
- Continue to work with partners to target clean up areas and develop programmes to address the issues – knives, needles, vapes etc

- Continue to clamp down on businesses selling adult products to those who are underage

Young People Pledges (Young People Will)

- Know the borough – familiarise themselves with the local area, including safe routes, emergency exits and places to seek help.
- Travel safely – use well-lit paths, public transport, or travel with friends and family when possible.
- Save important numbers and emergency contacts (such as police, helplines, trusted adults) in your phone.
- Share plans and be contactable when going out – inform someone they trust about their whereabouts and estimated return time and ensure they are contactable via phone.
- Report any incidents of harassment, violence, or unsafe behaviour they see, and understand how to report anonymously if needed through Crimestoppers and other organisations.
- Be aware of the consequences of carrying knives and weapons
- Report businesses who are selling adult products to those who are underage

Partners Pledge (partners and stakeholders will)

Through this next period of consultation, we will seek to capture the pledges of parents, guardians and relatives, our nurseries, Family Hubs, schools, colleges and training providers, our local businesses, charities, and other essential public service providers.

Useful links

Young people in **St. Helens** can report crimes through the following channels:

1. Online Reporting (Merseyside Police):

- Use the [Merseyside Police online reporting form](#) to report any crime you've witnessed or been a victim of.
- [This includes incidents such as assault, theft, criminal damage, harassment, online abuse, or blackmail¹.](#)

2. Emergency Situations:

- In urgent or emergency situations, always dial **999**.
- This number connects you to the police control room, where trained operators will assist you.

3. Non-Emergency Reporting:

- For non-emergency situations, call **101**.
- Use this number to report incidents that require police attention but are not immediate emergencies.

4. Police.uk Crime Map:

- Explore the [St. Helens crime map](#) on Police.uk.
- [It provides information on crime levels, hotspots, and statistics in your area.](#)

3) MORE HELP WITH MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

Summary

Young people raised the issue of mental health and wellbeing as one of the big issues they felt is impacting their generation. Many reported that they themselves, or someone they knew, faced barriers due to their mental health challenges which included experiences of anxiety or depression, or a lack of self-confidence or low self-esteem. They felt that poor mental health impacts heavily on a young person's ability to reach their full potential, and in some cases is a barrier to them 'living a normal life'.

To add to this, they felt that there isn't suitable provision in place to support young people with their mental health needs. They feel that it is difficult to access support, with waiting lists for services being far too long, and not very well advertised, leaving young people who are struggling with their mental health and wellbeing feeling helpless. They also commented on the lack of SEND and mental health support in schools and a lack of understanding from schools on how to support students with their mental health needs.

In terms of solutions, they outlined they would like to see more and better opportunities to be able to access support and services. They also wanted to see more education offered to young people around coping mechanisms, and to get a better understanding of themselves through skills and self-development programmes and learning. They also raised they would like to see peer support groups for young people to meet like-minded people and share experiences. They felt that free access to activities to support their physical health would in turn support their mental health.

What the Council has done so far.

We know how important mental health and well-being is and have worked hard to provide a range of services that are online, via text or in person. Through our [Mental Health Strategy](#) we are striving to ensure that everyone in St Helens will have access to the services that make them feel good about their lives and the high calibre support and caring services they require when they do.

In terms of services we currently offer, [Kooth](#) provides online information and support, alongside a counselling text service, this is free to register and use and is completely confidential. [ChatHealth](#) is a confidential text messaging service for young people aged 11-19 in St Helens. [Thrive St Helens](#) provides a range of services to support children and young people's emotional and mental wellbeing. THRIVE has four sections; Advice: Signposting, self-management and one-off contact. Help: Outcomes-focused, evidence informed low-level interventions More Specialised Help: to help more complex issues and behaviours. Risk Support: risk management and crisis response. Our [Local Offer](#) provides further information on support available including programmes within schools.

Within our educational settings, wellbeing of children and young people is one of our top priorities. We have co-funded almost a third of our schools to complete the

Therapeutic Schools Award enabling them to embed trauma informed, attachment aware approaches that will support every child's wellbeing and mental health.

We have also implemented TESSA-Triage for all education support and specialist advice for educational settings -in order to ensure educational and wellbeing needs are identified early and schools and families receive evidence-based intervention from the first contact.

We are in the process of developing a SEND Friendly Library in Haydock to be co-designed by parents, carers and young people with funding secured from ACE Libraries Improvement Fund. This will provide a vital space for children with SEND to learn and socialise with each other.

Additionally, work has been progressing to tackle self-harm in young people, including a comprehensive action plan to promote training and interventions. Please see below which highlights some data trends for self-harm in the youth cohort.

Although not raised by young people themselves, we are all too aware of the emotional support that young carers need as they look after their family members. Young carers play a vital role in supporting family members who are ill, disabled, or dealing with mental health conditions or substance misuse. St Helens Council has worked with local organisations to ensure young carers receive the necessary support and recognition. [The St Helens Young Carers Centre](#) is an important resource for young carers in the borough and offers regular support and emotional assistance to young carers who take on practical and emotional responsibilities beyond their years. The centre aims to ensure that every young carer has the same opportunities as other children and young people of a similar age.

To support young people and promote wellbeing we also launched our Active Lives Strategy which seeks to promote physical activity and inspire young people to participate. The Strategy aims to encourage schools to play a vital role in inspiring young people to be active and develop life-long habits around exercise. It also looks to support inclusivity and focuses on reaching every part of the community, including people with disabilities and health conditions. The overall goal is to improve health, well-being, and quality of life for all by fostering a culture of physical activity in St Helens.

Key stats

- In 2020, St Helens had the 4th highest rate of admissions for mental health conditions (0-17 years) in the North West (Public Health England, 2020)
- Self-harm admissions for children and young people in St Helens have reduced since last year
- Levels of tobacco smoking amongst young people in St Helens continue to fall
- % of young people in St Helens claiming to vape regularly continues to increase
- % of 14-16 year olds in St Helens who claim to drink alcohol has increased since last year

Council Pledges (the Council will)

- Work with the YMCA to create a new Youth Zone in St Helens as part of the Town Deal.
- Work with partners such as Mersey Care, OK TO ASK, St Helens Wellbeing Service, Talking Therapies and more, to boost support on offer for young people with their mental health and well-being.
- Tailor our approach to promoting our LiveWell search engine to young people which outlines all support options available in the borough.
- Work with our Young Advisors to review our mental health and wellbeing offer and services.
- Continue to deliver our Suicide Prevention Strategy to help bring down the numbers of suicides in the borough.
- Deliver our Active Lives Strategy to ensure more young people are physically active, having a positive impact on their wellbeing.
- Take action against the sales of vapes to young people.
- Work with partners to broaden training and development opportunities to improve people's understanding and knowledge of mental health in order to support others

Young People Pledges (Young People will)

- Look after their own physical health by eating a balanced diet and ensuring they exercise regularly.
- Learn about mental health and recognise common feelings and experiences.
- Seek help and support - if feeling overwhelmed reach out to teachers and those you trust and talk about your feelings.
- Speak up and report any negative experiences when accessing support.
- Avoid the use of substances such as alcohol, drugs, and vaping and be aware of the harms that these can cause to physical and mental health.
- Look after your friends or others who may use them and know what support is available.
- Undertake the 'I'd Ask the Question Pledge' which includes the promotion of the Zero Suicide Alliance training, the *Stay Alive app* and the encouragement for young people to "check in" on each other.

Partners Pledge (partners and stakeholders will.....)

Through this next period of consultation, we will seek to capture the pledges of parents, guardians and relatives, our nurseries, Family Hubs, schools, colleges and training providers, our local businesses, charities, and other essential public service providers.

Useful links

[Stop Suicide Pledge - St Helens Borough Council](#)

4) MORE PLACES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO GO THAT ARE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE.

Summary

Young people felt there were a lack of affordable places for them to go and socialise, and often felt the only perceived safe places for them to do this were fast food restaurants where they would have to spend money on unhealthy food to stay. The alternative for a lot of young people would mean they would avoid going out to socialise and this could sometimes lead to knock on impacts with them becoming more socially isolated.

Young people also pointed out that they think St Helens is lacking in a youth support offer and they believe this is leading to more young people being on the streets which could have a knock-on impact on the increase in anti-social behaviour in the borough. They wanted to see a better local offer with more free and affordable activities for young people to take part in including sports, gaming, cooking and music and other opportunities to gain skills in. They believe a better local offer would help young people find themselves and help them to unlock their passions and interests.

When asked where activities should be offered young people were clear that they would prefer it to be in a Community Centre or a safe local space. They wanted these spaces to be safe, warm and comfortable and available for use in the times young people wanted them – afterschool, school holidays and weekends.

Alongside this, young people also told us they wanted more SEND and Autism-Friendly spaces and activities, reflecting their aspirations for a more inclusive, vibrant and supportive community.

What the Council has done so far.

We have commissioned Vibe to help expand our offer and so far we have delivered outreach Youth Offer in St Helens Town Centre and Haydock and opened a youth club in Parr including an open access youth club at Parr Sports and Social Club on Saturday nights. Vibe have provided Zorb football, table tennis, football coaching, gaming, crafts and traditional games, all of which are free of charge. More work is underway to expand this offer further.

We have also been running a successful Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) Programme which is aimed at providing healthy food and enriching activities free of charge for primary and secondary school aged children and young people who are eligible for benefit related free school meals during the holidays. Through HAF we have hosted a number of events and learning opportunities during the school holidays including things like football camp, cookery sessions, martial arts, sensory play, music creation sessions, and t shirt design classes. Since the beginning of the HAF programme commencing at Easter 2021 we have seen 16,868 individual

children and young people attending 2,174 activities and over 58,000 opportunities have been on offer across the borough.

In terms of making more safe spaces for young people to go, we have been engaging children and young people in our 'once in a generation' regeneration projects for Earlestown and St Helens town centres, to ensure they meet the needs of our children and young people for years to come as they grow and develop here.

As part of our Libraries Strategy, we are looking to create a modern and inclusive library service in the borough. The Strategy looks to transform the operating model of libraries so they can offer modern and alternative services such as outreach, digital, home delivery, community managed facilities and will introduce a Schools Library Service. Opening hours will be adjusted based on public feedback meaning more will be open in the evening and at weekends.

Some of our most accessible and affordable places for young people to go are our parks and open spaces and we are currently developing a strategy to ensure they are attractive, clean and safe places for young people to go. This will be supported by investment from the Council.

Alongside this, in 2023, St Helens was nominated as the Liverpool City Region's Borough of Culture. Throughout the year, a packed programme of free family-friendly events led by St Helens Borough Council were held in various locations in line with the theme of celebrating the borough's past and building for the future, with more than £80,000 in grant funded allocated to a number of community groups to organise their own events for residents to enjoy. Hundreds of thousands of residents took part in the events over the year and we expect the events to resonate with residents for years to come, helping to foster a sense of pride and community.

It's important to also mention the role of the voluntary and third sector in providing opportunities to young people in the borough. They provide hundreds of activities and events for young people to get involved with, and provide vital spaces for young people to socialise, learn and be safe. This offer is set to be extended further through the development of the YMCA's Youth Hub which is aiming to reach an additional 296 young people per week to help them access activities focusing on mental health and wellbeing, skills, and opportunities.

Key stats

- There are more than 250 voluntary sports clubs across the borough offering over 25 different sports.
- There are 163 indoor and outdoor sports facilities across the borough managed by the Council.
- 100,000 children and young people attend swimming lessons run by the Council each year.
- The Council operates a network of 7 libraries spread across the borough offering a range at least 200 free events throughout the year, free high-speed Wi-Fi and public access computers.

Council Pledges (the Council will)

- Give young people opportunities to engage and have a say on what they want to see in our regeneration plans including clubs and spaces for them.
- Ensure through our Localities model that more of our Council buildings are child friendly and open to all young people.
- To continue supporting voluntary sector organisations with advice, information, funding when available to enable them to offer and publicise more to young people
- Deliver our Open Spaces Strategy that factors in young people, maintaining and making our Open Spaces more accessible for young people.
- Work with the YMCA to create a new Youth Zone in St Helens to provide more places and activities for young people.
- Through our libraries and leisure centres, continue to offer a series of affordable events and opportunities for young people to get involved with. We will also establish a youth advisory group for our Libraries in Arts Project.
- Continue delivering HAF Programme.
- Through our Active Lives Strategy continue working with the voluntary sector to provide accessible classes and activities for children and young people.
- Communicate and encourage groups to communicate more widely the borough offer on sports clubs and leisure facilities available.

Young People Pledges (Young People will)

- Participate in events and opportunities when they appear and keep an eye on the Council's website to see what child and young people friendly free activities and events are available.
- Use facilities that are available to them and spread the word about them with their friends and family.
- Volunteer when there is opportunity to do so – this could be through community service such as environmental clean ups, or via food banks and pantries.

Partners Pledge (partners and stakeholders will.....)

Through this next period of consultation, we will seek to capture the pledges of parents, guardians and relatives, our nurseries, Family Hubs, schools, colleges and training providers, our local businesses, charities, and other essential public service providers.

Useful links

[GoActive Website](#)

[Library Service Website](#)

[Arts Service Website.](#)

[Libraries Strategy](#)

[Active Lives Strategy](#)

[Arts Strategy](#)

5) PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR THE FUTURE AND HELPING THEM TO ACHIEVE THEIR AMBITIONS

Summary

The cost-of-living crisis was a consistent theme throughout our engagement with young people. The majority of them raised their concerns around the impacts and pressures this was having on themselves, their families and their peers both now and into the future. The young people we engaged with highlighted that they felt the cost-of-living crisis may not have had as much impact on people if they were taught how to manage money more effectively and were made aware of support that was available. They felt the lack of education around this was widening inequalities in the borough. They outlined that to avoid this for future generations they would like to see more support and education being offered to young people, particularly around budgeting, understanding finances such as mortgages, taxes, loans and accounts. They raised that they wanted to see this added to the curriculum in schools or via other providers outside of school. Young people also told us about the importance of personalisation in both education and support, advocating for approaches tailored to meet everyone's unique needs. They asked for comprehensive career workshops that include cutting-edge Virtual Reality and computer workshops to embrace literacy and technological skills.

In terms of the local picture, they highlighted that they liked living in the borough, and would like to continue their education here, and progress in their careers here but felt at the moment, that there are a lack of opportunities to do this.

What the Council has done so far

We know the legacy of the Covid pandemic and the rise in the cost of living will continue to have a lasting impact on communities including the widening of inequalities. That is why we are looking to pilot the Cradle to Career Project in Parr. The main aim of the project is to bring together the Council, schools, services, professionals and residents under one vision to reduce inequalities for children and young people living in this area and to improve long term outcomes for them. The Cradle to Career model has previously had success in North Birkenhead where pupils gained 11 months above expected progress in reading, had a 50% increase in achieving the highest reading ability and had improvements in social care step-down rates and re-referral rates. We hope this model can achieve similar results for children and young people in our borough and ultimately lead to young people living better lives.

The Council has also established Family Hubs and Children's Centres to provide a range of services, ensuring that children have the best start in life and are prepared for the future. These centres cater to families with babies, children, and young people from birth until they reach the age of 19 (or up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities). Our Family Hubs have enabled families to access support, information, and services all in one place, with trained professionals based at hubs offering advice on parenting, and helping families connect with community services and assist with accessing benefits and financial assistance. Family Hubs offer a range of services including early education

(integrated with daycare) and a range of activities and programmes including seasonal activities for babies and toddlers, parenting programmes, speech and language support, assistance with employment access, and half-term holiday activities and food programmes.

To encourage a positive learning experience for children and young people we have continued to invest in our schools through our School Replacement and Capital Programme. We want to ensure children across the borough have access to the best learning facilities they can. We hope this will help to contribute to an improvement on already impressive attainment and qualification results for children. To add to this, the majority of secondary schools in the borough are currently rated Good by Ofsted.

We also have a strong offer for children with SEND which includes our TESSA (Triage for all Education Support and Specialist Advice) service which provides specialised advice and support to schools, staff, and young people. TESSA covers several specialist areas including supporting children and young people with autism spectrum disorder and supporting those who are visually impaired. Alongside the TESSA offer we also deliver a dyslexia service in schools which identify access arrangements, literacy assessments, dyslexia diagnostic assessments, and much more. However, more is needed to be done, particularly around dyslexia, with no schools in the borough having a [Dyslexia Friendly Accreditation](#).

In terms of getting young people ready for the world of work, the Council's Ways to Work Service has been a real success in recent years. Ways to Work is the borough's largest employment support programme, delivered by the council and working with all local partners to deliver sustainable employment, education and training outcomes for local residents. It is funded by the Strategic Investment Fund (SIF) and has registered and worked with over 3000 residents since its inception in 2016, helping over 1200 people into employment, training and education. Ways to Work offers coaching and mentoring, paid work experience, training courses, skills development, information and advice, 1:1 support, group guidance, job search support, CV writing, and interview preparation and techniques to support individuals with their career development.

In terms of boosting aspirations and looking to the future our Local Plan aims to deliver a good choice of quality and affordable homes, boost the number of skilled jobs available, ensure there is efficient infrastructure and transport links and look to improve the overall health and wellbeing of residents.

One of the first steps in this journey is through the creation and development of the St Helens Manufacturing & Innovation Campus, which will build on the success of Glass Futures in introducing green jobs to the borough. This will bring huge inward investment opportunities and will mean there are a wider range of high quality, high skilled jobs on offer in the borough, boosting aspirations for many people living here.

Alongside this, as part of the Parkside Development, we worked closely with Langtree to undertake several initiatives to engage with school and promote learning and career opportunities. As part of the 'Learning to Work' programme, the Parkside team conducted 28 school visits, engaging with over 600 young people, providing

insights into various aspects of the development and fostering connections between education and real-world projects.

We plan to continue this work on ensuring young people are engaged with key developments and to ensure high quality jobs are on offer to local people in the future through working with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to introduce an Investment Zone, which will look to attract investment and jobs, and ultimately to boost economic growth in our borough and through the regeneration of the two town centres in the borough.

Key stats

- 3000 residents supported by Ways to Work
- 1200 helped into employment by Ways to Work
- Majority of schools rated Good by Ofsted
- 28 schools events re Parkside
- £27.815 million investment in schools over the last five financial years

Council Pledges (the Council will)

- Continue with our school investment plan to make sure children and communities have the high-quality facilities they deserve to get the best learning opportunity possible; including creative spaces for additional study support.
- Explore opportunities with partners to ensure more development and learning opportunities are on offer for young people in the borough around real life skills such as budgeting and stem subject such as cutting-edge digital skills.
- Offer more mentoring and coaching opportunities between young people through our Virtual School so they can support each other to develop.
- Support and encourage schools in the borough to work towards gaining Dyslexia Friendly Accreditation
- Progress with regeneration plans in the borough to attract more business and investment and to create a wider range of vibrant jobs and opportunities.
- Encourage inward investment from businesses to create more jobs for local people.
- Work hard to increase the number of opportunities such as supported internships across the Borough.
- Continue to expand the range of work opportunities for children we look after helping them to develop key skills.

Young People Pledges (Young people will)

- Explore – research various career paths and industries in St Helens, attend career fairs, workshops, and networking events.
- Work experience – consider gaining work experience through internships, work placement or part time jobs to prepare for the world of work.
- Consider what is on offer already around life skills.
- Encourage each other to succeed and be open to learning from each other.

Partners Pledge (partners and stakeholders will.....)

Through this next period of consultation, we will seek to capture the pledges of parents, guardians and relatives, our nurseries, Family Hubs, schools, colleges and training providers, our local businesses, charities, and other essential public service providers.

Useful links

[LifeSkills by Barclays:](#)

LifeSkills offers free online resources, including videos, activities, and guides. Topics covered include CV writing, interview skills, networking, problem-solving, communication, managing finances, and more. Explore their LifeSkills program to enhance your skills.

6) LOOK AFTER OUR ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE AND ENSURE OUR BOROUGH IS CLEAN AND TIDY.

Summary

Pride in our local place came out strongly as a priority with young people, with the need for everyone to start looking after our local areas and environments and taking some personal responsibility for this. For young people we engaged with, this was as simple as ensuring we clean up after ourselves and ensure we put litter in the bin and helping the borough be as clean and tidy as it can be. In terms of their solutions and removing barriers, there was a strong call for busier areas, such as the two town centres, to have better placed litter bins to encourage young people to tidy up after themselves and to encourage recycling. Alongside this, and in a similar vein, they wanted more people to take personal responsibility on protecting the environment and climate and holding themselves to account by ensuring they are recycling properly, being as energy efficient as they can be, switching to more sustainable and energy efficient methods, and using less plastics, to name a few.

What the Council has done so far

In 2019, the Council declared a climate emergency and declared that by 2040 we are aiming to make St Helens net zero. To ensure this happens we have worked with partners to progress carbon reduction in the borough and to ensure climate and environment benefits can be achieved. As part of this we have launched our [climate action plan](#), a detailed action plan which sets out how the Council will play its part in the fight against climate change. Alongside this the Council has also launched a Youth Climate Commission to gauge views from students across St Helens and to ensure young people have ownership on climate issues. The Council is also supporting world-first projects like Glass Futures and HyNet, initiatives which are driving innovation, creating green jobs, and contributing to a sustainable future.

Alongside our climate response the Council has also recently launched a new Recycling and Waste Strategy for the borough. This aims to help residents understand the impact of their waste and how we can collectively work together to

reduce, reuse and recycle as much as possible. The Strategy has also helped us to drive up recycling rates and position us as a national leader.

Key stats

- In 2021/22 we recycled over 36% of our waste in St Helens.
- We undertook over 7 million waste and recycling collections last year.
- 95% of residents interviewed used the recycling service in the last 12 months.
- Last year we spent over £9 million to dispose of our waste in St Helens.
- However, over 75% of the waste in the brown refuse bin at home could have been recycled through kerbside recycling, household recycling centres or shop take-back collections.
- In 2021 St Helens emissions topped over 1.1 million tonnes of carbon
- In May 2023 we published our Climate Change Action Plan with 134 commitments for change over the next 5 years
- Over 48% of St Helens emissions are from households and transport so we can all make a difference by moving to Net Zero through our daily decisions.

Council Pledges (the Council will)

- Continue to deliver the new Recycling and Waste Strategy, making waste a thing of the past, with a focus on food waste reduction, recycling and the reuse of clothes and furniture to benefit the local community.
- Deliver our St Helens Climate Response Plan and Action Plan.
- Ensure Net Zero is at the heart of our regeneration projects.
- Support the move to electric and hydrogen powered council vehicles to reduce emissions.
- Improve the distribution of litter bins in our parks and urban areas to help reduce litter.
- Expand and improve cycling and walking routes in St Helens.
- Continue engaging with the Youth Climate Commission to drive forward changes and environmental messages.
- Find ways to ensure our public buildings are as environmentally friendly as possible by reducing energy usage, reducing waste and carbon.
- Explore ways to use green spaces more creatively such as community allotments, wildflower areas and improve biodiversity and increase tree planting.

Young People Pledges (Young people will)

- Engage with the Youth Climate Commission to raise views on climate issues.
- Help promote and participate in reducing, reusing and recycling waste in St Helens both at home and in school.
- Promote a cleaner and greener community by tackling single use plastic and litter.
- Support environmental education in schools to reduce environmental impact and take the message home to friends and family.
- Ask their school to declare their own Climate Emergency and monitor progress on reducing carbon.
- Challenge each other to recycle.
- Encourage each other to volunteer at environmental events such as clean ups.

Partners Pledge (partners and stakeholders will.....)

Through this next period of consultation, we will seek to capture the pledges of parents, guardians and relatives, our nurseries, Family Hubs, schools, colleges and training providers, our local businesses, charities, and other essential public service providers.

Useful links

[st-helens-climate-response-plan.pdf \(sthelens.gov.uk\)](https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/st-helens-climate-response-plan.pdf)